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focus

TEACHING ABOUT DEATH AND DYING

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editorial comments

Every new editor has plans. I am no exception. My first plan is to get manuscripts, tons of manuscripts, all kinds of manuscripts dealing with or exemplifying the work of the profession: poems, short stories, articles on how to teach and what to teach, critical and scholarly articles, discussions of common problems. If the magazine is to represent the MCTE it must have manuscripts from elementary school teachers, high school teachers, college teachers, junior college teachers, students, parents, interested citizens , for learning our language is everyone's concern--or ought to be. And this journal should make it its concern to see that as many people from all the various areas become concerned with one of our most important tasks: the revitalization of and the recognition of the importance of the language we share.

I have already discovered that the task is not easy. It was difficult to assemble this issue because of a dearth of material. If we believe in language, we will have to use language, not as a tedious task, but as a pleasure, as a joy and delight, as a game at which we play intensely but nevertheless joyfully. This, then, is a plea for manuscripts. For the moment, never mind on what subject so long as it concerns language and literature. All teachers have something worthwhile to say: SAY IT. More important, send it to the editor of MEJ. One more comment regarding articles: if you have read a particularly provocative article in another journal write a brief summary of it giving your reasons for finding it worthwhile (a paragraph of 150 to 300 words will do) and we will try to publish a selection of comments on such material. Another comment: do send in book reviews; they seem to me to be extremely valuable in keeping us aware of what is happening in our profession. I will actively solicit such reviews for the journal.

Material for the next issue of this school year should be on hand by March 1. An earlier date will make it that much easier for the editor and readers, who expect--and have not had this first edition--the journal on time. Material for the last issue of this school year should be ready by June 1. I look forward to a flood of manuscripts.

DEALING WITH DEATH IN THE CLASSROOM

ELIZABETH C. BOMGREN
Senior, Bemidji State College

She stood rigidly gripping the back of the hospital chapel pew until her knuckles were white; her face without tears. Green eyes staring widely without seeing. In one short afternoon her secure, happy world had been shaken by the death of her fourteen year old brother. His best friend had shot him accidentally as they were squirrel hunting. She was eleven.

Three seven year old boys were impatiently waiting for their teacher to begin church school. In the middle of their scuffling and shoving, Freddie said to Johnny, "Hey, I hear your old man kicked the bucket!" Johnny froze.

The senior art class was busily making objects of art for their classmate who was dying from a malignant brain tumor. When the news reached them that she wouldn't need their art work, they refused to believe it. She was too vibrant, too alive for death to conquer--and they went right on, finishing their work.

He had been the Christmas tree angel, a joyous little redhead constantly running after his dad to "help." Now he was crushed by a horse at a horse show. His favorite girl cousin refused to eat, had recurrent nightmares, and was constantly waiting for Steve to come to play. He was six; she was four.

He was the football hero who had brought his team to victory time after time. After his death, resulting from a wild car ride late at night, the school body sat benumbed at the church service--some of the students sobbing openly, others grim-faced, still others whispering in snatches just to have human contact.

These are true-life experiences of death in one small community. How are the young people involved to be helped through their experience of shock and mourning? For death is a shock; no matter how well prepared the individual or the family is, death is a final separation from a friend or loved one. Mourning is a very real experience with everyone, whether they reveal their feelings or not.

The student spends from five to eight hours each day in the classroom. How can teachers cope with those who

hurt and whose hurt has so many unanswerable questions? Possibly the most neglected area of instruction in the public school systems today is the subject of death. In the latter half of the twentieth century, texts are written, films are made, and teachers unhesitatingly speak of the biological processes surrounding the beginnings of life. Yet, the phenomenon of death, the end of the biological processes of life, is strangely absent from the curriculum. Yet, the teacher will find scant mention of death in his texts on human development. Clairborne S. Jones says in Explaining Death to Children, that "death is...an archaic word in contemporary America--people pass away, pets are put to sleep, flowers wither and fade..." Yet death, no matter how it is dressed up, ignored, or denied, is a part of the regularly ordered cycle of life. Only as a teacher can come to terms with death, can he give reasonable support and explanation to his students who experience grief. He must be able to deal adequately with their strung-out emotions and help them to live life realistically and fully, for the person who is unable to accept death runs the risk of emotional disturbances and future disruption of a healthy life.

Contrary to common belief, even the very young child feels the effects of a death of someone close to him. He is aware at all times of important happenings in his small world. In the case of a death, very likely he is unsure of its meaning; if he is left to stumble onto meanings of his own, it can be very damaging to him. Bromberg and Schilder point out that "the child learns to consider death either as a blessing or as a great evil by watching and imitating his elders. For many, death is fearful because the grief-and-fear-reaction of his parents has made it appear so."[2] When the child of two or three years of age experiences a death involving his family relationships, there is little value in explanations, and possibly more harm in telling the child that the person he no longer sees around is "sleeping." In equating sleep with death, adults may cause the child to refuse to sleep. He needs to be assured that in all the changes he feels, the things that he is accustomed to are still there. He needs warmth and love and a sharing of the things that he understands.

Children of early school years often play death games such as "bang, bang, you're dead," or "I shot you dead--you're s'posed to lie still." This is comfortable for them as long as no one takes them seriously. However, when death occurs to someone close to them or even to a pet, they react instantly and sometimes violently. Often their reaction is stoically hidden and they must be encouraged to talk about the problem. The little boy who found his cat stiff in death reacted violently. He screamed and tried to fight with his father when the cat was picked up for burial. Finally, he was reassured that

the pet was lifeless and allowed it to be buried. It was explained to him that all things are returned to the earth, and the earth receives all things and cradles them. Another reaction to the loss of a pet is seeming unconcerned. Hansi's dog was hit by a truck, and Hansi at first seemed unconcerned. However, he soon had recurrent nightmares and questioned why God should allow his pet to be killed. The situation was finally resolved by Hansi's sharing in the plans for a funeral for the dog. Each child is individualistic and unique in his reaction to the things that happen to him. He says and does things that have to be met "right on." Evasiveness on the part of teacher or parent only prolongs the adjustment for the child. Robert Kastenbaum in Explaining Death to Children. states that if the child has not been told the truth about death, he will find it particularly difficult to know when death is not involved.[3] The child is a part of the family and should share in the sad experiences that are connected with the death of a member of the family. Even if he does not know the distant relative, if he sees his parents in grief, he feels the need to cry, too. This way he has the opportunity to work through the strange emotions he feels around him, and he learns how to live through the unordinary events of life.

Older children are more complex in their relationships within their families and with their peers in school. They have reached a more mature attitude of the world about them. They have strange new feelings about love and are able to understand the feelings of others. This sensitivity to others can very often be the cause of severe reactions to the bereavement they may experience or what they observe in others. Some young people suffer extreme depression. For example, three years after the death of his mother, it was brought to the attention of the school's counseling service that Paul was refusing to answer when called upon in class. He was sullen and refused to communicate with the psychologist. Finally, after many weeks of patient counseling, he responded to a cup of hot chocolate given to him by the psychologist. It was only after many more sessions, as well as parent-teacher conferences, that Paul and his teachers discovered that with the loss of his mother, he had had no one to fulfill his emotional needs. With an improved home situation, Paul improved scholastically and eventually recovered emotionally. Yet, he undoubtedly had experienced damaging traumas that would leave permanent scars.[4]

Other bereaved children find it impossible to concentrate on their assignments. It was two years after the loss of both her brother and her sister that Gail was able to maintain her usual grade average. She dropped out of all extra-curricular activities, stayed

very close to her home, and preferred her parent's company to that of her peers.

Still others feel a sense of hopelessness in achievement: who will there be to applaud the lessons well done? For whom should they work hard? Still other children who are grieving respond in anger. They become discipline problems in the classroom. Very often they are unaware themselves as of the reason for their anger. Johnny persisted in throwing balls in the forbidden area near the greenhouse. At last the inevitable happened, Johnny's behavior resulted in broken windows, but a discerning school official reasoned that Johnny's anger resulted from his associating flowers with funerals. With the proper counseling, Johnny was able to work out his grief and became less of a discipline problem.

Usually teachers and other adults are understanding and kind during the first year of bereavement. But lack of time and perhaps a greater lack of knowledge in handling the children leaves their healing in the hands of the school psychologists or counselors. Difficult as it may be to accept, a child may suffer the effects of bereavement two or three years after the loss has occurred. However, like any other illness, bereavement must be treated directly. Usualy the perscription is love, understanding, warmth, and acceptance. With these in hand, the teacher will be able to recognize the symptoms of the grieving child and bring all his forces to bear upon them.

In a questionnaire on a choice of discussion topics given out to high school students, the subject of death and dying was the item most frequently checked. In spite of the great increase of knowledge and technology in the world today, death is still the area of the great unknown. From a physical standpoint, no one can relate to another what it is like to die. In the book, What Happens When You Die?, Maurice Maeterlinck is quoted:

> Life is a secret; death is the key that opens it; but he who turns the key disappears forever into the secret.[5]

The adolescent, in his time of emotional explosions and smolderings, as well as his exploring of new ideas and understandings, wants to know about death and its meaning for him. Yet it is his life experiences up to this point that will carry him through his bereavement. Dick's brother had died in the service, and a year later his father had succumbed to surgery. After seeing his mother safely home from the hospital, seventeen year old Dick disappeared for many hours. He had suddenly been moved into the position as head of the house, and he

had to find his way by himself. In the days that followed, friends stood by with love and understanding. Dick knew they were there, but he worked out his grief by himself. It is difficult to help adolescents in their grief. Their efforts to puzzle out the meanings of life and death on their own must be respected. The more students feel that they can approach teachers with their ideas on any subject and receive an interested, dependable hearing, then the more likely they are to share their concerns about death. If parents and teachers can approach the subject of death without dismay or embarrassment and if they can respect the youth's view of reality, then his development of a healthy, positive attitude toward death will be assured. C. S. Lewis says in A Grief Observed, that he came to realize that "bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love."[6] Life and death are inseparable; when the ingredient of love is added, the teacher will not only be adding knowledge to his students, but will be teaching them how to live with the extremes of life as well.

Footnotes

1. Clairborne S. Jones, "In the Midst of Life," in Explaining Death to Children, ed. Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 127.

2. W. Bromberg, "Death and Dying," Psychoanalytic Review, XX, 213-14.

3. Robert Kastenbaum, "The Child's Understanding of Death: How Does it Develop?" in Explaining Death to Children, ed. Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 100.

4. Hella Moller, "Death: Handling the Subject and Affected Students in the Schools," in Explaining Death to Children, ed. Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

5. August H. Wagner, ed., What Happens When You Die? London: Abelard-Schuman, 1968), p. immediately following title.

6. C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed (New York: The Seabury Press, 1961), p. end paper.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON DEATH AND DYING

RESOURCES FOR THE TEACHER

Charon, Jacques. Modern Man and Mortality. New York: Macmillan Company, 1964.

This book deals with the "therapy of death fear" and raises the perennial question: "What is the purpose and meaning of life if death is---as it appears to be to an ever broadening segment of our society---the total annihilation of the conscious personality?" The author believes it is not a waste of time to search for an answer to the above question.

Foss, Martin. Death, Sacrifice, and Tragedy. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1969.

What makes man cover up the "important feature of life...death?" The only thing that justifies human existence is every person giving himself to others without restraint. Every life is destined to be sacramental and intercessional.

Grollman, Earl A., ed. Explaining Death to Children. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

The emotional and mental health of both adult and child is not the denial of tragedy but the open and frank acknowledgement of it. When tragedy is admitted, people can find comfort in each other and can go on to build worthwhile lives, even in a world such as the world of the twentieth century.

Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. On Death and Dying. New York: Macmillan Company, 1969.

The author worked with dying patients for two and a half years and gives an account of a new opportunity to focus on the patient as a human being, including him in dialogues, and asking him questions about the final stages of life with all its anxieties, fears, and hopes.

Lewis, C. S. A Grief Observed. New York: Seabury Press, 1961.

An intensely personal account of his wife's death written on notepaper in longhand as "a defense

against total collapse, a safety valve" Mr. Lewis comes to the conclusion that "bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love."

Mills, Liston O., ed. Perspectives on Death. New York: Abingdon Press, 1969.

Contains the revised and edited versions of lectures given at the Vanderbilt Divinity School by the faculty and other guest speakers. This book makes available the biblical teachings on death and how they are interpreted by the church. It investigates current concepts of death as they are reflected in contemporary literature and theology.

Pieper, Josef. Death and Immortality. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969.

A philosophical approach to the subject of death. "One who has been struck by the experience of death is forced to direct his gaze towards the whole of reality."

Rogness, Alvin N. Appointment with Death. New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1972.

"Nation-wide surveys show that young people are especially interested with this one unrehearsed event in their existence and their attitude toward it affects many other decisions in life." The book treats the subject of death helpfully and realistically.

Vernon, Glenn M. Sociology of Death. New York: Ronald Press Company, 1970.

This book is an attempt to help readers examine their own reactions to death and dying as well as understand the behavior of the dying individual.

Wagner, August H., ed. What Happens When You Die? London: Abelard-Schulman, 1968.

A compilation of letters by some of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century gathered in the last thirty years in answer to the questionnaire, "What is the meaning of death?" Some of the responses are from David Ben-Gurion, Sir Richard Gregory, and Abbe Felix Klein.

Westberg, Granger E. Good Grief. Rock Island, Illinois, Augustana Book Concern, 1962.

The author says no one can live without experiencing grief in many ways. He explores the good aspects of grief and describes a pattern of grief to determine what can be learned from it. "Little" griefs as well as "Big" griefs are treated in this small volume.

Materials that may be of help to the teacher in dealing directly with the child who has experienced sorrow are:

I. Picture books that help to build up a sense of security in the young child--

Anglund, Joan Walsh. Love is a Special Way of Feeling. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960.

Begins with mother love and ends with the happy feeling forever.

_____. A Friend is Someone Who Likes You. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

Brown, Margaret Wise. Runaway Bunny. Pictures by Clement Hurd. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.

A small rabbit and his mother play the pretend game of hide-and-seek. The mother always finds him no matter where he goes or what he does.

Buckley, Helen E. Grandfather and I. Pictures by Paul Galdone. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1959.

In all the hurrying world, only a boy and his grandfather have the time to walk, stop, and look, and then just "walk along, and walk along."

Fitch, Florence Mary. A Book About God. Illustrated by Leonard Weisgard. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1953.

A book for all faiths. "No one can count the ways God shows His love."

McCloskey, Robert. Time of Wonder. New York: The Viking Press, 1957.

Includes the security of family, friendship, and God's presence.

Yashima, Taro. Umbrella. New York: The Viking Press, 1958.

Shows the first time the child steps out into the world alone, Momo walks to school "straight like a grown-up lady."

Zolotow, Charlotte. Do You Know What I'll Do? Pictures by Garth Williams. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.

An older sister tells her younger brother all the things she will do for him to show her love.

II. Books for the older child where he will find death as well as life. Includes fairy tales which deal with death for the evil creatures and a promise of renewed life for the good.

Anderson, Hans Christian. Forty-Two Stories. Translated by M. R. James from the Danish. Illustrated by Robin Jacques. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1959.

Includes The Little Mermaid, The Tin Soldier, and The Little Match Girl, which all show an acceptance of death and life as one entity.

Bailey, Carolyn Sherwin. Miss Hickory. Lithographs by Ruth Gannett. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1946

The doll whose body is a twig and whose head is a hickory nut goes on living a new kind of life even though it loses its head to a squirrel.

Lee, Virginia. The Magic Moth. Drawings by Richard Cuffari. New York: The Seabury Press, 1972.

A family's experiences of lingering illness, death, and the funeral preparations. Delicately done, but fails to include the smallest children in the planning.

L'Engle, Madeline. A Wrinkle in Time. New York: Farrar, Straus & Company (Ariel Books), 1962.

A science fiction fantasy of the struggle of good versus evil. Love overcomes death.

Lewis, C. S. The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Illustrated by Paul Baynes. New York: Macmillan Co., 1960.

The first of a seven volume series that deals with the eternal struggle of good versus evil, and life versus death.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine de. The Little Prince. Translated from the French by Katherine Woods. New York: Reynal and Company, Inc., 1943.

Full of mystical symbolism, meaning different things to different people. More easily understood by the Christian child.

Speare, Elizabeth George. The Bronze Bow. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961.

Death represented by hate; overcome by love. Setting in the time of Christ.

White, E. B. Charlotte's Web. Pictures by Garth Williams. New York: Harper & Row, 1952.

The death of a spider who achieves immortality through her children as well as through her selfless achievements in saving the life of her friend, Wilbur, the pig.

Wilde, Oscar. The Happy Prince. The complete fairy stories of Oscar Wilde. Illustrated by Philippe Jullian. London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, Ltd., (distributed in the United States by the Macmillan Company), 1952.

This anthology includes the story of "The Selfish Giant," who, through the example of a little lame boy, dies happily, knowing that he is no longer selfish.

III. Books for the teen-age student.

Buck, Pearl S. The Big Wave. Illustrated with prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai. New York: The John Day Co., Inc., 1947.

Jiya's parents were killed by a huge wave and his foster father helps him to recover from his shock, accept death, and live again without bitterness. "We do not fear death because we understand that life and death are necessary to each other."

Dooley, Thomas Anthony. Doctor Tom Dooley, My Story. New York: Farrar, Straus & Company (Ariel Books), 1960.

A hero who lived courageously with cancer and died believing that he would continue to live.

Frank, Anne. The Diary of a Young Girl. Translated from the Dutch by B. M. Mooyaart-Doubleday. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1952.

During the Nazi occupation of Amsterdam, a young girl ignores the shadow of death and confidently plans for the future.

Gunther, John. Death Be Not Proud. A Memoir. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.

A glimpse of a brave family whose son goes through the ordeal of terminal cancer at the age of seventeen.

Munford, Lewis. Green Memories, The Story of Geddes Munford. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947.

At nineteen, Geddes Munford was killed in World War II. This book may help the older child to understand tragic deaths as well as understand the reactions of the survivors.

Musgrave, Florence. Marged. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Company (Ariel Books), 1956.

A Welsh girl in American becomes embittered because the flooding Ohio River claims the lives of her parents. She blames her grandmother for their deaths because she refused to go to safety in time. The realization of the grandmother's feeling of guilt finally brings peace to Marged.

Weir, Ester. The Loner. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1963.

The only person who had ever befriended a homeless, nameless boy is killed before his eyes. He runs away in his grief. Eventually he finds a family, a home, and a name.

IV. Films

Dead Birds
16 MM Film Optical Sound — 83 min. color

Depicts the people of the Dani tribe of West New Guinea. Protrays their elaborate system of inter-tribal warfare and revenge, and their belief that people, like birds, must die.

Prod. Gardner — Dist. MGHT — 1963.

Dear Little Lightbird
16 MM Film Optical Sound — 18 min. color

Portrays a father's reactions to the life and death of his three-year old son who was born with a heart defect.

LC no. F1A65-713 — Dist. AUSLDR — 1964.

Great Plan
16 MM Film Optical Sound — 20 min. color

Tells the story of two children whose grandmother is dying and who can't understand why God would let her die, and why their grandfather isn't crying. The grandfather tells them what he thinks death means.

From the Breakthu series
Prod. TRAFCO — Dist. TRAFCO — 1962.

My Turtle Died Today
16 MM Film Optical Sound — 8 min. Color

A boy's pet turtle dies and a pet cat gives birth to a litter of kittens. Designed to stimulate discussion on the inevitability of death and the continuity of life.

LC no. I1A68-211
Prod. BOSUST — Dist. FA — 1968.

Sandpile, the part five, Death
16 MM Film Optical Sound — 26 min. Black and white

Examines the meaning of life and death through dramatized vignettes, presents various concepts discussed by the cast and the theologian, Dr. William Hamilton. From the Look Up and Live Series. TV

PROD. CBSTV — Dist. CAROUF

V. Periodical articles for further study by the teacher.

Bourjaily, M. "Pretty Good Teacher, For a Cat." Reader's Digest, 98(March, 1971), 82-6.

Cargar, H. J. "Death is Alone: Excerpt from Death and Hope." Catholic World, 210(March, 1970), 269-72.

Cleath, R. L. "Hope in the Midst of Horror." Christianity Today, 14(March 27, 1970), 3-5.

Dempsey, D. "Learning How to Die." New York Times Magazine, (14 November, 1971), 58-Discussion in Ibid., (5 December, 1971), 125.

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Hale, B. "Some Lessons on Dying." Christian Century, 88(15 September, 1971), 1076-9.

Hammer, M. "Reflection's on One's Own Death as a Peak Experience." Mental Hygiene, 55(April, 1971), 264-5.

Jones, S. M. "Magic Room." Good Housekeeping, 171(December, 1970), 83+.

Kaas, L. R. "Problems in the Meaning of Death." Science 170, (11 December, 1970), 1235-6. See also Ibid., (29 December, 1970).

Logsdon, G. "Will She Ever Live Again?" Farm Journal, 94(April, 1970), 44-5.

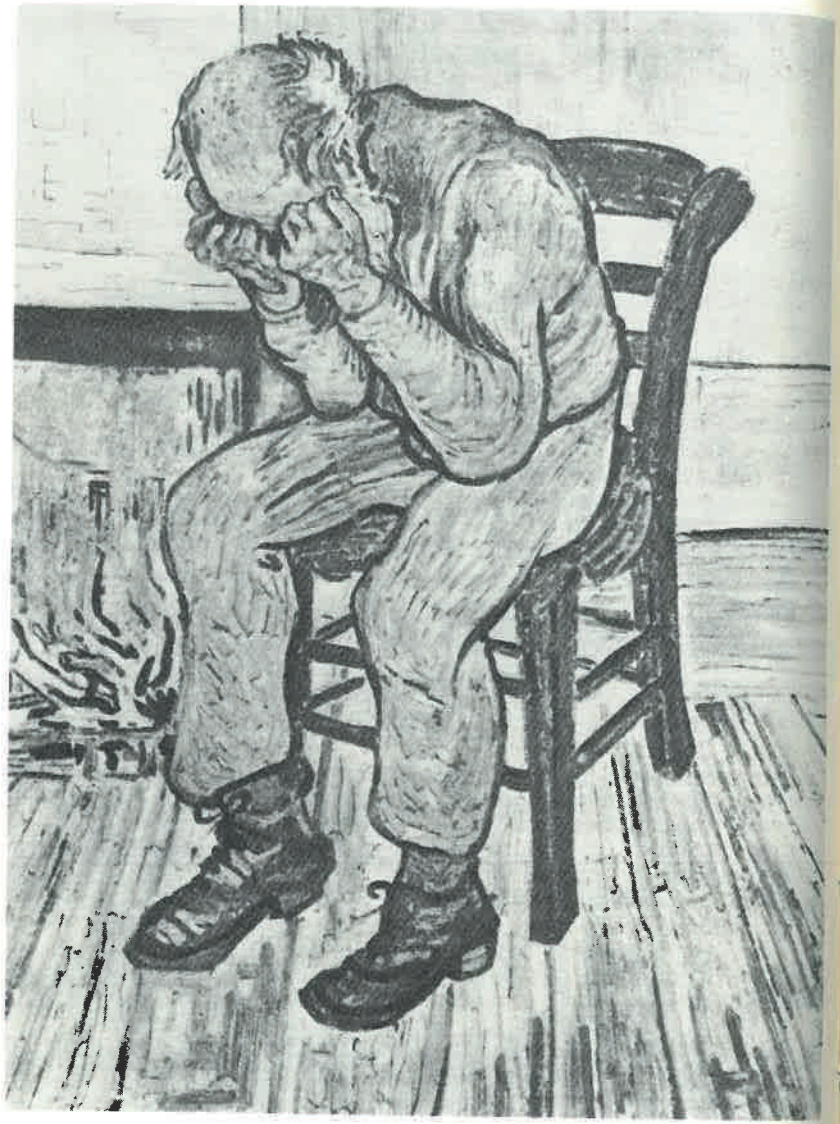
Martin, M. C. "Helping Children Cope with Sorrow." Parents' Magazine, 45 (August, 1970), 42-3.

Miller, C. "Ministering in a Death-Oriented Culture." Christianity Today, 16(12 November, 1971), 10-12.

Minton, F. "Need for a Theology of Death." Christianity Century, 87 (25 March, 1970), 352-5. See also Ibid. (17 June, 1970), 767-8.

Powers, T. "Learning to Die." Harpers, 242(June, 1971), 72-4.

Woodward, K. L. "How American Lives with Death." Newsweek, 75(April 6, 1970), 81-2.



VAN GOGH "On the Threshold of Eternity"

"ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY"

Van Gogh's old man
"On the Threshold of Eternity"
covers his eyes with tense
gnarled knuckles,
sits on the old straight-backed chair,
his shoes, trousers wearing
the end of time,
his time,
which has bent his back.
Shutting himself behind his eyes
he looks inward to
the threshold of eternity,
quarrels with time,
the flame in the fireplace
warming only a little
the hours he has left.

Elmer F. Suderman
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NO SUNLIGHT

Every afternoon father dreamt
in his rocking chair
looking out the open window
looking waiting for death
who he knew was near
listening for Death's footsteps
above the long sound of the wind.

In his eyes were the shadows
of a thousand thunderheads
chasing each other across
the buffalo grass and
storm clouds were in his eyes
darkening the grass.

But the sunlight was missing--
there was no sunlight in his
dreaming eyes as he sat waiting
waiting for death.

Elmer F. Suderman
Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

DEATH BY CAR

"The most popular time for dying on
American highways is one o'clock Sunday
morning."--public service announcement.

If I die
on an American highway
let it be a single car accident
on Tuesday afternoon
at three o'clock.
Let my car be undamaged,
upright on the shoulder,
the engine idling smoothly,
the gearshift at neutral,
the radio on to weather.
Let me be dead
behind the wheel,
foot on the brake,
looking ahead
through the clear windshield.
Let me be the local man
who dies of undetermined injuries
at an unpopular time
on a cloudless day.
Let me be under investigation
for weeks.
Let there be mysterious circumstances.

Howard Mohr
Southwest State
Marshall, Minnesota

THE JOURNALS OF ROBIN CULLEN

CYNTHIA HAKE

The sidewalk was checked with shadows and patches of light where the sun shone down between the awnings of shops along the street. I carefully sat down in a shadowed square next to Herman. He had been there, as usual, all day.

"Hello, Herman," I said. He was staring across the street, either at the cartload of apples on the corner or the young matron persuing the apples. His hand went slowly to his shirt pocket and he pulled out a stubby black cigar, lit it, and turned to me:

"It's hot today. The people are moving slower than usual." He gently brushed a fly off his knee.

"Yes, it is," I agreed. A boy rode by on a bicycle, a huge pink bubble hanging from his mouth. Herman watched him ride away until the bubble popped into a sticky mess on one young pink cheek. "How have you been? I noticed you weren't around yesterday..."

He interrupted me abruptly: "When things move so slow, there's nothing to see, that's all." He flicked the ashes from his cigar onto the shining black shoes of a passing local banker. Then he spoke again: "Have you ever wondered what it would be like to see out of someone else's eyes, knowing their memories and your own, their feelings and your own?" He didn't wait for me to answer. "Sometimes I think it would be like knowing two different worlds, or two different realities...maybe it would give you a clue to what is really going on...the truth..." He laced his fingers together and stared at them for a minute, for two minutes: "Then again," he said, "maybe not..." Two birds hopped along the pavement, pecking, bright-eyed, at the brilliant glass particles in the asphalt. "Do you know what it feels like to be old? Just exactly the same...no matter how long you've been here...it's just exactly the same"

Herman died in October. I remembered I had not seen him for several days. His accustomed streetcorner had been empty since I returned to the city, and for that reason, and the fact of his advancing age, I was not surprised to learn that he was dead. He had been a fixture of the street, like a lamppost or a hydrant, since I was a child. I attend the funeral and wondered at the simultaneity of his death and my

continued life. It was strange to consider him gone, to realize there would be no further intersections of my life and his. My memories of him would gradually fade until only the part of him and me that had become one would be left: the streetcorner and the hours we spent together there, watching the part of the world that passed by and telling stories. One of these stories had been more important than the others; it was the story of which all the others were made, and if Herman had a legacy, it was this story, and I was the heir apparent. His legacy is intangible, born of language and dreams, and carries with it the curse of language and of dreams: it must be told or it dies.

There are two men in the story. Their names are Robert Moore and Robin Cullen. Both were of average stature, well-educated, introverted, and enamored of the search for truth while being enamored of very little else. They spent their time accordingly, reading prodigiously, writing more. Libraries and museums were their usual meeting places. But there were differences between the two men. Cullen was wealthy: he had inherited a substantial amount of money from his parents, along with a large and beautiful house; Moore lived in an unkempt apartment and worked as a clerk in the city. Robert Moore was healthy; Robin Cullen was dying of a long wasting disease which left the mind intact to perceive the continual weakening and, finally, the total deterioration of the body. The disease was never discussed between them, though they were both well aware that Cullen was dying. He died in January, three months before his twenty-seventh birthday. Shortly after the funeral, Moore quit his job and went to live in Cullen's mansion. It was supposed that Cullen had left his money to Moore, and Moore was now living out the rest of his life in comfort and solitude.

The day of Robin Cullen's funeral was bleak and dreary. The casket was conspicuously black against the sky and the snow-covered earth. Robert Moore lingered at the grave longer than the other mourners, but soon the cold overcame his obligation to grieve and he left the graveyard. He found himself at the steps of Robin Cullen's house, now his own home, and went inside. It was cold, the heat had been turned off. Circuitous hallways twisted in all directions from the front room. Moore headed for the library. Cullen had called this room his "Library of Babel" for reasons not clear and left unexplained. The room was in the form of a hexagon, with six walls, the one containing the door and the remainder filled with shelves to within five or six inches of the ceiling.

It was at the desk in the middle of the room that Robin Cullen had been found dead by the housekeeper.

Moore stared at the desk and thought about what he should do. He could leave the library intact, or he could look through Cullen's writing and find something publishable, and thereby, perhaps, assuage the feeling of guilt he felt at usurping the possessions of his dead friend. It would be a fitting retribution, he decided, as well as a philanthropic effort, and he began to search for manuscripts. In the desk, he found twenty-seven notebooks full of writing. On the third, fifth, and sixth wall, he found thirty-two more notebooks. He sat down at the desk and began to read. After the first page, he looked up at some slight noise, and saw in one of the corners, several wrapping sheets for reams of loose yellow paper, one of them half full. He remembered that Cullen had used this paper for at least three years before his death. In about half an hour, he located the yellow papers. They were wedged between the ceiling and the top shelf on five of the walls. When piled in a stack, they were approximately 27 inches high.

The next few weeks were taken up with the collected journals of Robin Cullen. Moore left the house only to eat at a nearby cafe, and for occassional walks in the woods in back of the house. He slept for four or five hours a night, usually between two and seven in the morning. His reading material proved interesting.

Robin Cullen had left a journal of about 8,350 pages. Moore read nearly two hundred pages a day: it took him six weeks to get through them all. He had managed to arrange the journals in chronological order. Some of the entries were dated, some were not, but there were enough dates to determine the order of the notebooks. The yellow sheaves were more difficult: they were not dated. By the time he started reading these, he had become aware of the uselessness of chronological order in the journals.

The first two notebooks were full of bad attempts at poetry and short prose fiction. They were quite ordinary and Moore hurried through them. On the last few pages of the second notebook, he found something that demanded closer attention.

These pages contained a play in one act, consisting entirely of a long soliloquy by a single character. The character was William Shakespeare, and the subject of his speech was the story of his writing of Hamlet. The play was remarkably alive and provocative, and, had Moore not known it to be fiction, he would have taken it for the result of a carefully researched interview. Then he came to a postscript on the last page of the notebook:

> The reader is encouraged to contact the author for additional elucidation of Shakespeare's ideas. The interview was long and arduous, and the author was unable to include everything gleaned from conversation with so great a writer in one small play.
>
> The reader may well question the wisdom of converting an interview into a play. However, the reader will remember that this was Shakespeare's method: indeed, this play is meant to emulate the interview that produced Hamlet.

The next four or five notebooks consisted of poetry concerned with the writing of poetry. In these poems, Cullen told of Homer's despair when his inspiration failed at the outset of the third and final part of the trilogy of the Odyssey, the Iliad, and Hector Reborn; of Milton's anguish when he could not finish Samson Agonistes with the reincarnation of Samson as a swan; and of Dante's horror when he found himself, after death, in the ninth bolgia of the Hell he had created.

The end of the sixth notebook was an essay entitled, Apples, which read, in part:

> Moore and I ate lunch together one day. He had finished as I took an apple from the plate and brought it to my mouth. I was stopped in mid-air by a cry: "That's my apple!" I waited. He went on: "It's a dark red, the same shape, and has the same stem, but I know I have already eaten mine." I replied that it indeed was my apple, and ate it. It should be inserted here that over a quart of wine had been quite inadvertently drunk during this particular lunch. As I was eating the apple, I thought: these apples could have been, and probably were, bought in the same store, where they lay side by side on the fruit counter, and could, further, have grown on the same tree, same branch, in the same wind and rain, even been picked by the same hand. They were, for our purpose, interchangeable. And, in much the same way, my friend and I, sitting there side by side in the sunlight, were also interchangeable for some purposes and from some perspectives. Tracing each other's steps throughout the day would lead to almost exactly the same place at the same time. We wore the same clothes. An observer 400 feet away could not distinguish between us. If the distance were infinite, or the powers or perception so apathetic to the object observed so as to duplicate great distance, it is possible to imagine an observer who could not differentiate between my friend and me, even between my

apple and me. At the same time, if the observer were at an infintesimal distance or the powers of perception were so acute as to see absolute detail, our entire planet, along with ourselves and our apples, could be perceived ultimately as millions of identical particles, as though through an all-powerful, infinitely large microscope. It occurred to me that we live in a world which our human senses tell us is neither one large mass nor a mass of identical particles, though it is possible to imagine the world as both. Instead, we perceive a series of independent finite objects, which we must relate to each other, and to ourselves, if possible, to assemble what we call reality. It seems a strange limbo: to be given a power of perception great enough to create a reality, but too weak to ultimately define it. On the other hand, it could be called a great human treasure, enabling us to avail ourselves constantly of the search for truth, without having to find it. This search, the crusade of all good men, is one of the few ever proven so fruitful in its fruitlessness.

The seventh notebook began this way:

Mirrors

We have all been confronted with mirrors, and have seen in them a reflection. I do not know how to prove what that reflection is, but generally it is believed to be ourselves. For the sake of argument, let us assume that we see what is there, which I believe to be closer to the truth. I have recently read books by an Argentinian author named B_____. The books were mirrors in which I saw B_____, and B_____ a mirror in which I saw a part of myself, and myself a mirror in which I saw a part of B_____ and his ideas. As I looked into the mirrors, I became confused as to the identity of the images I saw, until I was able to see only one image. That single image is what I will try, forever or until I succeed, to describe, and then in the description I will see a mirror which will show me something further, and so on, until finally I look into and see one image only, and that will be the truth.

And then a note on the next page:

B_____ mentions a man who tried to paint an image of the universe. He filled a wall with all the physical objects he knew the world to contain, but found, as he lay dying, that he had painted a likeness of his own face. This experience B_____ compares to the experience of writing: good writing mirrors the writer without his intent to portray the world. The universe, sifted through the labyrinths of one human soul, becomes the image of that soul.

On the night of this reading, Robert Moore had a dream. In the dream, he stood in front of a large mirror. The mirror was blank for a long time: it did not reflect his own image. Then, on the mirror appeared the face and figure of Robin Cullen. Slightly behind this image was reflected the image of Robert Moore, and behind this was an old man, familiar to Moore, but so blurred that he could not distinguish the image's identity.

On the morning of the twenty-second of January, Moore opened the eighth notebook:

I have found that in the time spent trying to title my subject, I have exhausted all possibilities I perceived to exist. Therefore, the composition will have to be inferred from the definition I have set down. Perhaps I have dreamt it, and have set down what I remembered upon awakening. You have read it, though you could also have dreamt it. Whether I have dreamed you, or you have dreamed me, we shall never know. Rather I hope that we, all of us, have dreamt our whole great world and ourselves along with it, and when we awaken we shall remember only the title and definition of our dream, and at last will have the truth.

Moore went on with his reading, and gradually an idea or a pattern began to form in his mind. Soon the reading time diminished and more time was spent on pondering meaning and reasons for the astonishing things he was discovering.

One evening, he consulted a dictionary and other books. After an hour's work, he read the notes he had made:

Damon and Pythias...were, in Roman legend, friends so devoted to each other that when Pythias, condemned to death for plotting against King Dionysius of Syracuse, wanted time to arrange his affairs, Damon pledged his life that his friend would return: Pythias returned and was pardoned... Moore and Cullen...were friends...Cullen died... but came back and begged more time...Moore lived out the rest of Cullen's life and his own...

Robert means: bright, gleaming fame; diminutives: Bob, Rob, Robin...Robin...the Library of Babel: the universe with infinite centers and no circumference; the man of Babel: no circumference, and infinite centers...

Moore read a single passage the next day. In the passage were contained these lines:

> My muse is Hermes, a god signifying my philosophy and enbodying my needs. As the herald and messenger presiding over commerce, roads, invention, eloquence, cunning and theft, he is my ideal interlocutor. What is this collection of journals but a road, an invention to be traversed, inevitably constructed of everything I have read and seen? Everything herein contained is a puzzle stolen from someone else; a puzzle stolen, yet never solved. And finally, Hermes is the conductor of the dead to Hades: so shall he conduct me. And so does every man watch other men die.

At noon on March second, Moore finished the last pages, sat back and closed his eyes. Spring was coming, and the lilacs were almost in bloom. Dogs were barking outside, and on the roof, shingles flapped in the wind. The inside of Moore's head was still in the dead of winter. He was thinking of dreams, and the intabigle labyrinth in which he was caught. Already, some of it was clear; Cullen had written his soul on paper, expressly, it seemed, for the eyes of Robert Moore. The journals were based on several premises: the continuum of history and of literature are running parallel, like race horses, and they often intermingle and exchange courses; the race of man runs in the same way, and people are not necessarily separated by the skin around their bodies; time is not important, or, indeed, mandatory--the race is run in circles needing neither time nor space.

Robert Moore did not publish the journals of Robin Cullen. Three or four weeks after the reading ended, he emerged from the house and began to socialize with the people of the town, though he said little and was equally reserved in his actions.

In January, one year after Robin Cullen's death, Moore disappeared, and was never seen again in the town.

This is Herman's story.

Several weeks after Herman's death, I was called to the city attorney's office and given an envelope on which was written my name. This is the contents of that envelope:

My dear friend:

You will soon be receiving this letter, and will read it with incredulity. I did not want to see your face.

The journals of Robin Cullen exist and should be published. I am asking you to do this for me. The address of the old house is enclosed. You will find the journals intact in the library. They are a small corner of the labyrinth which intersects between human beings: the result of literature from the beginning of time. In every work of literature, all of the ones before are evident, and in some point in infinity, the writing of one man could possibly tell the story of the universe. The chain must not be broken. The journals must be published.

And now I will tell you what no living man knows.

It is the blink of an eye, a slip of the tongue, from Hermes to Herman.

I am, or was, Robert Moore.

I found the house, the library, and the journals. I piled the notebooks, all of them now yellow with age, in the middle of the desk in the library. At that moment, I did not know if I was living history, literature, or the present reality. I listened to the shingles on the roof flapping in the wind, and sat down to read the journals of Robin Cullen.

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ENGLISH IN THE CONTEXT OF SURVIVAL: CHANGES BEFORE IT IS TOO 1990

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The prophets of doom tell us that "time is running out" and that the "lead time" we had ten years ago has been misspent and squandered. Our alternatives are fewer today; our chances for survival, less probable. We have courted our rendezvous with disaster; we anticipate its result, almost sensing its outcome before the tragedy ends.

The twilight of an affluent society silhouetted against the smog-covered skyscrapers and the polluted streams. A testimony of what technology has wrought, of what repression has ironically produced. Political promises of hope and religious vows of faith have been strained to their limits. The pleas of youth have been muted by a generation who promised answers to our problems. Now the whispers of youth seem to mock us in reverence of our age and our failure. The institutions America has held dear are deteriorating. The plight of alienation is apparent in our schools and churches. The wars on foreign soils have waged deeper conflicts of values in our own land. Our government--yes, even the family as the basic institution in our society--has alienated our youth rather than alleviated the problems facing America.

Three years ago the NCTE convention convened in Atlanta; two years ago in Las Vegas; last year in Minneapolis. The issues we as English teachers have contended with over the past three years parallel the unsteadying influences within our society. In 1969 the NCTE membership needle wavered slightly because of a resolution introduced at our business meeting that concerned the Viet Nam Conflict. English teachers becoming involved at their convention in the issue of war? In Atlanta we debated hesitantly a resolution dealing with campus unrest and the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. Then in Las Vegas we cautioned ourselves and our publics on the use of standardized tests and raised the question of student self-evaluation in the learning process.

Our concern as English teachers have been broadened in both scope and significance and will continue to be

increasingly shaped by the realization that what is happening around us--outside our classroom and the covers of our materials--is not peripheral to but intrinsically a part of what we now know as "English."

The changes reflected in our subject matter are but a microcosm of the significant events which have taken place in our country over the past several years. We have watched our youth change, and have asked why. We have seen them flaunt their naked bodies in the pool of the Lincoln Memorial. We have viewed 250,000 of them on television at Woodstock as they smoked their pot to the accompaniment of acid-rock music. We have read with fear how they ensnarled our nation's capital in a War Moratorium; how they battle the police in Chicago, "The World's Friendliest City," during the Democratic Convention; how they confronted the National Guard in A Separate Peace setting of Kent State. America's youth have mirrored the problems besieging our society, the confrontation of value systems in our culture.

What has happened in our society and throughout the world requires us to adjust our approach with students, our perspective of what we want to happen in our classroom. Kent State, Viet Nam, My Lai, Lt. Calley, legalized abortion, the price freeze, busing problems, inadvertent bombing of the dikes and the French Embassy, the Watergate affair, the energy crisis: the '72 scene is different in Minneapolis than in November 1971 in Vegas. Just as we have been changed by what has happened, our students are not immune to these same phenomena that affect their lives. If we were eight, twelve, or sixteen again, we may find ourselves more vulnerable to the uncertainties of the times and less tolerant of old responses to new questions today. We live in unsteadying times, and the contemporary soothsayers tell us that the tempo of life will not level inself out, that America is not becoming Greener, that Future Shock is becoming a present tense.

It is these uncertainties in our society that require us to provide more alternatives in English to accommodate the diversity of life styles and value systems among our students. Alternatives: the chance for more children to succeed through education. Without alternatives, we can anticipate that youth will continue to drop out of schools and to participate in subcultures featuring value systems that rub abrasively against each other. If the subject matter of ENGLISH does not allow itself to grapple, with purpose and urgency, with those issues and concerns that affect not only our relationships with fellow man but also our very survival, then ENGLISH deserves to succumb to the fate of being absorbed by other components of the curriculum.

Many changes have already been effected in the manner of how teachers use English to help students understand themselves and the world they live in. Those of us who have taught more than ten years are certainly aware of these changes. And those who have learned with their students for more than twenty years are cushioned by the wisdom of their experience in perceiving that some of our "innovations" today are merely reruns of similar programs that had their premiers many years ago.

This is reflected in a conversation I had with an English teacher who has taught for many years and who was not particularly ecstatic with the craze of changing from year-long required English courses to shorter term elective courses. For her, "electives" have been around for years, as have "open" classrooms, "continuous" learning systems, and "student-centered" curricula. Twenty years ago she was teaching alternative units in English; exchanging units with fellow teachers; giving her students choices and alternatives in units, novels, and composition activities; sending her students to the library for independent study (Resource Centers weren't IN yet), or allowing them to work in small groups in the hall. Many of our supposed innovations today were found in the country school concept of the early 1900's--without the price tags of the carpeting ("accoustically treated" floors), computers, and movable walls.

Although we are providing more alternatives in the materials and definitions of ENGLISH, I believe that the most significant change in our subject-matter, a change that will likely hold more students in school and will insure the survival of ENGLISH in the curriculum, is the focus upon the learner in the learning process. Our subject-matter is allowing itself to be a vehicle in helping teachers learn with their students. As teachers, we are becoming learners in our own classrooms. In this role, we see even more closely interact with fellow learners once the classroom door is closed--if what we know as the "classroom" must have a door.

In the maze of accountability literature and in light of Toffer's warnings, we must make ENGLISH more malleable to the forces amassing in our culture. Nuclear power, cybernetics, overpopulation, pollution, mechanized learning, unrenewable resources and electronic surveillance all pose a threat to the survival of man. Out of this turmoil, however, will emerge even greater diversity rather than increased standardization within our schools, particularly because our approach will become problem-solving oriented in a

human context. Our survival will be predicated more upon our ability to cope with these forces rather than upon knowledge per se. The role of the teacher becomes that of facilitating the learning process as a resource person rathern than as a dispenser of facts or a reservoir of knowledge. The curriculum, by necessity, must focus upon process rather than on product. Arthur Combs, past president of the ASCD, and professor of education at Florida University, has said that we can no longer require the same curriculum of every student: "The information explosion has destroyed that myth."

This means that we can no longer rely on one textbook. There must be alternatives. The focus of language instruction should be on what the child can do with language, not on what he cannot do. As a process, language is an art of building, creating, revising, not the tedium of tearing down, analyzing, correcting. Language exists within man rather than without: within the student's power to create rather than only within the textbook which is to be followed mechanically, chapter by chapter.

We know that children learn differently and that learning does not take place in the same way or at the same pace for any two children. Materials in the English program, therefore, must be diversified enough to accommodate these realities. The student who has difficulty in reading should not penalized for his handicap in our English classes. With tapes, films, and kits; through creative drama, role playing, and other oral communication experiences, we must help each child to succeed in language rather than to fail. We need to broaden the definition of English to the extent that it will unlock doors for children and allow every child, regardless of his ability, to experience success in school. In short, we must increase the options, provide more alternatives, tailor our program to different interests, strengths, and weaknesses of children.

ORAL language experiences are an essential base for students to mature in their use of language. We all recognize the carry-over from the use of oral language to the critical skills required in the reading process. For too many years, too many children have failed in their education and dropped out of our schools because they could not read. How long will reading as a skill dominate our program and determine whether a student succeeds in our schools? When will we modify our grading system and tailor our program accordingly to fit these students who have difficulty decoding language but who, if given the opportunity, could learn through other media? The counterpart of the national

Right to Read Program must be the Right to Succeed Policy which requires every teacher to make provisions in his class materials and activities to allow each student to succeed if he makes the effort.

The world of literature is no longer restricted only to those who "read;" the film experience is now an important and legitimate dimension of the literature program. Library shelves share book space with cassette tapes of literary selections for children who read with their ears and can perceive the world around them if they are given the chance through alternative learning styles. Students who have been consistently defeated by the challenges of written composition may succeed in alternative approaches in composition as a process through filmmaking. Our assignment for tomorrow, regardless or whether we teach fourth graders, an elective course in Great Writers of the Western World, or a class in freshman composition, must feature alternatives for students; choices that require them to decide which alternative is appropriate in terms of their abilities, interests, and vocational plans. Our role as English teachers is to unleash, through language, the power of every student to lift his sights and achieve his potential.

The alternatives in our classroom environment imply clearly how we perceive not only the process of language development but our role in that process. Quiet homes, addicted TV viewers, and hushed classrooms do not encourage the use of language. Silence is not always the best environment in which to learn. Studies show that in most classrooms, the number of oral utterances by each child is very small each day. This is, ironically, as true in the language arts class as in any other classroom. The arrangement of chairs or desks reflects to some degree the teacher's attitude toward oral language experiences in the learning process. Compare the typical kindergarten room arrangement of tables to facilitate oral interaction among the children, with a typical tenth grade English class that has five rows of desks facing front or the college classroom that has the same rows of chairs facing the front, with the embellishment of a lecturn used too often. If our subject matter is children, regardless of age or the walls of grade levels, and our vehicle to help them is language, we need to develop strategies that enable teachers to be comfortable in working with children rather than imparting treasures of knowledge to get them through their next test.

Providing alternatives may disturb many teachers who wish to maintain a safe distance from their students. We must be careful that our attempt to personalize and humanize our program is not done with, paradoxically, the very instruments that work to dehumanize our approach and make it impersonal. Learning packages are on the tail winds of the behavioral objectives and PPBS is in the wake of the behavioral objectives--the year's work (job specifications for students as well as for machines) in 43 packages, taken at your own rate--"stop in when you have a problem." Many innovations hold promise but require caution in their implementation. The very means to bring teachers closer to students may be the avenues that can drive us apart--if we are not careful.

In other words, our hurried scramble for open schools, newer materials, really "in" elective courses, individualized instruction through personalized machines, complex scheduling procedures could be subtle means to camouflage our desire to maintain a safe distance from our students. Rather than bringing us closer together as human beings, our obsession to be current and innovative and our desires to be accountable to others rather than to our students could provide "legitimate" means for us to keep the learning process at arm's length.

Although the elective-English concept has added motivational adrenalin to English programs, many elective English courses developed across the country have been too narrow in their scope and have, consequently, lost sight of the fact that the inherent characteristic of any English course should be the integration of the language arts. Whether the course is "Science Fiction--Fantasy" or "The American Sampler," students should benefit from language arts experiences which are integrated, not fragmented into exclusive language, literature, or composition offerings. There are enough departments within our educational program without making the subject-matter of English departmentalized.

Elective programs provide many alternatives for our students. However, some acclaimed programs featuring numerous course offerings have, ironically, forgotten to provide alternatives for individual differences within each course. Departments that have rigidly phased or tracked their elective courses adjust their classifications within several years because the students does not necessarily elect those courses that his teachers feel are the most appropriate for him. This practice requires us to moderate toward the position that some courses become "all-phase" courses geared to all students. These courses must have varied alternatives for students of many abilities and diverse vocational plans. For example,

although the course "Sports: Action through Language" may be geared to reluctant readers or low achievers, several very capable boys may elect this course because of their interest in sports; consequently, they deserve to be challenged through alternatives provided within that class. In several years this course may have, if it survives, a heterogeneous enrollment; and its survival depends upon our willingness to adapt its content to students, rather than to mold students to the course.

Alternatives in English do not give blanket endorsement to every new concept on the education market. The advances in education deserve--even demand--the deliberation of careful testing and research before the packets, objectives, and systems are unleashed on students who look to their English teachers as guardians of the humanities. It is easy though time consuming to write performance objectives requiring a given number of correct responses, but it is difficult to legislate the humanity of the staff that is to observe those behavior changes in the students. Our students today want instructors who are human first and teachers second.

In spite of what some prophets say about youth, students look to us to work with them, to provide alternatives for them in seeking answers to the questions that have always faced man: What is human spirit? What drives man to realize his potential, to find himself? What responsibility does a country have in following its collective conscience--our role in Viet Nam, the Middle East; the welfare program that doesn't reach the 300,000 Americans who go to bed hungry each night; the Title I programs that fail to reach the many students who are to benefit from such assistance? How can an American today reconcile the contradiction of priorities--for us to allocate 10½ million dollars to the Defense Department for an advertising campaign to attract men to enlist in the service, and for the same administration not to have 2 million dollars to advertise the food stamp program for the thousands of Americans who would qualify and <u>could</u> benefit from the program if they only knew about it?

How do we reconcile that nearly 100,000 American men ran away from the Army alone in fiscal 1971? How troubled is our sleep, how disturbed our conscience to think that at least 10 million people in the world, mostly children, will starve to death this year and each year not only this decade but throughout the century? And even more discouraging, it is too late, according to Dr. Ehrlich in his book, <u>The Population Bomb</u>, to save many of those who are starving. Even if couples produced no children other than merely to

replace themselves, the world population would not level off until the year 2050. Each week the world population increases in excess of one million people.

And for a country priding itself in being a leader of the free world and a protector of small countries preyed upon by aggressors so that their citizens may determine their own destiny, how does it set with us in America that 10% of all American Indians over the age of 14 have had no schooling? What has America chosen in alternatives to expend in 1972 on Man's Space Flights to the moon over 1½ billion dollars and still not be able to provide on our planet, adequate schooling for all of America's children, let alone invest sufficient financial resources to alleviate the critical problems of starvation, pollution, cancer and heart diseases, and natural resource depletion.

We need to concern ourselves with these issues in our English classes, even though our discussion of these problems may borrow at 1% interest <u>ten</u> of the 36 days that we spend on grammar instruction--in the name of "because English teachers are supposed to teach grammar." We cannot afford to plead "lack of relationship to English" when, on the other hand, we contend that the raw matter of our discipline is the problems and nature of man, the language of understanding that will bring man of different races, different backgrounds, varied cultures together. The literature of Homer and Shakespeare; the questions of Ghandi and Thoreau; the dreams of Martin Luther King and James Michener--all of these men have shared with us the truths, the aspirations that Robert Frost speaks of when he says, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall."

We need to reckon with the walls of alienation and drugs, the fences of descrimination and prejudice. This generation, like previous generations, is confronted with critical problems. Overpopulation and starvation. Pollution and destruction of our natural environment which we have taken for granted so long. The trends toward a mass culture and urbanization. The threat of drugs must be combated with the same vigor that put man on the moon in the 60's. Over the past ten years our attention has been diverted from the death toll attributable to drugs to the toll of the Viet Nam War that has ripped our society apart and confused our priorities. In what ways should we rebuild America, with our youth as the major architects in the reconstruction? The future is truly problem-centered.

Our task in education is to provide children with the skills of problem solving in order that they may

steer Spaceship Earth into the future. The child in California who reads that entire forests in his state are dying; the student in New York who wonders how long before his city like Tokyo, will feature coin-operated oxygen dispensers along the street for people overcome with exhaust fumes; the sixteen year old boy in Iowa who wonders whether the U.N. scientists are correct when they predict that by the time he is forty, the world will be uninhabitable: the students in our English classes are not separate from but a part of the world outside the classroom. They are troubled. They are living in a time when society is changing more rapidly than in any previous age, and the rate of change is accelerating. Margaret Mead describes today's youth as "faced with a future in which they cannot know what demands will be placed upon them." Their ability to cope with these rapidly changing demands is one of the survival skills that must emerge in the learning process.

The problems facing our society are the link between English as we have known it and English as it has to be defined to survive in the real classroom outside of school. Time is not running out if we accept the fact that alternatives in learning as well as alternatives in the teaching of English are prerequisites to the survival of our subject matter in an age of upheaval. Where we have changed already has shown students that learning can be "the best of times, not the worst." Not a season of darkness but a time to give our students no less than the best of tools--a compassion for and understanding of the world they live in. But we need to bring that outside world into our English classroom.

The acid test of our success or failure will be ten years from now when we look back upon the 70's and assess whether we had the fortitude to preserve the human qualities of teaching, the commitment to provide more alternatives for children to succeed in learning, and the depth of compassion to respond to the changing needs of our students. A challenge it is, but the stakes are high. We have no other alternative in the context of survival.

TEACHING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS IN READING AND WRITING

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The close relationship between skill in reading and skill in writing has long been appreciated. Ben Jonson demonstrated an awareness of this relationship when he advised, "For a man to write well, there are required three Necessaries: To reade the best Authors, observe the best speakers: and much exercise of his owne style."[1] Various reasons can be stated for the fact that reading "the best Authors" and hearing the best speakers might encourage good writing. Reading and listening to skillful communicators might result in more effective writing because of the ideas and insights thereby acquired. Reading and listening are also valuable because they provide models of style; reader and listener become increasingly familiar with the principles of organization and development of ideas and with appropriate sentence structure and diction. It would seem that one might best learn to communicate well through first learning to respond appropriately to formal communication. The purpose of this paper is to explore one aspect of the "necessaries" cited by Jonson--ways in which proficient reading can contribute to learning organization skills in writing.

Most teachers of English would probably agree that a high correlation exists between reading ability and writing ability. The English Council of the California State Universities and Colleges, in a study of competency testing in writing, concluded, "Capable writers are almost always capable readers, and it is reasonable to expect that careful training in reading will help the development of writing ability."[2] I would go one step further and propose that the relationship might even be a causal one--that difficulties in writing may be traced to undeveloped skills in reading, particularly in understanding the principles, organization, and development of ideas. If a student is able to follow patterns of organization in expository reading, he should be better able to properly organize his own ideas in writing. Conversely, a student who is unaware of normal paragraph structure and development as he reads the writings of others seems likely to experience difficulty in organization and development.

The prospect that many readers fail to grasp the principles of organization and development of ideas in their reading is suggested in a study of students' abilits to state the main ideas of paragraphs. Maurice

Williams and Virginia M. R. Stevens presented expository paragraphs to high school students and instructed them to indicate the topic sentence and to compose a title for each paragraph. Despite the fact that the paragraphs were written at the sixth-grade level of reading difficulty, only fifty-seven per cent of the topic sentence responses were correct while sixty-five per cent of the titles were acceptable. The authors concluded that many high school students tend to read for details and consequently tend to overlook main ideas. They suggested[3] that teachers give more attention to this basic skill.

The findings of Williams and Stevens have clear implications for the teaching of organization skills in writing as well as in reading. Many high school and college students experience difficulty in organizing and developing their ideas. Perhaps these problems are related to the lack of understanding of the structure of the written materials they read. It may be that this understanding must first come in the area of reading if students are to write coherent, well-organized compositions. John Weber, upon evaluating the effectiveness of freshman English programs in selected Michigan community colleges, argued that without a sophisticated level of reading ability, it is not possible for students to write proficiently. Thus he recommended that instruction in reading skills precede remedial instruction in writing.[4]

Weber's point on the primacy of reading skills deserves serious consideration. But delaying instruction in writing until a satisfactory level of reading competence is achieved seems unnecessary. Rather, since many of the same principles of organization and development apply in both reading and writing, the two media might most effectively be taught together. For example, in order to comprehend written materials, the reader must be able to identify thesis and main points. Otherwise, from his reading he may gather only an uncoordinated collection of details. Similarly, in writing, the student must be able to formulate a thesis statement, divide it into points and subpoints, and use details at the appropriate place to develop these points. Proficient reading also demands that the reader be aware of the writer's method of development, regarding supportive statements in relation to the main points they support. It is also necessary for the writer to be aware of the common patterns of development and to use them appropriately in developing his ideas. This parallelism in reading and writing skills is also seen in attention to, and use of, transitions, introductory paragraphs, conclusions, and the unity of a selection.

The existence of these parallel skils in reading and writing makes the integrated teaching of organization skills in both media seem logical. The organizational skills students learn in their reading can be applied in their writing; reading materials can become models for organization in writing. Writing, in turn, encourages students to give careful attention to the structure of prose, which should enhance reading skill. Thus reading and writing should reinforce one another. Teaching that integrates reading and writing should not be confused with the mere use of several illustrative paragraphs in a grammar book or teacher handout. Several examples are not sufficient for mastery of a skill. Just as students need, indeed must, practice in order to acquire other skills, they need practice in the principles of communication.

In the teaching situation the various parallel principles of communication can be taught first in reading, through structural analysis of selections, and then in writing, through students' applying these principles in their own compositions. In studying the topic sentence, for example, students first learn the role of thesis and topic sentence in their reading. Since the thesis is generally a summary statement of the essay and the topic sentence, the main idea of the paragraph, readers should give thesis and topic sentence foremost attention in their reading; supportive details should be seen in relation to these two components. This skill can be demonstrated and practiced in numerous expository reading assignments. One obvious approach would involve asking students to state the thesis, identify topic sentences, and explain the functions and relationships of paragraphs as part of class discussions or exercises.

Classroom discussion and questioning procedures can also further awareness of thesis and main ideas of paragraphs. Rather than opening a class discussion with an emphasis on details, the instructor should, I feel, give priority to broad questions--questions that require students to think in terms of thesis and main ideas. After aspects of comprehension have been considered, questions on details may be asked, and in ways that encourage students to relate the details to the larger ideas. In such an approach, details are subordinated, but not overlooked; they are seen as an expansion, illustration, or clarification of main points. This same priority in questioning and discussion may also be applied in tests, quizzes, and worksheets.

Instruction and practice in skimming can be a most valuable means of making students aware of the structure of expository prose. Allowing only two or three minutes for skimming an essay in order to find thesis and main

ideas forces the reader to focus on these larger matters without scrutinizing details. In a second, more careful reading, the student gives more attention to the details, "filling in" the gross framework he acquired in the skimming step. Thus he discovers the main points and then considers the details in relationship to them.

Irwin Weiss reports using practice in skimming to teach his high school English class to become more proficient in reading and writing. He describes the skimming step as follows:

> Basically, the students learn through directed practice to consider the title carefully for clues; to read any summarizing sentences near the title; to skip the introductory interest-rousing story and the other merely illustrative narratives; to see whether the main idea is clearly stated after the introduction to the article, or in the final paragraphs of the article; to begin to read the first sentence of each paragraph and decide how far to read in the paragraph; to go back and read the last sentence of the preceding paragraph on occasion, or even the entire preceding paragraph, if important enough; but above all, to evaluate constantly what the author is doing at a given point, and to react flexibly.[5]

Such an emphasis on main ideas is one means of helping students overcome the inability "to see the forest on account of the trees" in written materials, a problem apparently indicated in the findings of Williams and Stevens.[6]

Development of ideas is also important both to reading and writing processes; parallel aspects of development can also be taught simultaneously. Knowledge of the role of supportive material in the paragraph is important in proficient reading. Whatever method of development the writer uses, the supportive material is generally an expansion, clarification, or illustration of the topic sentence. Seen in this light, the proficient reader regards facts, examples, and incidents in relation to the topic sentence. Thus he does not become preoccupied with examples or isolated facts at the expense of overlooking the main idea. Having learned the proper relationship between details and main points in his reading, the student should be capable of developing his own topic sentences in such a way that each supportive sentence serves to develop the topic sentence.

Thus the instructor might best deal with each method of paragraph development--facts, examples, reasons, incident, comparison-contrast, and cause-and-effect--first in reading and then in writing. In studying the relationship between paragraphs, the function of introductory paragraphs, transitional paragraphs, and conclusions should be considered in a similar way.

As is implied in the quotation by Jonson cited earlier, students learn the principles of good writing partly from ther reading of "the best Authors." In fact, it seems possible that proficient writers have learned their skill not necessarily through doing a great quantity of writing but by reading widely. This learning is probably taking place to some degree even without explicit effort on the teacher's part. How much more effectively students should apply these principles in reading and writing if we provide for them in our teaching. When a student discovers the relationship between main ideas and details in his reading and learns to take a reader's perspective in his own writing, he should be well on his way to becoming a proficient communicator.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Ben Jonson, "Timber: or, Discoveries," Literary Criticism of the Seventeenth Century, ed. Edward W. Tayler (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 115.

[2]"Equivalency Testing in College Freshman English: A Report and a Proposal," The English Council of the California State University and Colleges, October, 1972, p. 11.

[3]Maurice Williams and Virginia M. R. Stevens, "Understanding Paragraph Structure," Journal of Reading, (April, 1972), 513-516.

[4]John Weber, "Recommendation for Better English Instruction," Junior College Journal, 38 (February, 1968), 34.

[5]Irwin Weiss, "Skimming Practice," English Journal, 56 (1967), 136.

[6]Williams and Stevens, pp. 513-516.

LAND AND WATER IMAGERY IN FAULKNER'S "OLD MAN"

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People or objects in Faulkner's "Old Man' are frequently portrayed as being held in suspension between earth and sky. This is true also in other of Faulkner's writings. Lena Grove in Light in August watches an approaching wagon which seems to "hang suspended in the middle distance forever and forever" (7).[1] In Absalom, Absalom! Sutpen and his horse appear to the people of Jefferson "as though they have been created out of thin air and set down in the bright summer Sabbath sunshine in the middle of a tired foxtrot" (32). The narrator of "Ad Astra" thinks of himself and his companions as "bugs in the surface of the water. Not on the surface, in it, . . . not air and not water" (466). "We were outside of time; within, not on, that surface" (482). The Texas ponies of "Spotted Horses" "huddled in camouflage, or simply on in pairs rushed, fluid, phantom, and unceasing, to huddle again in mirage-like clumps" (373). "Old Man" has at least eighteen references to suspension in air or mirage. A figure used so frequently must have some further significance than that objects suspended above water in mirage-like fashion give a literally accurate description of the appearance of a flood. A closer look at these references will give us a hypothesis to explain Faulkner's intent with this figure. All the insecurity the flood can mean to the tall convict of the story is embodied in his sense of suspension between air and water; all the security he can find is in his infrequent encounter with ground, and mud, and trees.

When the flooding of the river reaches the prison farm, the convicts are driven up the railroad ramp. They look across the tracks where the "other half of the amputated town seemed to float . . . ordered and pageant-like and without motion, upon the limitless liquid plain" (553). They pass a plantation house "Juxtaposed to nowhere and neighbored by nothing, . . . rigidly fleeing its reflection, burning in the dusk above the watery desolation with a quality paradoxical, outrageous and bizarre" (555-556). The lights of a distant city are "a faint wavering row of red pin-pricks . . . apparently hanging low in the sky" (556). The tall convict who is the focal character of the story is caught in the floating debris "above which the skiff seemed to hover in weightless and airy indecision like a bird above a fleeing countryside" (576). He sees

on the levees "entire towns, stores, residences, parks and farmyards, which leaped and played about him like fish" (580). He tries to keep ahead of a huge pursuing wave "until after a while it no longer seemed to him that he was trying to put space and distance behind him or shorten space and distance ahead but that both he and the wave were now hanging suspended simultaneous and unprogressing in pure time" (588). The towns he passes as he flees on are "apparently attached to nothing upon the airy and unchanging horizon" (592).

Later in the story as the tall convict and the woman he has rescued leave the island where the baby has been born, they see the island "fade slowly into the mist which seemed to enclose the skiff in weightless and impalpable wool like a precious bauble or jewel" (599). Again, as the steamboat on which they traveled puffs off into the distance, the ship grows ever smaller until it seems to "hang stationary in the airy substanceless sunset" (612). The man's own feeling of suspension is revealed when he, like the narrator of "Ad Astra," realizes that he "would ever be no more than the water bug upon the surface of the pond, the plumbing and lurking depths of which he would never know" (626). When he narrates the story to his fellow prisoners, his words recreate his own sensations as they "seemed to reach his listeners as though from behind a sheet of slightly milky though still transparent glass, as something not heard but seen--a series of shadows, edgeless yet distinct, and smoothly flowing, logical and unfrantic, and making no sound" (592).

This sense of suspension is in each instance produced by the flood waters. The convict's reaction to the ground he encounters is quite different. Early in his journey he watches, almost enviously, the trees rushing past. "They were fixed and secure in something; . . . He remembered in an instant of despairing rage the firm earth fixed and founded strong and cemented fast and stable forever by the generations of laborious sweat, somewhere beneath them" (565). As he rests, exhausted, on the Indian mound, he feels secure, for "It was mud he lay upon, but it was solid underneath, it was earth, it did not move; if you fell upon it you broke your bones against its incontrovertible passivity sometimes, but it did not accept you substanceless and enveloping and suffocating . . . it did not snatch you violently out of all familiar knowing and sweep you . . . for days against any returning" (597).

It seems clear that to Faulkner's tall convict, who is Everyman in his encounter with the unexpected exigencies of life, his frightening and bewildering encounter with a flood such as he has never before experienced creates this sense of unreality, of suspension

in time and space, even in the physical objects about him. He is a simple man--as all men against problems and decisions too big for them are simple men. If he had known them, he might have quoted Housman's words, "I, a stranger and afraid, in a world I never made." He is used to a certain setting, a predictable routine. The river, though it has long been just across the levee from the fields he has plowed, is unfamiliar and certainly unpredictable. Its rampaging destroys his sense of security. Things no longer seem in perspective. The horizon, before so steady, blurs before his vision. He endures, as Faulkner's simple folk often do, but only his contact with the ground--the thing he is accustomed to, which he knows by experience and habit--gives him assurance while he battles the river. All else hangs uncertain, insecure, suspended, out of its proper relationships of time and space, until he, surely almost happily, returns to the prison, where he can depend on horizons behaving themselves.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The quotations from Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! are from the Modern Library editions. All other quotations are from the Viking Portable Library edition.

BOOKS

Review of J. Mitchell Morse, THE IRRELEVANT ENGLISH TEACHER

PHILADELPHIA: TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1972

Why did I order this book for the library? Surely we already had enough surveys and commission reports on the teaching of English, but this book, several reviews suggested, would be different ("scrappy, contentious," said The Hudson Review). This would be a lively, one-man performance that would reassure us of the dignity of our profession and the importance of our task.

Chapter headings promise a lively variety. Samples: "The Case for Irrelevance," "Our Linguistic Servility," "Social Class in the English Class," "The Shuffling Speech of Slavery: Black English," "Who Should Teach Freshman English?" and "Take for Example Finnegan's Wake." Professor Morse also obliges us with a list of themes that are to be found in this little book, and those are often encouraging and just as often provocations to debate. Once again, a few samples:

We are perishing for lack of style.

Good writing is relevant to itself. It need not be relevant to anything else.

The difference between good writing and bad is objectively demonstrable.

The contemplation of a well-made sentence is the second greatest pleasure in life. The greatest is to write such a sentence. What did you think it would be?

Full professors should teach freshman English.

The book is refreshing--for a time. There is some satisfaction in meeting a writer so unabashedly sure that his position is right and so ready to quote Samuel Johnson: "Sir, treating your adversary with respect is giving him an advantage to which he is not entitled." (The adversary now is anyone who scorns precise language.) Morse may indeed be called scrappy and contentious when he picks out a passage from a current textbook on style and calls the writing "pitiful slop." Here is an academic whose terms

are not restrainedly academic. And I am inclined to like someone who likes plays on words, who can quote with unashamed enjoyment King Arthur's question to Guenevere, "Who was that last knight I seen you with, lady?" and whose contempt for moral maxims leads him to such strained efforts as "Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives subliminal and departing leave behind us footprints of a nut or criminal." And who includes "virgin" in a list of mythical beings.

But there is much that is respectable and solid: reasonable statements about a standard language, a real concern with form, with the joys of art, with precision in vocabulary to achieve expression. There is consistent concern with the need to teach writing: freshman English is an important course, and "literature and composition should be taught together at all levels including the graduate level."

The more I read, however, the clearer it became that, if these essays were frequently exciting, they could also be repetitious, contradictory, and narrowly elitist.

The repetition is understandable, if not totally forgivable, when we realize that the volume is a gathering of articles that have appeared in English journals and speeches given before professional audiences. Some things--the same things--are going to be said more than once. The diversity of the chapters and themes is therefore more apparent than real.

The contradiction centers about the key word, relevance. Sounding like the New Critics in the first flush of examining literature "as such", Professor Morse states flatly that "in the classroom I preach irrelevance. . . . As an English teacher I cannot with any conscience invite my students to read kitsch as literature or literature as sociology. . . . Relevance be damned, I say."

In fact, however, Morse's own position as a "secular political liberal" or "liberal intellectual" is never really removed from his literary sympathies. Eliot is a reactionary. With religious writers Morse is especially careful to make clear that their values are not his. He can enjoy St. Augustine's Confessions but does not subscribe to his beliefs. "In the beginning was the Word" is a commendable verse, but one doesn't have to accept what the words say. Why is it necessary to say, "I reject St. Augustine's religious, political, and social ideas" if we are dealing with literary appreciation per se? The basic contradiction, finally, is seen in the consistent argument that a close study of good writing makes for a critical habit of mind, which, in turn, leads to political and social enlightenment. The case for irrelevance becomes a brief for relevance.

The "narrow elitism" may be a tautology, I suppose, for whoever heard of a wide elitism? But I'll let it stand. Most of us, I imagine, share Morse's disdain for language which is just a cut above no language at all. ("Like they can't say what they mean because like you know like they don't know what they mean"--his example.)

But the disquieting conviction overtakes me that the writer is not including me in his circle. His judgments are arbitrary and authoritarian, even to matters of pronunciation. Regional dialects are suspect. I am on the outside when Morse says calmly that only a handful of writers, mostly modern and avant-garde, deserve our respect: Grass, Stevens, Beckett, Joyce, Kafka, Robbe-Grillet, Böll, Hawkes, etc. Actually, we are told, only two writers, Beckett and Nabokov, are renewing the language; perhaps a score of writers are simply not sapping it--and all the rest are. Such confines are too close.

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Review of William D. Elliott's WINTER IN THE REX

Winter in the Rex, William D. Elliott's attractive third book of poetry, is a captivating--at times intriguing and searching--collection of poems dealing with the vision of a Minnesota poet come home after years away. An early life in northern Minnesota, interruped by years in distant places to grow and react to a more complicated world, are relived vicariously in the plastic form of poems. Surely a compliment to the poet's achievement, it is a special compliment to life in Minnesota.

While the book is divided into four parts which parallel the poet's life in and away from home, time and space transcend the most instinctive impressions of childhood and youth into the experiences of mankind itself. Elliott's distinctive awareness of the multiple implications of a word, without losing sight of his total composition, places the collection in the mainstream of contemporary poetry.

Thematically, the poems deal with life: some nostalgic, some disturbing, some charming and humorous. Three decades of personal history intertwine the simplest experiences of hiking, fishing, and watching sky divers, with the poet's more sensitive reactions to the significant issues of war, ecology, racism, and peace.

The ultimate value of any collected work of poems rests with the few outstanding poems that it contains: poems that not only say something truly relevant to everyone, but poems that work technically as well. Winter in The Rex has its good share of these. "Dinner at Seven Seas" (Pt. III), playfully but with a tone of urgency, records on the literal level the vacation itinerary of one busy day which includes a dinner and a playhouse musical. On the levels of imagery and rhythm, the poem suggests the more intimate and, perhaps, more poetic parts of the itinerary.

> . . . The chorus
> cuts our ears the
> rhythmical moving of heads in
> costume hats, back, ahead
> back, ahead, ahead, bac
> the beach at eleven
> . . . . . .
> and sailing
> brunch at Seven Seas
> Conamessett Inn Red Coach
> Grill: mix the orders and
> fish, please, for strippers . . .

"Winter in The Rex" (Pt. IV), the poem that inspired the title of the collection, has a structure and a theme which reflect the organization and meaning of the entire book. A compressed world from the 1940's through the 1960's is glimpsed from a perennial booth at the old Rex Restaurant in Bemidji:

> I lie along the booth, her
> new legs, my weight
> XER and its neon sign
> in ice, and see the summer.
> Watch our Bemidji Belle falter on the birch
> and finally sternwheel by . . .

Pleasing visual and tactile images in this last poem involve the reader emotionally. Simultaneously, the contrasts suggest the present inversions of the poet's immediate vision of his lifelong home.

Life in Minnesota is a popular topic today in everything from nature writing to a cover story in Time Magazine. This reviewer believes that the poetic interpretation of Minnesota life, the view that crystalizes those everyday immediate experiences into a clearly beautiful and integral whole, is one of the most reliable accounts of life itself. For this reason, I recommend Winter in the Rex for the nostalgic and the idealistic, for those that love Minnesota, love good poetry, and love life. Winter in The Rex may be ordered or purchased from Bookcraft, Bemidji, Minnesota, 56601, for $3.50.

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HOW TO TELL A TORNADO

Listen for noises.
If you do not live
near railroad tracks,
the freight train you hear
is not the Northern Pacific
lost in the storm:
that is a tornado
doing imitations of itself.
One of its favorite sounds
is no sound.
After the high wind, and
before the freight train,
there is a pocket of nothing:
this is when you think
everything has stopped:
do not be fooled.
Leave it all behind
except for a candle
and take to the cellar.

Afterwards
if straws are imbedded
in trees without leaves,
and your house--except
for the unbroken bathroom mirror--
has vanished
without a trace,
and you are naked
except for the right leg
of your pants,
you can safely assume
that a tornado
has gone through your life
without touching it.

Howard Mohr
Southwest State College
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SCHOLAR

Discovers Troy seven layers down in the head,
with all its walls down,
drags himself around the city
because he feels Greek.
Knows all about commerce in blood
between spleen and liver,
and rates brain charges muscle
for electric power.
Can take the logarithm
of Henry James's fog index.
Archaeologist, anthropologist, theologian.
Trained at University of Diaphragm,
broadened himself at table,
traveled widely,
fourth-class book rate.
What a joy talking
about himself in the third person.

John Calvin Rezmerski
Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

MINNESOTA PASTORAL, CIRCA 1901

Down East gone West Midwesterners, Miles
Ole & Hans, angle the Blue Earth's bed,
In snowglare gaze toward picket hill and plain,
Yankee-proud, bundling backward through stumps
That guffaw, swipe a Scandinavian grin.

Felled oak, plowed up prairie, changing wind
Sounded the Mississippi upstream, fleet
Cargo for river landings no one told
A prairie crop about nor harmonica moved
A millwheel grinding over in harvest hope.

Miles, Ole & Hans circle the moon homeward
To prairie rouged women, sun spoiled berries,
Bringing wintered seed in knotted bandannas.
There is always black land to settle, sow
Sweat into harvest, brindle for Cities.

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