

STARSHINE '89

THE

LITERARY

ANNUAL

OF

MIDLANDS

TECHNICAL

COLLEGE



Foreword

This, the second issue of what we sincerely hope will be an annual publication, like the first issue, confirms our belief that there is a great deal of creative writing talent in our highly varied student body. The striking imagery of many contributions, the rounded characterization in the fiction, the thoughtfulness reflected by the essays, all made this a delightful duty for the editors.

As with our first issue, publication would not have been possible without the support of many people. There is a risk in attempting to thank some, that others may feel slighted. Still, we should mention the enthusiasm of Bill Rowell, Chairman of the College's Trustees, who read a poem from last year's issue at Commencement. Then there is Jean Mahaffey, Dean of Arts and Sciences, who carried the financial ball for us. Rhett Jackson, owner of The Happy Bookseller in Columbia, again served as an outside judge for us in the writing competition which has become a part of this process. Finally, Alan Clayton and all the crew in our Commercial Graphics Program worked very hard to give us the high quality printed product which you are about to enjoy.

Most of all, the editor wants to thank all the students, both in his Creative Writing class and throughout the College, for their willingness to take chances and their acceptance of our criticism. It is our hope that we may enjoy their bylines in other publications in years to come. But even if they never publish again, we hope they gained as much satisfaction as we did from Starshine '89.

Maurice R. Duperre
Editor

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Assistant Editor

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BARROOM BEETHOVEN

by
Terry Bailey

I have danced
in the netherlands of my soul,
Held court in silent waiting.
And when morning passed
and the late afternoon
was burnt into the earth,
I laughed and watched
shadows empty
the hidden corners of my heart.

EVENING OUT

by
R. B. Herbert, III

Last night I had a beer
And so did she.
Because her chest was hot,
I placed a freezing hand
Upon her breast,
And sipped my beer;
Watching
Her and me,
And everybody.
We chatted quietly
About nothing in particular,
Just feeling good
There alone
With everyone,
'Til finally we went home.

WILMA

by

Michael William Hines

“Andrew! Andrew! Answer me, boy.”
But nothing answered except static and finally a click.

Wilma cried in her trailer. Her only son would not even talk to her and her heart burned. The frustration of the distance made her scream into her bottle. The all-comforting bottle rocked with her in the torn La-Z-Boy and her husband snored in time with her rocking. She now, stared at him. “I would do away with him right now but the checks would stop,” she thought to herself. Then what? She had not worked in seven years and the alcohol had turned her into a crippled old woman. It took all her effort to move down the dirt road each week to retrieve the check and more pints of cheap blended whisky.

She turned the bottle up and drank the last bit. “All gone,” she said aloud. Andy, her husband, shifted on the couch and coughed up part of his diseased lungs. That disgusted her. Not much disgusted her but that did. She screamed and threw the empty bottle. It spun through the air and made contact with his head. The bottle ricocheted off and disappeared through a now broken window. Andy sat up and looked at his wife.

“What?” he asked as he rubbed the enlarging welt on his forehead. “Why’d ya do that?” She laughed suddenly and stopped just as quick only to peer deep into Andy’s eyes. He knew she was a little crazy from all the booze, but she still amazed and scared him.

“You go to the store. I’m tired of doing that walk. There is no shade and I ain’t got no umbrella. You never go. Hell, you never move off that couch.”

He was amazed. “Damn woman,” he screamed, “I ain’t even walked in years. You know that.” He slapped his useless leg and stared at Wilma. “Wilma, Wilma baby, Let’s lay off that stuff a little. You know you...” She turned her head and shut him out. Seven years ago a cable had snapped at Moore Steel and the result was a crippled Andy. Now she was his maid and wife-by-law but that did not include listening to pious lectures.

Wilma grabbed the arms of the chair and screamed, “You can go to hell. I slave for you and that bad leg. I only get lectures in return. I live for you and now you are trying to take my only pleasure away. No, you ran

little Andrew off but you will not take my spirits. Just go back to sleep. Go on. Damn you.”

“Oh Wilma, you know what he was doing. You..” She pushed her body up out of the sunken chair and moved over to the coat rack where her purse hung. She walked to the door and turned to Andy, “Just go back to your dreaming and leave reality to me.” She laughed hysterically and stepped into a hot Carolina sun.

When she returned, she staggered into the house a whole bottle drunk. Andy was asleep again and she slammed the door as hard as possible. He opened his eyes and smiled at his wife. “Everything okay? Check get here today?” He asked but, he knew it had because she had several bags in her arms. She set them down and started to throw the groceries into the rotted cabinets. He spoke calmly again, “I did not mean to talk down to you, but when you’re drinking, you are down. I don’t like to see you dying in those damn things.”

She jerked around from the refrigerator and yelled, “Shut-up, shut-up. Now! Leave me be! I ain’t your slave, you crippled waste. Look at me. I’m sick from the sun, not drunk. But I’d be better without you, you drag.”

Andy’s eyes watered over and he mumbled, “Drunk, drunk again.” She heard his silent words and she charged from the kitchen only to fall forward. A hard thud echoed through the hollow trailer. Andy bit his lip and cried for his suffering wife. She managed to get to her elbows only to fall back to the cracked floor. “Don’t talk about me,” she slurred through her bleeding lips. Rolling on to her back, she moved against the wall and sat up. A half-empty bottle materialized in her hand and she took several stinging swigs. After she screwed on the cap, the bottle rolled off her finger and cracked. She giggled and squealed, “More where that came from, honey.” Andy continued to weep as Wilma crawled to the door and fell out. He buried his face in the pillow and once again tried to escape to his happy dream world.

At the bottom of the steps, Wilma was sprawled on her back with one leg pointing back up. She rolled over and pushed herself onto her knees. Then she made it to a swaying stance, continuing to a pigeon-toed walk.

“He can’t talk to me that way,” she mumbled to nobody. “I’m so tired of his stuff.” She kicked over a plastic daisy windmill and trampled it into the dust.

She continued across the overgrown yard and went into a roof-sagging shed. “I ain’t a waste,” she yelled. She started kicking paint buckets and old rotted bags of feed. Her rage grew. She grabbed a garden spade and smashed out the only remaining window.

The rusted shovel slammed into flower pots and returnable bottles. “He ain’t going to talk that way to me any more,” and she kicked the door. The fragments of the broken window sprayed out as she stepped back into the yard.

She moved along her own zig-zag path and swung the spade at everything. A duck, its ducklings, and other cement barn yard animals crumbled under the blows. Daisies, roses, young saplings, and others did not escape Wilma’s wrath either. Her path ended at the door to the trailer.

Andy was fast asleep when she stumbled in. “Little Andrew would be lovin’ me now if you...” she

whispered. She moved over to the couch and smashed her husband. It took a few swings on the graying head and Andy stopped living. “There,” she said. “Preach to me now.”

Wilma,” Andy yelled. “Wilma, wake up. You’re burning my dinner.” Wilma opened her eyes and looked down at her lap. She had the empty bottle in one hand and the phone in the other. Andy moved over to the ice chest next to the T.V. and opened the last beer. “Why ain’t you gone to the store yet? There’s no beer. And what about my check?” Wilma just bowed her head. “Damn, you ain’t nothing but a waste. Why do I even keep you under my roof?” He stood in front of Wilma and lifted his hand as if to strike her. “Get up and fix me what you ain’t burnt.”

Wilma looked at Andy and then at the shovel leaning against the wood stove. She got out of the chair and moved towards the shovel. She spoke, “I got a dream. Oh lord, I got a dream.”

Perfect skin and chilled martinis

by

Terry Bailey

What special skills
will you bring?

Eater of life,
your belly is taut.
If only I had a pin.

I dance
for your pleasure.
Come,
take me now.

My arms are open
to embrace
or murder.

LOOKING AT MY BABY

by

Lelia L. Land

Looking at my baby
high up on his throne
Chewing on his cracker;
My, how his eyes shone!
The concentration on his face
as he brought it to his mouth,
Two white pearls up North
and two more teeth down South.
Cracker in his nose
and cracker in his eye
Not much in the mouth
that smiles so sweet and sly
He bubbles a song
so happy and gay
At seven months old,
I pray the song will stay:
Lord, keep my son strong
and happy at heart
And never let us be apart.

THE HEART OF A CHILD

by

Carol Rogers

Energy, synergy, sun and sea
somersaults, seesaws, bouncing knees,
Vim, vigor, vitamin things
puppies' toes, a red rose, a heart that sings.
Ability, agility, running a race,
beachballs, butterflies, a smiling face.
Abounding, resounding, love in the air
a sunrise, clear skies, a Father that cares.
Exit, enter, farewell winter:
Dayspring!

From Lilith to Lestat:

A Brief History of Vampires and Vampirism in Literature

by

Mary B. Carson

Casual readers may consider the vampire to be a creation of the eighteenth-century Romantic school of literature. However, the legend of the night-stalking, blood-drinking undead has origins in the beginnings of written literature and is still evolving in today's best-sellers.

Perhaps the earliest recorded vampire tale is that of Lilith, the rebellious first wife of Adam. According to the Talmud, the book of Jewish civil and religious law, Lilith refused to acknowledge Adam's superiority. Despite the warnings of three angels, Lilith left Adam and was punished for her disobedience by the deaths of her three children. When Eve replaced her, Lilith vowed to kill any children that Eve would bear to Adam. Since all humans were considered to be the children of Eve, each succeeding generation feared the wrath of Lilith. Amulets have been discovered which bear the names of the three angelic messengers; presumably they protected children from this mother of vampires.

The story of Lilith spread throughout the ancient world, and reappears in Greek mythology. In this version, her name is Lamia, and she is one of the many human consorts of Zeus. As in so many other Greek stories, Hera, Zeus's wife, is overcome by jealousy. She drives Lamia mad, and destroys her children by Zeus as well. Lamia takes her revenge by killing as many children as she can, eating their flesh and drinking their blood. Where she was once a beautiful young woman, she is now a hideous monster.

Medieval England yields two noteworthy tales. The first, according to Map, from the twelfth-century *De nugis curialium, distinctiones quinque*, is of a knight and his lady who have had three children, each of which was found dead on the morning after its birth. When their fourth child is born, they decide to watch over it through the night. That evening, a pilgrim arrives at the castle. He is made welcome, and apprised of the couple's plight. He offers to join their vigil, whereupon they return to the baby's room and discover their trusted old nurse bending over the cradle with a

knife in her hand. After interrogating the nurse, the pilgrim announces that she is actually a vampire who has taken the form of their faithful servant. This is an early example of shape-shifting, a favorite practice of more contemporary vampires.

Another British story, this one supposedly true, is told by the thirteenth-century historian, William of Newburgh. In 1196, a resident of Buckinghamshire arose from his grave to visit his wife on three consecutive evenings. On the first two nights, "He not only filled her with the greatest alarm but almost killed her by leaping upon her with the whole of his weight and overlying her." On the third night, she gathered her friends about her for protection. The vampire was not to be denied, however. He left his wife alone and began to harass his brothers. When he started appearing to the townsfolk in broad daylight, the village archdeacon begged the Archbishop of Lincoln's advice. The Archbishop wrote out a full absolution of the dead man's sins, which was placed upon the corpse's breast. Thus, the Buckinghamshire Vampire finally achieved eternal rest – and by a much gentler method than that of the wooden stake.

It will come as no surprise to modern-day vampire aficionados that the richest source of vampire lore is middle Europe. Austria yields the story of Grando of Kranj, who was released from his torment by a priest and then beheaded. The village of Kisolova, in what is now Hungary, was plagued in 1725 by the vampire Peter Plogosovitz, who was dispatched by a stake through the heart. In 1730, a genuine "vampire hunter," the Count of Carreras, related a story in which another Hungarian village was terrorized for thirty years. Two years later, a young soldier named Arnold Paole was reportedly tormented by a Turkish vampire; Paole himself, after his death, allegedly became a vampire and caused the transformation of at least seventeen other people.

The last three incidents were recounted by the Benedictine scholar, Augustin Calmet. Father Calmet concluded that these "vampires" were actually victims

of premature burial and condemned those who had beheaded, staked, or burned them as murderers. His work was praised by the enlightened men of the age; however, his writing did not loosen the grip of the vampire upon the imagination of fiction writers.

The "modern" vampire made his first appearance in April of 1819, with the publication of John Polidori's, "The Vampyre." Polidori, a doctor by profession, reportedly based his vampire, Lord Ruthven, on his most famous patient, Lord Byron. Ruthven, like Byron, is educated, refined, considered slightly eccentric, and is deemed extremely attractive by the women of his circle. He is different from the peasant vampires of earlier tales in that he is self-aware. Where the early vampires drink blood without guilt, Ruthven is tormented by the fact that he must take other lives to sustain his own.

Another famous vampire was created by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu in 1871. "Carmilla" is the story of a lonely young woman who falls under the spell of a mysterious countess. Veeder notes that several readers have made much of the fact that Laura obviously feels a strong sexual attraction toward Carmilla, one that the vampire returns. To concentrate on this, however, would be a disservice to the author. Le Fanu felt that the people of his era, women in particular, were pressured to disregard their true needs and desires in order to pursue those that were more acceptable. It is not important that Laura accepts her own lesbianism; it is important that she comes to know herself.

"The Vampyre" and "Carmilla" are illustrations of how the vampire theme progressed from myth to peasant superstition to an acceptable vehicle for serious writers. Edgar Allan Poe used the theme in his story, "The Oval Portrait," in which the artist creates a painting that drains his beloved's life away. Even William Faulkner has incorporated the idea into his work; his novel, *Absalom, Absalom!* is held by Torsney to be a "vampire novel," albeit without neckbiting and garlic hung around the windows.

The best-known vampire tale, however, has no lofty pretensions. It is pure, sensationalistic, glorious Gothic horror. It is, of course, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Stoker based his Transylvanian count on the fifteenth-century prince Vlad Tepes, also known as the Voivode Dracula. In the Wallachian language, "Dracula" means "devil," and is a title given to one who distinguished himself by courage, cruel actions, or cunning. By historical accounts, Prince Vlad (called "The Impaler" in recognition of his favorite method of dealing with his enemies) deserved his title. Stoker used the story of this nobleman as the foundation on which he built the

penultimate vampire. Dracula is cultured, wealthy, and incredibly attractive. He can change his shape at will. Women not only submit to his fatal advances, they become willing accomplices to his dark designs. In the end, however, he is destroyed by his nemesis, Professor Von Helsing. Once again, reason triumphs over the baser instincts.

For the last fifty years, Stoker's Dracula has continued to arise in literature, film, and television. Most vampire stories refer to him; some are little more than slightly altered versions of his adventures. In the guise of actor Christopher Lee, he has been vanquished numerous times by Peter Cushing's Von Helsing. Every so often, a fading actor will don clown white makeup and a cheap satin cape for a role in a made-for-television film.

There have, however, been recent departures from the Transylvanian tradition. In his story, "Something Wicked This Way Comes," science-fiction/fantasy author Ray Bradbury writes of psychic vampires that feed on human souls, while Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* follows the last human left on an Earth populated by vampires. The 1970's saw a Broadway opening and a sumptuous movie version of the Stoker tale, starring Frank Langella and Sir Laurence Olivier; there was also the release of a comedy version, *Love At First Bite*. Whitley Strieber's 1981 novel, *The Hunger* (the film version of which was released in 1983) features some of the more interesting variations on the theme. The vampire is a beautiful woman who preys on victims in contemporary New York City. Her primary lover-victim is a woman who is doing geriatric research. According to Rudin, this "victim" is no peasant, nor is she one of the sheltered young girls whom Dracula seduced. However, like Laura in "Carmilla," she lives in isolation—not in a remote wilderness, but in an emotional wasteland. Strieber's New York is a miasma of aimless consumption, joyless sex, and meaningless existence. Vampirism supplies the young doctor with the nourishment she has always—perhaps unknowingly—craved.

Probably the most radical departure from the stereotypical vampire appears in the work of Anne Rice. The hero of her 1976 novel, *Interview With the Vampire*, scoffs at the idea of shape-changing, and has equal scorn for the stake-through-the-heart remedy for vampirism. Rice's sequel, however, completely rewrites the vampire myth. Vampires are no longer creatures of Satan; they are descendants of pre-Dynastic Egyptian royalty. Lestat, the protagonist, revels in his condition; however, he has vowed never to take innocent blood. To this end, he roams the rougher sections of New

Orleans, searching out pimps, murderers, and other criminals on whom to feed. Most importantly, Lestat is the rebel of his race. Vampire law, Rice writes, formulated during the Dark Ages, holds that vampires must never reveal their true nature to mortals, must never commit their history to writing (lest a mortal read it), and must never reveal to mortals the location of their or any vampire's lair. When the novel opens, though, Lestat informs the reader that he is about to break all the laws at once. He has formed a rock band named after himself; their concert tour is about to begin, their album has sold four million copies, and their video clips are being played all over the world. He adds, "I am also the author of an autobiography which was published last week". It is not clear whether or not Lestat's human admirers believe his story. The old vampires, however,

are outraged, and determined to destroy Lestat. The novel ends with strong hints of coming battle between Lestat and the "old guard," and between vampires and humans.

In conclusion, the vampire has gone through substantial changes since its first appearance in literature. Where once it was a self-loathing, repulsive creature, it is now beautiful and shameless. It used to hunt in small, isolated villages; now it stalks the streets of great cities. Once it was a luckless peasant, knowing only that it must drink blood to survive. The vampire has progressed through the ranks of nobility to what passes for nobility in a supposedly democratic society, a rock star! It understands how to survive in the human world. May it do so for another three thousand years!

FIRST TASTE OF SUNLIGHT

by

Karen D. Masters

It is held within us all
As cold as the gray decaying stone
 that adorns a long forgotten mound
A small yet mighty hill
Echoing cries of triumph and agony
 calling softly
 faintly
 flying on the wind

Remember its first taste of sunlight
Your mouth went dry with the desire for blood
Reaching upward
Soaring towards the light
day became night
Screams of war raged on
The lurching of your stomach reminded you
How mortal you really are
Merely human

As years have passed
The quiet gentle rocking of
 sweet scented breasts
 soothes you
You face your foe as we all do
Driving it deeper within the crystal cave

SONATA

by

Richard Glover

(for Diana's)

I

A Shattered Moonlight

The night is swatched with indigo;
A shattered moonlight leaves her shards
Unswept upon the ground.

The screech owl gives her music voice;
The barnyard cat pads silently
Across the cobblestones.

The fox is passionate and cold;
And, merciless, the wolf slips through
The corridors of pine.

II

Thin Ice

My thoughts are brittle ones.
A little pressure and they'll crack and run
Like thin ice on a pond.
I need you here to steady me.
My mind is full of clarity and light,
A hospital lobby at 4 A.M.
I need you here to steady me.

V

Early November in the Forest

The sky is full of stars and I begin
To think of you. The moon shines through the leaves
Of tall, slim silhouettes, and gently starts
To weave the pattern of your face. For all
My love for you, I don't know when the last
Time was I saw you smile. When I am with
These trees I almost let myself believe
The voice that always calls to me is yours,
And not the simple whisperings of the wind.
And that the twinkling eyes I see are really here.

III

Play the Hunter

But I could play the hunter too:
Could stalk this cold, moon-haunted hall
And revel in her window light,
Could let her hunger well inside my head
And let her movements dance me to your door.
Yes, I could play the hunter too:
Could stand above your bed,
Important, undeniable,
Too beautiful to be true,
And claim you as my own.

IV

Le Petit Mort

I long to taste your blood.
I long to feel your fingers turn to claws
 And rip the life from me.
I long to feel your breath upon my neck.
Oh rip the life from me!
I long to feel your teeth.
Oh let them sink into my throat
 And rip the life from me!
Oh, let me taste your blood.

A SONNET OF LONELINESS

by
Mark Skeen

I am lonely and long for your soft touch.
At your absence, time teases my yearning.
Alone, bearing emptiness, is too much;
The sorrow, here inside me, is burning.
I would gladly give the world to hold you,
And defy evil to be by your side.
But for now, I will live on, being blue,
My feelings for you swelling in a tide.
I wonder where you are, and what you feel;
Could you also be thinking about me?
Now I realize the love we share is real.
Learning to trust you, I have found the key.
I will eagerly await your return,
Until then, my heart is a broken urn.

THE ANSWER

by
Bennie Sue Miller

It came in such a soft way,
not from in front of, or behind,
just up by my side,
took my hand —
all the tangents tumbled
into a straight line and
I could proceed again.

REALIZATION

by
Elaine Jackson

Open your eyes
I beg
Mother
to the virgin
white
desire to please
complacent
Daughter

Rebuke
the judgmental
angry
arrogance
Unbending Matron

I ran to you
once
for solace
warmth
in the night . . .

Deny
the anger
hidden inside
longing heart,
unfeeling
Daughter

MY AMAZING MOTHER

by

Mildred A. Mann

In spite of her age, my mother is still a very busy person. My mother is eighty years old and she had nine children, six girls and three boys. Through them, she had thirty-three grandchildren and, so far, twenty-five great-grandchildren. Some of the grandchildren still rely on her every day; two of my mother's grandsons stay with her every afternoon after school until their mother comes home. Some of the great-grandchildren come to visit her every weekend.

My mother still plants her spring garden, and she's always in the yard with her flowers. During the winter

months, she sews quilted pieces together to make full-size quilts. And when she's not gardening or quilting, she's at the senior citizens' lodge with the old people. The staff of the senior citizens' lodge takes the entire group on outings for shopping or amusement. Just yesterday, they all went to one of the bowling alleys here in Columbia. At other times they have travelled as far as Charleston, Poinsettia Park, or even to Carowinds, the amusement park. With all of this, there's not a dull moment in my mother's busy schedule.

IKE

by

Roberta Okoli

My best friend, Ike, is the most loving person I know. I can be myself whenever I'm around him. He needs me, and that makes me feel good. Ike's face lights up when he sees me. He calls my name all the time, he's so happy to be here with me. Just thinking about him gives me the inspiration to get up each morning to come to school. Whenever I look at my child, I see love, my husband's love added to mine and equalling more than that love's sum total.

FIRST DEATH

by

Suzie Reamy

"Death ends a life, but not a relationship which struggles on in the survivor's mind: searching for some resolution, some final resting place, which it perhaps never finds . . ."

Robert W. Anderson,

I Never Sang For My Father

The spring after my sixth birthday, my father had a visitor from his boyhood, an open and friendly young man named Ed Landon. Ed was about thirty, slim, with receding black hair, a disarming grin, and one glass eye. To my child's heart, he was perfect.

As the weeks of his visit passed, Ed and I grew close. I began to call him "Uncle Ed," and we got into the habit of sitting on our front steps each morning after breakfast. He entertained me with stories about his and Daddy's childhood, growing up on the Chesapeake Bay. During warm spring afternoons, he pulled me through the dusty streets of our secluded town in my dented red wagon to Epps' drug store, where we ordered Floppy Dopes, wonderful concoctions of vanilla ice cream, Coke, and chipped ice. In the evenings he watched me swing, higher and higher, in an old tire hanging from an oak tree in our backyard; finally, he would hold out his arms, and I'd jump to him. I was never afraid to go. Ed would never let me fall.

Daddy told me that Ed had been his best friend through grade school and college, and since Ed had felt bad lately, he would be visiting for awhile. Ed had no family and spent most of the next six months with us. He left once in mid-May to go to Washington for a week. When he came back, I heard my mother say that he was different—sadder somehow. But he was back, and I didn't waste time wondering what Mother said.

The hot weeks of a Low Country summer sweltered by. More and more, Ed spent his time sitting in the porch swing. Each day after lunch, he went into his small bedroom to take a nap. I heard my father remark that he seemed to be losing weight, that he didn't smile any more. One Sunday after breakfast, I found him standing in the kitchen, eating cold grease from the frying pan with a spoon. When I wrinkled my nose and asked him why he was doing that, he just walked away.

My parents told me more and more to leave Ed alone and let him rest. They began to scold me for bothering him. Once after such a scolding, Ed found me crying, huddled on the ground beside our backyard coal bin. He knelt beside me and drew a tic-tac-toe game in the soft black dirt with the sharp edge of a rock. We played for only a few minutes when he stopped and clutched his stomach. He took a white pill from his pocket and swallowed it. Uncle Ed stared at me for what I thought was a very long time; I sat motionless and noticed dampness under his good eye. Ed stood up after that and went back inside the house.

The next day, Ed borrowed my father's old Plymouth, and we drove to Silver's, the only dime store in town. We marched straight to the toy counter, and Ed told me to pick out anything that I wanted in the entire store. Before deciding, we played with almost every toy there, much to the irritation of old Mr. Stout, who ran the store. I finally decided on a doll that cried when turned on her stomach. I named her after Uncle Ed and slept with her that very night.

When I got up for breakfast the next morning, Ed was gone. I cried, but Daddy said that he would be back in a few days; that didn't seem so bad, so I spent the rest of the summer learning to roller skate and waiting for Ed.

Early one Saturday morning, I crossed the street alone to go play with Frances, my friend in the next block. We had just started to spread out mud on wide magnolia leaves to cook our "pies," when her grandmother arrived. Frances scurried over for a hug and some gum, and I followed close behind.

Her grandmother was just reaching into her large patent leather purse for the treasured pieces of gum when she noticed me standing here. Her smile disappeared, and her forehead wrinkled. She opened

her mouth to speak, and her words took my breath:

"Tell your daddy we were sorry to hear about Mr. Landon's passing away."

I can still feel the panic of that minute. I began to scream, "No! It's not true; it's not fair!" as loud as I could. I ran blindly down the middle of the street, dodging the few cars out so early, heading straight to my house to tell Ed the lie this horrible woman had told. In the distance, I saw my mother and father on the porch. I shoved past them and ran, hysterical, into Ed's room. He had to be there! My father came in and held me tight in his arms, trying to calm me. I bit my lip until it bled and tore several buttons from my mother's dress as I fought to be free. I wanted Ed! Where was Ed?

The next few weeks were a nightmare in our home. Uncle Ed had gone away and could never return. I had trusted him, but he left me. I became terrified that my parents would do the same thing. I sneaked into their bedroom at night and slept on the floor to be near them. I sat outside the bathroom door and cried while my mother was inside. I refused to stay in school. The teacher tried to hold me while my parents slipped out, but I fought free and ran screaming across the schoolyard back home.

Child psychologists were almost unheard of in those days, but my parents took me fifty miles away to Augusta to find one. He listened to their story and then advised my parents to steal away and let me, as he put it, "cry myself out." That's what they finally had to do.

That afternoon, my mother sent me with Louise, our cleaning lady, to the far side of the porch to water plants. When I heard the car start up, I knew immediately what was happening. I threw down the watering can,

raced around the side of our house and started chasing the car down the dirt street. All I could see was my mother's face staring sadly back at me, getting smaller through the rear window.

The neighbors must have seen a strange sight — an old '39 Plymouth hurrying down the road, chased by a skinny, crying six-year-old, with a heavy black woman close on her heels. Louise finally caught me at the corner and stood with me, crying, in the center of the unpaved street, watching my parents disappear in the dust — my parents that I'd trusted, just as I'd trusted Ed.

At dusk, my parents came back, but my crying had ended long before then. Perhaps I started to accept life's realities on that day; maybe I simply lost my child's faith in the fairness of the world; perhaps I learned that there are some things that no one, not even an adult, can ever make right.

Over the years, I learned Ed's story in piecemeal fashion. Ed had developed stomach cancer, untreatable in the early Fifties. During his ordeal, he had discovered that eating grease coated his stomach and eased his pain. He had become addicted to barbiturates; when he told the doctors, their ominous reply had been, "So what?"

When the pain became unbearable, Ed took the train north to Baltimore, checked into a cheap hotel, swallowed an entire bottle of sleeping pills and died — alone.

That summer forced me across the gap between the faith of childhood and the uncertainty of the adult world. I made the jump alone. No one was there to catch me, and I was only six years old.

FARMER

by

Richard Glover

(for the Goddess)

The day will come when you will feed this farm,
As it has given food to you. The beets
will drink your blood, the tassles of the corn
Will imitate your silken hair. And soon
The growing wheat will profit from the bread
You ate, the rye from liquor that you drank.
Your skin will bind the onion soon, and you
Will lie beneath the flower bed. Your sons
Will carry on, old man, they need you here
No more. So take your leave, and let them pick
Your cabbage head, and eat your ears of corn:

UNTITLED

by

Bryan Reese

afraid of morning
old men prepare for sleep
cold fragile bodies

dead men, cold and gray
bodies torn by black gore crows
stare with mild surprise

lonely old men wait
mark time, waiting for the Friend
journey starts again

UNTITLED

by

Michael Coward

I wish to find my way on a journey
down the trout-road
to places I've never been before
and will never be again

Let me go
so that I might roll over the surface of dark waters
and tumble down the murky riverbeds
that lie within the forest

Let me go
so that I might be a part of the whole liquid
surrounding all in front of me
flowing over rocks, edges smoothed with time

For when I go
I am many
in parts that can be seen through objects in my steady motion
and yet I am one

Let me go
on a one-way trip to sea
and though you think never to see me again
you may come to the bank, peer into the river,
and know that's where I'll be.

TEN SPEED BIKE

by

Michel J. Gaudet

SUMMERTIME. NIGHTTIME. Talk about steam heat. This whole city get like the bathroom when somebody in there taking a shower with the door shut. Nights like that, can't nobody sleep. Everybody be outside, sitting on they steps or else dragging half they furniture out on the sidewalk — kitchen chairs, card tables — even bringing TV's outside.

Womenfolks, mostly. All the grown women around my way look just the same. They all big-stout. They got big bosoms and big hips and fat legs, and they always wearing runover house shoes, and them shapeless, flowered numbers with the buttons down the front. 'Cept on Sunday. Sunday morning they all turn into glamor girls, in them big hats and long gloves, with they skinny high heels and they skinny selves in them tight girdles — wouldn't nobody ever know what they look like the rest of the time.

When I was a little kid I didn't wanna grow up, cause I never wanted to look like those ladies. I heard Miz Jenkins down the street one time say she don't mind being fat, cause that way her husband don't get so jealous. She say it's more than one way to keep a man. I never understood why they was in so much demand anyway, when seems like the only thing a woman can depend on 'em for is making sure she keep on having babies.

We got enough children in our neighborhood. In the summertime, even the little kids allowed to stay up till eleven or twelve at night — playing in the street and hollerin' and carryin' on — don't never seem to get tired. Don't nobody care, long as they don't fight.

Me — I don't hang around no front steps no more. Hot nights like that, I get on my ten speed and I be gone.

That's what I like to do more than anything else in the whole world. Feel that wind in my face keeping me cool as a air conditioner, shootin' along like a snowball. My bike light as a kite. I can really get up some speed.

All the guys around my way got ten speed bikes. Some of the other girls got 'em too, but they don't ride 'em at night. They pedal around during the day, but at nighttime they just hang around out front, watching the

babies and running they mouth. *I* didn't get my Peugeot to be no conversation piece.

My mama don't like me to ride at night. I tried to point out to her that she ain't never said nothing to my brothers, and Vincent a year younger than me. (And Langston two years older, in case "old" is the problem). She say, "That's different. You're a girl." Now I want to know how is anybody gonna know that. I'm skinny as a knife blade turned sideways, and all I ever wear is blue jeans and a old Wrangler jacket. But if I bring that up, she liable to start in on how I should start be taking more pride in myself and be acting more like a young lady. She say fourteen is old enough to start acting right, and if I don't stop it she be ashamed to call me her daughter.

I just tell her that my bike be moving so fast that hardly nobody can see me, and couldn't catch me if they did. Mama complain to her friends how I'm wild and she can't do nothing with me. She know I'm gonna do what I want, no matter what she say. But she know I ain't getting in no trouble, neither.

Like some of the boys I know stole they bikes, but I didn't do nothing like that. I'd been saving my money ever since I can remember, every time I could get a nickel or a dime outa anybody.

The reason I got me my Peugeot was so I could start to explore. I figured I'd better start looking right now, so when I'm grown, I'll know exactly where I want to go. So I ride around every chance I get.

Last summer I use to ride around with the boys a lot. Sometime eight or ten of us'd just go cruising the streets together. All of a sudden my mama decided she don't want me doing that no more. She say I'm too old to be spending so much time with boys. (That's what they tell you half the time, and the other half the time they worried' cause you ain't interested in spending more time with boys). Don't make much sense. She want me to have some girl friends, but I never seem to fit in with none of the things the girls is doing. I use to think I fit in more with the boys.

But I see how mama might be right . . . for once. I

didn't like the way some of the boys was starting to talk about girls sometimes. Talking 'bout what some girls be like from the neck on down, and talking all up underneath somebody clothes and all. Even though I wasn't really friends with none of the girls, I still didn't like it. So now I just mostly ride around by myself. And mama don't like that neither — you just can't please her.

This boy that live around the corner on North street, Donald Dupree, started asking me one time if I don't ever be lonely, 'cause he always see me by myself. He say don't I ever think I'd like to have me somebody special to go places with and stuff. Like I'd pick him if I did! Made me wanna laugh in his face.

I do be lonely, a lot of times, but I don't tell nobody. And I ain't met nobody yet that I'd really rather be with than be by myself. But I will someday. When I find that special place where everybody different, I'm gonna find somebody there I can be friends with. And it ain't gonna be no dumb boy.

I found me one place already that I like to go to a whole lot. It ain't really that far away — by bike — but it's on the other side of the Avenue. So I don't tell mama and them that I go there, cause they like to think I'm right around the neighborhood someplace. But this neighborhood too dull for me. All the houses look just the same — no porches, no yards, no trees — not even no parks around here. Every block look so much like every other block that it hurt my eyes just to think about it. So I ride across Summit Avenue and I go down that big steep hill there, and then make a sharp right at the bottom and cross the bridge over the train tracks. Then I head on out the boulevard — that's the nicest part, with all them big trees making a tunnel over the top, and lightning bugs shining in the bushes. At the end of the boulevard you get to this place call the Plaza.

It's something like a little park — the sidewalks is all bricks and they got flowers planted all over the place. The same kind that my mama grow in that painted-up tire she got out front masquerading like a garden decoration — only seem like they smell sweeter here. It's a big high fountain right in the middle, and all the street-lights is the real old-fashion kind. That Plaza is about the prettiest place I ever been in my whole life.

Most all the time something's going on there. Like a orchestra playing music or a man or a lady singing. One time they had some girls doing some kind of foreign dances. They look like they were around my age — maybe a little older. They all had on these fancy costumes, with different colored ribbons all down they

backs. I wouldn't wear nothing like that, but it looked real pretty when they was dancing.

I got me a special bench in one corner where I like to sit, 'cause I can see just about everything, but wouldn't nobody know I was there. I like to sit still and think, and I like to watch people without they watching me. A lot of people be coming there at night — to look at the shows and stuff, or just to hang out and cool off. All different kinda people.

This one night when I was sitting over in that corner where I always be at, there was this lady standing right near my bench. She mostly had her back turned to me and she didn't know I was there, but I could see her real good. She had on this shiny purple shirt and about a million silver bracelets. I kinda like the way she look. Sorta exotic, like she maybe come from California or one of the islands. I mean she had class — standing there with her arms folded. She walk away a little bit. Then turn around and walk back again. Like she waiting for somebody.

Then I spotted this dude coming over. I spied him way far across the Plaza. Looking real fine. Got on a three piece suit. One of them little caps sitting on at a angle. Look like leather. He coming straight over to this lady I'm watching and then she see him too and she start to smile, but she don't move till he get right up next to her. And then I'm gonna look away, 'cause I can't stand to watch nobody hugging and kissing on each other, but all of a sudden I see it ain't no dude at all. It's another lady!!

Now I can't stop looking. They smiling at each other like they ain't seen one another in ten years. Then the one in the purple shirt look around real quick — but she don't look just behind her — and sorta pull the other one right back into the corner where I'm sitting at, and then they put they arms around each other and kiss — for a whole long time. Now I really know I oughtta turn away, but I can't. And I know they gonna see me soon as they open they eyes. And they do.

They both kinda gasp and back up, like I'm the monster that just rose up out of the deep. And then I guess they can see I'm only a girl, and they look at one another and start to laugh! They just turn around and walk off like it wasn't nothing at all. But right before they gone, they both look around again, and I see I still ain't got my eye muscles and my jaw muscles working right again yet. And the one lady wink at me. And the other one say, "Catch you later."

I can't stop staring at they backs, all the way across

the Plaza. And then, all of a sudden, I feel like I got to be doing something, got to be moving.

I wheel on outa the Plaza and I'm just concentrating on getting up my speed. 'Cause I can't figure out what to think. Them two women kissing and then, when they get caught, just laughing about it. And here I'm laughing

too, for no reason at all. I'm sailing down the boulevard laughing like a lunatic, and then I'm singing at the top of my lungs. And climbing up that big old hill up to Summit Avenue is just as easy as being on a escalator.

I just love my ten speed bike!

MISSION LINE

by

Elaine Jackson

Sunshine hammers steamy sidewalks
Forty people wait
for the bread of life

Sweaty smells of distilled spirits
Their raggedy clothes
are dim in the light

Sad eyes reflect the hollow smiles
Contemptuous thoughts
darken the empathy

Sterile seats and cellophane utensils
Reverent in consumption
then slip into the city

THE TAILOR'S TALE

by
Connie Addison

There are no licensing guidelines for tailors, so anyone can put the word "tailor" after his or her name. Yet would you want a high school dropout to teach your children, or a housewife to doctor you? Then why would you want just anybody making or fixing your clothes? To get your money's worth, you may want to go to the tailor who has a degree in tailoring. But even highly trained tailors are often underpaid, subjected to stress, and deprived of job security.

First of all, tailoring is one of the most underpaid jobs today. The average tailor starts off at \$6.00 an hour and improves very little over the years. For instance, on my last job as a tailor, my employers always talked about a raise while the sale was on, but somehow they always got too busy to talk to me until business got slow again. Then they'd tell me since business was so slow, they couldn't afford to give me what they knew I really deserved. This went on year after year.

Along with being low paying, tailoring is both physically and mentally stressful. Sewing is tedious work which makes your eyes bad and your hands start to shake. Your eyes go bad because of the continuous strain on them. Eventually it becomes impossible to thread a needle or tell the difference between similar colors. Next are your hands. They start to shake. When you try to cut a garment, it may be ruined if your hand

shakes, causing the layer to slip and be cut too deep. In addition, your patience may be stretched to its limit. A customer's wife wants his new suit to make him look like Alex English, but the customer is built like Rerun from *What's Happening*. That's when you have to use charisma because it's a mind, not just a suit, you are fitting. You may convince him and his wife that, with a little altering, he will be the best-looking man in town, but there are other customers you can never please. In those cases, the boss is all over you to do whatever it takes to keep the customer from returning a suit. Why should tailors go through such stress for the modest amount of money they get?

Finally, a tailor always worries about job security. He thinks that even though the pay is low and the stress is high, at least he has a job. But once an employee gets up into the fifties or has reached a decent level of pay, the boss wants to hire someone new at minimum wage. He hires Betty, who knows only how to run a sewing machine. After you finish training her, she has your job because it is more profitable to keep Betty than you. If you are sent to another location, without good bus service, when you depend on the bus, you may miss a few days and lose your job because of it.

All things considered, low pay, stress, and lack of security, a tailor's life no longer suits me.

FEAR IS A FOUR LETTER WORD

by
Bonnie G. MacGregor-Liverance

Franklin Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," and Madam Marie Curie claimed, "Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood." I seriously pondered these two profound quotes as I sat in the Graphics Office of Midlands Technical College that muggy afternoon in September of 1987. I had often told myself that in order to make progress, you have to *make* things happen in your life, but fear was trying to make a liar out of me this time. Returning to college after twenty-three years generated a variety of emotions within me, the greatest of which was fear. Even though I felt pride, anticipation and determination, I recall that fear overwhelmed me as I sat there nervously contemplating my future. I was afraid that I couldn't pass the assessment tests for entrance acceptance, I was doubtful that I could manage financially with working at a full-time job, and I was uncertain whether I could keep up with working and still maintain decent or even passing grades. However, I was sure of one thing. I wanted to make a career change. To accomplish this, I needed more training in the field I had chosen, which was typesetting and graphic design. The department head in the Commercial Graphics Department explained that the school offered a Certificate in Typesetting and Mechanicals Preparation. This was just what I needed. However, part of the program would be offered in the fall quarter and the second section would not be offered until the following summer quarter.

"Why don't you consider attending school full-time, to earn an Associate's Degree in Commercial Graphics?" he asked. "That would encompass typesetting and design plus a richer knowledge of the printing industry which would be very beneficial to you in the area you are interested in." He further explained the program requirements to me, and the more he talked the more eager I became.

"Do you really think I can do it?" I queried. "It has been twenty-three years since I've been in school and I'm in my forties."

"Certainly," he continued. "Lots of older students

are able to qualify for grants and work-study benefits and work at part-time jobs too." He was so encouraging and so positive that we were setting up a class schedule before I knew it. Still, I thought I would have a couple of days to think about it.

Fifteen minutes later, I was in the Admissions Office and the counselor was saying. "Well, Bonnie, what do you want to do? This is the last day we can accept new students. In fact, the Cashier's Office closes in twenty minutes at 3:30 p.m. You need to make up your mind quickly. I wish I could give you more time," she added sympathetically.

"I can't make up my mind that fast." I thought. "I need to make arrangements. I need to be more prepared." I was in a panic. I didn't have a job (I had just been laid off from a print shop that very morning), I hadn't applied for a grant, and I would have to take the assessment tests before the end of the quarter to continue in school. My hands were wet with perspiration, and my heart raced.

"What should I do? Do you think I can do it?" I asked the counselor.

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell you what to do, it's your decision," she said.

"But do you think I can *really* do it?" I pushed. I desperately needed some help with this.

She cast an eye at the clock, then at me and she smiled and replied. "Do you really *want* to do it?"

Once again I thought to myself, "You have to *make* things happen in your life."

"Yes, yes, I do want to," I replied breathlessly.

"Well, then, there is your answer," she said with a twinkle in her eye. "I'll call the Cashier's Office and tell them you are on your way over. You have five minutes before they close; they'll be waiting for you."

Suddenly, it was 3:25 p.m., and I was in the Cashier's Office writing out the check for tuition. I was excited and scared, but I had a good feeling that I had made the right decision. Later, I called my mother, who lives in Canada, to tell her my good news. I felt very proud of myself.

"Aren't you a little old to be going to school?" she innocently asked.

I felt as though she had slapped me in the face. But then I realized that she probably didn't know that in recent years lots of people go back to school after their children are raised. It's not an uncommon thing to do anymore. Still, her negative attitude didn't matter. The decision had been made, and I was determined to stick with it under any circumstances. I was motivated now!

The very next day I applied for a part-time job in a small business in the neighborhood where I lived, and got it. In the weeks that followed, everything seemed to fall into place. I managed to pass the assessment tests with better than average scores, and I was amazed. In addition, the grant I applied for was approved, and I became eligible to participate in the work-study program

at the school. Even more surprising, I have successfully maintained excellent grades and have made the Dean's List for several quarters. Even though I'm an older student, my fellow classmates never once have made me feel out of place or different. They have made me feel very special and I'm proud to be a second "Mom" to more than thirty students in the Graphics Department. They even elected me President of the Graphics Society. Returning to school after twenty-three years was one of the best decisions I have ever made but I had to "make it happen." It has been a lot of hard work and I'm often very tired from the hectic pace, but ultimately I knew what I wanted and my desires were obviously stronger than any fears I had, and that made all the difference.

MATURE STUDENTS

by

Carol Rogers

High top Reeboks
And a hopeful heart
A few gray hairs
And years apart
Dancing damsels
Up the hall
Spirits soaring
Six feet tall
Age is no matter
Nor is the time
Books to read now
And poems to rhyme
Classes to attend
Lifelines to meet
A pounding heart
And rushing feet
It matters not
We have to squint
We glance with glee
At small fine print
We are not young
Our minds don't know
Experience can earn
A 4.0
Thank you Lord
For life today
That time takes not
Spirit away.

DON'T TELL ME SO

by

Michael William Hines

I sigh and say good-bye.
Oh god, I'm way too high,
Bought a line,
Did some time,
Can a feeling like this be a crime?
Get some smack,
An egg of crack,
Pale arm with dotted track,
This life is mad and very sad;
Endless and mindless
Don't tell me bad.

DISILLUSIONMENT

by

Genevieve Calmes

Shadows dance
on the grass
as trees shiver
in the breeze

A single bird
sits on a limb
agonizing
the fickleness of spring

Irises bow
their lavender heads
in shame
of their anxiety

And I myself
with no warm clothes
freezing
in the wintry breeze.

HOW TO LIVE ALONE

by

Bonnie G. MacGregor-Liverance

Because I live alone, I can definitely advocate solitary living as a marvelous lifestyle. To me, living alone translates into freedom. It means having the liberty to make my own decisions, to choose freely what to do with my time, and ultimately, to live my life on my own terms. However, I did not *choose* living alone as a lifestyle, so when circumstance descended upon me and I was left unexpectedly on my own, I found myself full of fear and anxiety. True independence is not easy to achieve. Adjusting to single life, adapting to the practical aspects of living alone, and learning how to make your own fun are important and essential steps in learning to live by yourself.

The first step to living alone successfully is adjusting to an unfamiliar lifestyle. Coming home to an empty house, eating alone, and sleeping alone will at first be strange and frightening. However, just as you became accustomed to the presence of another person, you can become accustomed to living alone. Resolve not to let it get the best of you and challenge yourself to survive it. Remember, too, that your feelings of loneliness are normal, but time is on your side and is a great healer. Another help in adjusting to your single state is the face your fears, worries, and doubts head on. I remember vividly having what I call the "what ifs." What if I can't support myself, what if I become ill, or what if my car breaks down? The best way to combat these fears is to face them one at a time. Living your life 'one day at a time,' is an excellent rule to live by. In addition to this, have a realistic perspective on events that occur by not blowing things out of proportion. Your aloneness is just one part of your life and not an all-consuming thing that will destroy you. Others have survived this; so will you.

The next step is to adapt yourself to the practical aspects of living alone. It is important to come home to cozy, warm, and comfortable surroundings. If memories haunt you every time you walk in the door, then it is either time to redecorate your present home or find a new place to live. Sometimes just changing the furniture around or buying new lamps will help. Redecorating is a creative activity that demands some concentration and the rewards can be very pleasing. Eating alone is

another activity that single people often find difficult. Cooking for yourself and eating alone can be fun, especially since you can indulge in any food you crave. The dinner hour can be at any time you want it to be, and you can even afford to be extravagant, since you don't have two or three other mouths to feed. After dinner, it might be nice to soak in a hot tub of bubbles, then slip into your favorite granny gown or pajamas and watch television, work a crossword puzzle, or read. The possibilities are endless!

Finally, it is equally important that you learn how to make your own fun. Entertaining yourself and others without relying on the support of anyone else is a positive step toward self reliance and confidence. In the beginning, try window shopping, browsing through a bookstore or going to a movie alone. You will probably be surprised at how much you enjoy these activities without the interference of someone else's time limits or preferences. Other activities which are enjoyed by many, are the continuing education courses offered by local colleges. Course offerings are diverse and expand personal horizons while enhancing professional skills. Courses range from familiar hobbies such as oil painting and calligraphy, to seminars and field trips in photography or antiques. You can also take self improvement courses such as Assertiveness Training or Stress Management. The added bonus that comes along with this type of activity is that you simultaneously interact and socialize with other people while learning something beneficial. When all else fails to entertain, reading is a worthwhile pastime which always provides endless hours of enjoyment. It is a mind-occupying activity that can provide a means of escape, amusement, adventure, or enlightenment to many people. Even rereading old classics can be an enjoyable diversion. I recently reread *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and *Anne of Green Gables*, books that I hadn't read since my teenage years. I believe I enjoyed them even more the second time around.

Living alone, therefore, can be a very positive and rewarding experience in your life. I have found that it has enhanced my personal growth and helped to boost my self-esteem. By adjusting to single life, focusing on

the practical aspects of living alone and learning to make your own fun, you will find that you have a good start on living alone and liking it. In addition, it can be

fun and relaxing. I can't think of anything greater than being able to take a nap without being disturbed, can you?

ENEMY MINE

by

Bryan Reese

my anti-Christ, my life-long foe
a dear old friend of mine
follows me, where'er I go
our shadows march in time.
I long to end my loneliness
and find someone who cares
His solitude and selfishness
invokes the hostile stares

where I scowl, His face lights up
like blossoms on the graves;
with Misery He fills his cup
my agony He craves
I try to care, He does forbear
hubris is his sin
my soul I bare, on which He'll tear
psychotic, twisted twin.

the two of us are bent and torn
'twixt shades of dark and light,
capacity to love and scorn
forever doomed to fight.
in my heart is heaven's key
and he is bound to Hell,
but who is real? am I or He
the heart, or hollow shell

our bodies joined, our spirits mesh
from Him I cannot flee;
this fiend, He wears my selfsame flesh
we stand as one, do we.
doomed to live, in pain no dearth,
I'm blind, but I can see
hell on earth, damned at birth
I am my worst enemy.

MORNING STRANGER

by

R. B. Herbert, III

The toothbrush carried me into reflection
And there I stood,
The other side of me,
One mirror step away.

He shaved.
First one side, then the other
Looked, a cold and darkly brown;
Shift to I, shift to eye.

Break. Break. Break
From the study;
Who is that man?
What surety does he sell?

Pelting droplets score on score encore
Showering, into rivulets run,
But I shall walk past the man in the mirror
On our way to my room

COMMON GROUND

by
Elaine Jackson

You call home
Concrete skyscraping heat

I call home
Plowed earthen coolness

Our street
has the same name.

DOPPLEGANGER

by
John Bender, III

My demon lover, friend to me.
Forever shall I see.
He's my shadow, never to hide.
Part of me, my demon side.

Piercing my life, like a weed.
My life the fertilizer, he the seed.
My mirror reflection, my self to be.
Not two, just one, not we.

Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience"

by
Andrew Thornley

Henry David Thoreau, in his essay "Civil Disobedience," takes issue with the machine of government, particularly by questioning its morality. And, by extension, he questions the morality of the supporters of such a government. To accomplish his purpose, Thoreau uses language, logic, and examples that stir the heart, but fall short of reason. It appears that he divides his essay into two distinguishable sections: his philosophical evaluation of the morality of government and its subjects, and his one-night stay in jail for refusing to pay a poll tax. While "Civil Disobedience" shines in its aesthetic literary value, its idealistic and presumptuous nature fails to leave the reader with a reasonable strategy for effective civil disobedience within a democracy.

The organization of "Civil Disobedience," whether by design or not, is ambiguous. In the first of the two discernible segments (which overlap), Thoreau engages the machine of government, questioning the morality behind it. Within this attack on government, he pauses periodically to question the rightness of those who would submit to it, asserting that a man "cannot without disgrace be associated with it". He names the Mexican War and the issue of slavery as prime causes for civil disobedience. The second segment of the essay deals with his overnight stay in the Concord Jail. One is at a loss to draw any real organization of the essay beyond these two divisions. This would probably alienate some readers who would find the essay difficult to follow on the first reading. But Thoreau is, in a real sense, an artist. "Civil Disobedience" is not arranged in the typical fashion of an essay, nor should it be, for it is a display of literary art. Indeed, it is the artistic aspect of the work that shines the brightest. The organization is difficult, but not impossible.

Undoubtedly, one of Thoreau's strongest tools as a writer is his use of the English language. One finds himself raking jewel upon jewel from this showcase of magnificently worded sentences. Thoreau is a master communicator, and every sentence mandates, by virtue of its balanced composition, that the reader stop and savor the locution. For example, there is an attractive rhetorical flavor to the following statement: "There are

nine hundred and ninety-nine patrons of virtue to one virtuous man." Such eloquently composed prose gives credence to an argument that is otherwise confounded by impractical reasoning. The language of "Civil Disobedience" is on the level of the intellectual and would probably present some problems to the average lay reader. And it is long. The verbosity of the essay can be distracting, and only those who are very interested (or required to read it for English Composition) may be inclined to press on to the end.

Thoreau's logic is one of the glaring weaknesses of the essay. Though he argues eloquently for an idealism which would overcome the immorality of the large foe of government, he fails to make the transition from idealism to realism. Thoreau emphasizes individualism, and it leads him to make the following statement: "I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name—if ten honest men only, ay, if one honest man, in this state of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, would actually withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once done is done forever." Admittedly, this is beautiful language which stirs the soul, but the reasoning is faulty. The individualism Thoreau propagates runs against the grain of a government which is "by the people, for the people." America operates on the principle of the republic where majority rules. It is based on the interests of the people, not a person. Of course, Thoreau realizes this, and vehemently beats the drum of individualism throughout the essay in hopes of drowning out the cries of the masses. The cause for which he speaks is noble and praiseworthy, but the method is frail. Perhaps his ideology would be more conducive to a country of one-man states. Indeed, we find him at the end of the essay looking forlornly for "a still more perfect and glorious state" which he imagines but "has not anywhere seen". The question the reader might well ask is can such a state ever exist without chaos.

Thoreau makes use of two popular examples of the injustice of government: the Mexican War and slavery. These are used successfully to portray the machine

advancing at the expense of the rights of others, and are probably the more effective since they were current issues at the time of the essay. His use of the account of his overnight stay in jail accentuates the personal cost of civil disobedience. But Thoreau shoots himself in the foot when he ventures to use examples of the New Testament to build his argument. His reference to Christ and the tribute money apparently is used to argue nonconformity to the government. Yet that story, rightly understood within the context of the New Testament, shows that Christ was not much interested in a physical kingdom, but rather a spiritual one. Scripture nowhere indicates Jesus was interested in an active opposition to the Roman government, and yet Thoreau casts Him into the role of a Zealot. If anything, Jesus supported the Roman government by His reply about the tribute money, for His real interest was to expose the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Thus, Thoreau's use of Christ as an example is inaccurate.

"Civil Disobedience" concludes with Thoreau asking rhetorically, "Where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical talent enough to avail himself of the light which it [the New Testament] sheds on the science of legislation." This appears to be a good

question, but one surely must wonder why Thoreau again appeals to the New Testament to anchor his argument, for it does no such thing. Consider "the light" of Romans 13:1,2: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement upon themselves." Thoreau would have done well to further expound upon the evils of slavery and war than to try his hand at theology. The latter only serves to erode his argument.

"Civil Disobedience" is a worthwhile essay to read and ponder, for it is, in this present writer's opinion, a literary masterpiece. The fact that it is often quoted today by various human and civil rights activists speaks for its timeless relevance. It sets forth a delightful theory of government and the steps that should be taken to achieve such a government. Yes, it is an argument for honest men to do the right thing. And, sadly enough, it never comes down from its intellectual, idealistic plateau to the valley of reality where majority rule is king and invincible in the land of democracy.

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC ILLUSIONS

by

Christine Johnson

Schizophrenia, Paranoia
Diffuse Delusions.
Scrambled thoughts, maggot brain,
Hallucinations and Delusions.

Manic-Depression, Psychosis
Suicidal ideations
Inability to cope with life,
No emotional adaptation.

Organic Brain Syndrome, Dementia
No mental orientation.
No sense of person, place, or time,
No logical concentration.

Chloral Hydrate and Phenobarb
Valium and Elavil.
Haldol, Lithium, Navane too.
Zombiose, ambulatory pill.

Diagnosis, staffing, treatment team
Ventilation of feelings.
Psychotherapeutic humph
Head spinning, drowning, reeling

SQUIRRELS

by

Gerry Merkle

It's morning, the food hits the dish;
The flavor is beef or the flavor is fish.
I lower my head to the bowl.
I got to get a squirrel; that is my goal.
I lick my chops, then I lick my master.
I think my hind legs are getting faster.

I look out the window and see a squirrel,
My anger erupts like a chopper's whirl.
The man gets up; I'm out the door
And I chase that rodent with a roar.
He's under the fence and gets away,
Stupid thinks I want to play.
I look around, check my territory
And I just told you my whole life story.

VIBRATIONS

by

Genevieve Calmes

Meandering manpower of steel
tracks the riverside
like a mystic serpent.
A dog paddles down
the dancing river rapids.
Sultry sunlight: sizzles.
Budding branches laugh
at wind's wit
tickled by the sheen of summer.

WHAT THE CANVAS KNOWS

by

Antionietta Rhodes

On the easel the white canvas lies
With an empty face and wondering eyes.
Will the glutton brush bend abrupt
To thunderheads, clouds and stormy seas,
Or in a vein of passion as a new master
Set quick strokes of yellow
On the spring meadow that afar can glow?
Or in a calmer soothing mood
Will the brush curve silent waves
Lapping at the edges of a narrow bay?
Yet stirred from pain and sorrow,
Inspiration may arise
To guide the brush to immortalize
The purity of a mountain stream that flows
And splinters off the rocks below
In thousand prisms of light
To shine and glow.
Only the canvas will know at the first touch
Of the brush that strives her way
What the artist's soul has to say.

POETOLOGY

by

Michael Owen

To express much with ideas in mind,
To express words with completion assigned,
Best expressing simple thoughts, in excessive?

Torn from the author's perspective opinion,
Torn from, and viewed under another's dominion,
Wrest meaningful renditions as merely unexpressive?

For differences circulate pending abortion,
For differences clutter impending destruction,
Whiz around, search beyond, burning the initial aggressive?

A poet's creation may turn to suicide,
A poet's personal preference will decide,
Fizz it up, or define it undoubtedly oppressive.

WARNING

by

Katherine Haltiwanger

Imagine living in a world with only one form of life: the human. No trees, no animals, no fish in the oceans, just man living in his bleak, man-made world. Picture a rock unsoftened by fields of green grass, a city skyline unbroken by a single tree. We couldn't survive; many of us wouldn't even want to try.

Occasionally, mankind needs to be reminded that we are only one of many thousands of forms of life on this planet. The diversity of life, from organisms visible only through the microscope to the huge African elephant, is here for a reason. Every living thing plays a crucial part in the maintenance of life. Unfortunately, in man's drive for technological, industrial, and economic growth, this natural law is being regularly broken.

Even as you read this, somewhere a river is being polluted. Somewhere a forest is being clear-cut, and a truck belches black smoke into the air. Is this any way to preserve the delicate balance of nature? This earth is not ours to ruin. Everything man does to his environment affects all of the other living organisms, and the effects are becoming more noticeable daily.

We need the fragile beauty of a wildflower just as we need clean air. The great shaggy wildness of the bison, now almost gone, is as necessary to our spirit as safe water is to our health. Think of the odd furry anteater or a towering, quietly solid redwood. These are our companions on this earth. Do we really want to be here alone? Can we stand to lose them, to lose a part of ourselves?

Sunny Interim

by

Bennie Miller

Like the first beat upon the kettle drum
In Shostakovitch's fifth,
The sun has just burst through the clouds,
Igniting trees to memories of Moses
And the lake, long the color of the forest,
mirrors the sky's blue-eyed blink.
Wondrously, at the same moment
A tiny animal has fallen on my roof
And is scampering skittishly about,
I know not whether from fear
or the mad ecstasy of the moment.
The gulls have taken flight,
Flashing white wings across the water.

I can almost hear the entire symphony
Heralding the gusty glory.

not fit to be pawned

by
Terry Bailey

Bleakness permeates the valley,
chokes the green in its prime.

Not quite winter —
something more perverse,
more permanent,
a subtle shift.

Quiet terror
clicking into place
with the simple ease
of a stubborn gearshift
on a mountain road.

Homeless images
rolling into bedlam
strict and bereft
not fit to be pawned.

FOUR FLOWERS

by
R. B. Herbert, III

Exquisite petal,
Would that love were less fleeting —
And as beautiful.

Blossoms fall dying —
Asked to change, so too does love,
Withered by demand.

A bloom in full blush:
Perfect for but a moment,
Echoes love's attention.

A flower's beauty,
Like love, is forever flawed
When improved upon.

A TASTE OF AFRICA

by
Christine Coker

From my window
one may see
Kilimanjaro
above the tree.

From my window
one may hear
Native children
laughing near.

From my window
one may smell
Violet blossoms
from the hill.

From my window
one may see
Dry bronze skies
like pottery.

From my window
one may taste
Mysterious Africa
loved in haste.

THE STORY OF THE REX BAR

by
Bonnie G. MacGregor-Liverance

Located in a small college town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, The Rex Bar appeared as an ordinary, typical college bar where students gathered on the weekends and after school. It was a place to relax, enjoy idle conversation with friends, and indulge in some refreshments. However, appearances can be deceiving. I was one of the college students who frequented this tavern during the mid-1960's and I discovered it possessed a fascinating history. Its walls held secrets which will never be told, for it was during the era of prohibition, in the 1920s and '30s, that (according to the locals) it was a hideout for the infamous Al Capone and his gang from Chicago. It was to this bar that the mobsters fled when things got "hot" in Chicago. The bar contained a main saloon, a speakeasy and a veranda, and each area had a special significance and purpose.

A plaque depicting a morose looking black and white bulldog greeted the patrons entering the main saloon, under the sign was the name Rex, written in Old English calligraphy. The main saloon itself was dark and gloomy and smelled musty from stale smoke. To the right, a mahogany back-bar mirrored liquor bottles of all descriptions. Behind the bar stood the owner and his wife who were probably in their late sixties. Mr. Smith, the owner (I heard that was not his real name) who was a small, bespectacled, unassuming-looking man with graying hair, agreed to show the establishment to me. He had owned the bar, he said, since 1923 when he had purchased it from a Chicago businessman. This main saloon, I later learned, was the part of the bar where only legal activities were conducted during the '20s and '30s. Alcoholic beverages were not allowed to be served in this room. Walking through the wooden planked saloon, I noticed hanging on the walls several paintings of bulldogs, all of which had been pets of Mr. Smith throughout the years. Under each portrait were the appropriate names, Rex I, Rex II, and Rex III. They all looked very bad-tempered and threatening.

Threading my way through the empty tables and chairs, I climbed a narrow stairway to the upper floor to what used to be known as "Rosa's Speakeasy." Mr. Smith explained that years ago his wife, Rosa, would entertain special customers of the bar here. He told me it was a "party room," a place where folks enjoyed

laughter and good times. In a far corner, close to what appeared to be a dance floor, stood an old Wurlitzer jukebox decorated in a rainbow of colors. I could almost hear it cranking out a Jimmy Dorsey or Benny Goodman hit for a nickel. The walls of the speakeasy were adorned with pictures of flashy women in flapper attire and mustached men sporting bow ties and straw hats of the '30s. Long Victorian couches and ornate chairs were scattered randomly around the room, and an inconspicuous door to the right was marked "private." Mr. Smith explained that the door led to the private apartments where he and his wife lived. I was later informed these were the apartments where Al Capone stayed when he was in town. At the end of the room facing north hung long, scarlet, brocade drapes which Mr. Smith abruptly opened revealing French doors which opened to a spectacular view of the Portage River from the veranda. Unpainted, weather-beaten railings of natural grey wood enclosed the porch from which a set of stairs descended to the ground.

A few feet from the bottom of the stairs, a three foot statue of the Virgin Mary stood guard over three small graves marked Rex I, Rex II, and Rex III. Underneath the veranda was a large overhead door which the river flowed under. Although Mr. Smith was reluctant to divulge any information as to why the huge door was there, he did say that his boat was enclosed behind it. The story has been told around the town that boats called "rum runners" delivered illegal liquor from Thunder Bay, a Canadian port some fifty miles across the great Lake Superior, via the Portage River, to the Rex Bar. Looking north from the veranda, I could imagine seeing signal lights from the boats carrying the contraband liquor, a sure sign that a delivery was about to be made.

As I re-entered the bar, I wondered about the lifestyle Mr. and Mrs. Smith must have had some forty years before in the small college town. What dangers must have lurked in these rooms and what secrets could they tell? I have been told that the bar was sold in the late '60s and that Mr. and Mrs. Smith have since passed on. I recall, though, that they seldom spoke to others of those incredible days and mostly kept to themselves. Still, they have a place in history, for it was an era that will be written about for years to come.

WILL YOU REMEMBER, SUSAN?

by
Terry Bailey

Sunlight tracing innocence,
the curve of your smile.
Cool pressure
defining sand,
your body
defying silk.

I remember your rebellion and your beauty.

The light in your eyes
frightened me,
your hand
on my shoulder.

I still carry
your taste on my lips,
the perfect pleasure
of a transient sky,
the curse and promise
of an early harvest.

When the ascetic winter
retreats into memory,
will shadows measure
the distance between
your soul and mine?

Contributors

- Connie Addison** Ms. Addison is a former tailor, who wants to major in Respiratory Technology. She is currently upgrading her writing skills in Developmental Studies.
- Terry Bailey** Mr. Bailey is a graduate of Kent State, currently taking some undergraduate psychology courses at MTC preparatory to graduate study in clinical psychology.
- John "Joe" Bender, III** Mr. Bender is a first-year student in the Associate of Arts program and hopes to continue to an eventual Ph.D. in child psychology.
- Genevieve Calmes** Ms. Calmes wants to continue as a student, here and then at USC, eat avocados as often as possible, and write poetry, not necessarily in that order.
- Mary B. Carson** Ms. Carson is a Dean's List student, full-time in our evening program, and is a basketball fan.
- Christine Coker** Ms. Coker is a graduate of Lexington High School and is pursuing an A.S. degree.
- Michael Coward** Mr. Coward is completing an Associate Degree this term and simultaneously beginning B.A. study at Carolina.
- Michel J. Gaudet** Mr. Gaudet is an Electronics Engineering Technology major and is unlike the protagonist in his story, neither fourteen nor skinny nor black nor female.
- Richard Glover** Mr. Glover commutes from Gilbert to our Airport Campus, where he is majoring in Legal Assisting.
- Katherine Haltiwanger** Ms. Haltiwanger has been majoring in our Medical Laboratory Technology program and is regularly on the Dean's List.
- R. B. Herbert, III** Mr. Herbert, a contributor to Starshine '88, has nearly completed a degree in Computer Programming.
- Michael William Hines** Mr. Hines is not settled on his eventual goals, but leans toward majoring in English and History and wants to create with words.
- Elaine Jackson** Ms. Jackson, a mother of two, will graduate in August with a degree in Business. She is a partner in a promotions company.
- Christine Johnson** Ms. Johnson is in the Nursing program and is also on the Dean's List.
- Lelia Land** Ms. Land has an infant son. A graduate of Richland Northeast High School, she is in the Human Services Program at Tech.
- Bonnie MacGregor-Liverance** Ms. MacGregor-Liverance will let her essays, "Fear is a Four Letter Word" and "Living Alone," speak for her. As a student in the Commercial Graphics degree program, she was responsible for setting the type for Starshine '89.

- Mildred A. Mann** Ms. Mann is in her early 40's and has just started college, currently updating her skills in our Developmental Studies program.
- Karen D. Masters** Ms. Masters is in the Associate of Science program and plans to continue study after transfer to a four-year college.
- Gerry Merkle** Mr. Merkle began at MTC in the summer of 1988 and says his best grades are in English.
- Bennie Sue Miller** Ms. Miller is a returning adult student, majoring in Medical Records Technology and working as a student assistant in Psychology. Her eventual goal is to become a writer.
- Laurence "Larry" Moore** Mr. Moore is an instructor in the continuing education program at Harbison campus and writes short stories in his spare time.
- Kellie Moses** Ms. Moses is a graduate of Dreher High School and is in the AA degree program at Beltline.
- Roberta Okoli** Ms. Okoli is currently improving her writing skills at Beltline and plans to take an Associate of Science degree.
- Michael S. Owen** Mr. Owen is in what he calls his "overextended" associate degree program, but will eventually seek a four-year degree in architectural design.
- Suzie Reamy** Ms. Reamy, a contributor to Starshine '88 says she would like to be an actress, but is open to any other reasonable suggestion.
- Bryan Reese** Mr. Reese is a recent transfer student and is on the Dean's list at Tech.
- Antonietta Rhodes** Ms. Rhodes, a non-native speaker, began at MTC in DVS, and is now in the final stages of her associate degree. She is also a painter, mostly of landscapes in oils.
- Carol Rogers** Ms. Rogers is a nursing student at MTC and an extension student of Columbia Bible College. Her goal is to be a nurse on the mission field.
- Mark Skeen** Mr. Skeen graduated from Elgin-Lugoff High School, where he was the editor of their first literary magazine.
- Andrew Thornley** Mr. Thornley is in his second quarter in the Associate of Science program at the Airport Campus.

The 1989 First Prize Winners

Fiction: Michel Goudet
 "Ten Speed Bike"
 page twenty-three

Poetry: Richard Glover
 "Sonata"
 page fifteen

Essay: Mary Carson
 "Lilith to Lestat"
 page eleven