This issue of Collage marks the beginning of a new era (of uncertain duration) as a new director, Mike O'Neal, assumes the mantle of editorial responsibility. As always, Collage encourages any and all to submit their creative endeavors, whether they be essays, photography, artwork, humor, poetry, fiction, reviews or any other printable creative form. Collage is a unique form of expression in the University community—use it.

For those of you who have already submitted work and have not as yet been notified concerning it, please be patient. As in most ups d'etats there has been a certain amount of reorganizing necessary, and consequently things are just beginning to get under control here. We'll try to get in touch with you as soon as we're able to go through our files.

Besides contributions in general, Collage is looking for people who are interested in doing well-researched, readable, critical articles on issues relevant to the University community. We've got some challenging subjects to have handled this spring and need top-notch writers if they're going to come off. You can fill your niche on the Collage staff.

(Incidentally, for those who may be concerned about the welfare of David Gilbert, the previous director, place your hearts at ease. The old fossil is being kept around the office for sentimental reasons and is still available to anyone who wants to come in and reminisce.)

Collage is your magazine. If you have any ideas or suggestions about what you'd like to see done in Collage, let us know. Send your cards and letters to Collage (c/o State News, Student Services Bldg., MSU), or drop by the office, or call us at 353-8252. We'll be waiting.

Moral: Do like the birdie's do...Sing baby, sing!

Contributors...

They (today's young people) spend their time in classrooms and are so career-conscious they are afraid they will never get ahead unless they have a degree. At 19 or 20, they should really be enjoying themselves, instead of always having nervous breakdowns or taking tranquilizers. So much education tends to specialize you—nowadays few people really stimulate you with what they say, and these are usually men.

Agatha Christie, 73-year-old mystery writer, in an interview in McCall's magazine.
A White Man’s Nat Turner

By BRUCE CURTIS

EDITOR’S NOTE: Bruce Curtis, assistant professor in ATL, also holds an appointment teaching in James Madison College. His major field of specialization is American intellectual history.

Certain books are deceptive in appearance. The cover or title or stated intention of the author misleads us, prepares us to be taught or thrilled in a certain way. And then our expectations are disappointed. William Styron’s The Confessions of Nat Turner is such a book. In the interests of clarity we might subtitle it “A Novel of Today.” Confinement arises because, since Nat Turner was hanged as a rebel slave in 1831, the books seem to have a claim on the past and invite examination as an historical novel. But The Confessions of Nat Turner is best regarded as a work whose writing and reception, while casting a harsh light on the present, is less successful in illuminating the gloomy past. The novel is a prescriptive document, and Styron-and his critics as well-can teach us much about the uses of the past in the hands of present-minded men.

In discussing his reportorial technique in “The Algiers Motel Incident,” a story of three killings in the Detroit riots of 1967, the novelist John Hersey wrote:

There was a need, above all, for total conviction. This meant that the events could not be described as if witnessed from above by an all-seeing eye opening on an all knowing novelistic mind: the merest suspicion that anything had been altered, or made up, for art’s sake, or for the sake of effect, would be absolutely disastrous. (p. 27)

John Hersey sacrificed art to ensure absolute veracity.

William Styron, like Hersey, a white novelist writing at a time of racial turmoil, but a Southerner as well takes a diametrically opposed position. As author and defender of his Nat Turner, Styron insists: the book is neither racist nor a tract but a novel, an essay of the imagination where the necessities of always questionable fact often become submerged in a larger truth.

(Nation, April 22, 1968, 341)

In further defending his novelistic method, Styron quotes George Lukacs, the “greatest Marxist literary critic,” who asserts: What matters in the novel is fidelity in the reproduction of the material foundations of the life of a given period, its manner of being, its feelings, and thoughts deriving from these. This means that the novel is much more closely bound to the specifically historical, individual moments of a period, then is drama. But this never means being tied to particular historical facts.

( Ibid. 341)

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William Styron insists upon his right and duty to reject discrete historical facts when they impede his novelistic purpose of seeking a “larger” truth.

When one examines reactions to the book, it quickly becomes apparent that critics who praise it are predominantly white, while those who damn Styron and his novel are predominantly black, and that, although they receive some white support, they are in the minority. It is also clear that black critics, like those represented in ‘John of Nat Turner’s Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond,” are inevitably primarily by what they see as Styron’s misuse of facts, and by his consequent cruel, distorted and racist characterization of Nat Turner. No doubt Styron has been surprised by the amount and intensity of criticism that he and his novel have faced in recent months, especially from black writers. For it seems probable, despite charges to the contrary, that Styron acted in good faith in attempting to create a richly complex human being. His Nat Turner was fated, by innate intelligence and inherited slavery, to be caught and torn between two cultures, and between the violently contradictory emotions of hate and love for both his slave brothers and his white masters.

It may be that black critics reject Styron’s “Nat Turner” because it is essentially an integrationist novel. Styron tries continually, sometimes by main force, to bring black and white together: to have a black, at least, try to understand white, to have Nat succeed, ultimately, in overcoming hatred by escaping from the clutches of emotional ambivalence into the arms of Christian love. It is because William Styron wants black and white to be reconciled (or is it that uncomonomously he wants the black to be reconciled to whites?): that he ignores or alters some of the soundest facts about Nat Turner. The chief historian of the South’s own “Confessions,” transcribed and published soon after the revolt by a white lawyer, Thomas H. Gray. According to Gray’s parenthetical note, the facts should be read by his master’s slave mother–apparently could read and Nat says he was bound of his deeply religious grandmother. Although Gray undoubtedly altered the “Confessions,” in some respects, it seems improbable that he falsified the record so as to emphasize the influence of Nat’s family. The best evidence available, then, suggests- that the black slave quarter as well as the white big house, considerably influenced young Nat Turner’s personality.

Virtually the entire thrust of Styron’s novel, however, is to exhibit a black slave who has been almost swallowed up in the dominant white culture, who is a virtual stranger to his black fellows, whatever slave or free man or woman. Nat Turner works and plays, is petted and pampered, educated and trained, elevated and cast down, in the white house culture. His meaningful intellectual exchanges are with white. His sexual fantasies are lily white. The most meaningful human relationship he experiences is with a white girl. She teaches him of the temporal and spiritual dimensions of love. William Styron’s Nat Turner wants white. He wants to be integrated. But his promised manumission shatteringly denied, his not-factually-recognized yearning for fulfillment with a white on white terms blocked by his slave status. Nat’s post-visionary religious drive provides a vehicle and a rationale which carries him, sword in hand, a new but captivating avenger Christ, down the road of revolt that leads to Jerusalem, Va.

Understandably, numerous black critics do not recognize Styron’s Nat as either a richly complex human being or a reasonable facsimile of the historical rebel slave and Black Hero. To them, this white-natched Nat is weak, cowardly, ambivalent and emasculated. Their Nat is the prophet of black power, a founding father of the revolution. As their culture hero he is the black equivalent of the whites’ George Washington. Perhaps those who praise and defend Styron’s novel should ask themselves this: How would they, or their ancestors who are seeking an identity as a people, have reacted if 150 years ago, say in 1811 on the eve of war with Britain, a novelist, say an Englishman, had published a “meditation on history” in which he tried to present the rich human complexities, ambiguities, idiosyncrasies and weaknesses that made up the character of George Washington? The novel of course would have been seeking to create a “larger” truth which would have allowed him to ignore inconvenient facts or to fabricate when there were none to guide him.

George Washington was a British subject in the colonies of Virginia, a Southerner who was recognized and sought to obtain the expected rewards of his courage, a man who was regarded as a rich asset by his British overlords. Throughout a long and tryng rebellion, George Washington appeared as a truly human figure, subject to all the doubts and inconsistencies that any leader not a demigod could have felt. The culmination of Washington’s faith in his cause and his God came at Valley Forge, where, cold and hungry, with great numbers of ill-disciplined forces now deserters, he rallied against “my damned army,” an old battle cry that now seems to have passed.

(continued on page 11)
Jeffrey Justin was poetry editor of Collage last year. After graduating from MSU, he spent one term writing at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He is now teaching in Monroe, Mich., and writing "a great deal." The poem, "Growing Old," is an example of Jeff's latest experiments with prose poetry.

SURFACE ONLY

Headlights show long strokes of night rain washing the streets.
The bed I lie in is a phone booth.
The door sticks. Sheets of rain drape the facades of buildings.
Jerk ing passers-by around, the flasher on a police car winds attention tighter.
This doesn't illuminate; it announces.
Each fears he has been found out.
The loneliness of the petitioner with his forms lost or misfiled.
The trapdoor of bed can't drop me:
I see there is no bottom to the world.

A traffic light at 4 a.m. signals an intersection where night is stalled.

---Jeffrey Justin

THE STREET PREACHER

He squawked and cars honked in the aim of traffic lights.
He said, "The truth kills but you can't see no blood."
Day-to-day mothers, budding children to safe flanks, had no ear for his war-talk.
He stopped people.
For fourteen years he stuck in the street gullet.
He stuck out the white page of his bible among buildings the color of gallstones.
The chain of cars clanked as it tightened.
He jangled in the lock.

---Jeffrey Justin

GROWING OLD

Florida sticks out like a tongue. It savors the old people on it. I tell them, don't go there! Green is no plant but the slowest, largest and most complicated of animals. I don't know if Florida is a full body or just the mouth. Travel posters picture a blue forehead and green fur around smiling lips of land.

Day and night, the metabolism of green pounds steadily as a piston. Though it assimilates and sloughs off, green does not age. It is the electric idling of now.

Flowered shirts are pure! The grip is too delicate for old people to feel. They believe they retire in safety. But all around, green stalks, green stalks. Young people see green for the animal it is, but believe that the roads they whip down have tamed it.

Suddenly green clutches and accelerates, into the future. In an instant people are past.

Even the sea there is sick, heaving from the salt seasoning with which it eats green. So I tell old people, go home up North! But they say, there snow freezes us out. We are shut in and shut out and finally shut up. White is the extreme and so is black. We would rather be in Florida where green preys for us.

So they even garden green. I am amazed at the courage of this act.

---Jeffrey Justin

NIGHT RAIN

We stopped to match ourselves with the real bus running in a file cabinet on purple streets.

Windshield wipers ticked:
Clock hands waging in nervous breakdown.

Heads had popped from jack-in-the-box seats into yellow light.

But during supper the couple next door just started singing.

---Jeffrey Justin
MITCH MILLER

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mitch Miller, State News staff writer, is a graduate student in communications from Westwood, Pa.

I was born in West Philadelphia 22 years ago, and I spent a considerable portion of my youth there working in the basement of a mom and pop store at 42nd and Lancaster.

Anything that happens in this world happens at that corner. The kids that I waddled around with grew up to be Big 52, the world murder rate, etc. The bar across the street, one of the six I could see from the front window, had more fights than the Art Institute. The constable next door to it was one of the first closed down when the BIA started his investigation into the constable-magistrate system.

I state these facts merely to establish my credentials to talk about the racial-urban problem. Not that it is impossible to grow up in such an environment and be a racist, because many of the country's worst racists are those who have had the most contact with members of other races, but because without such contact you cannot really know anything about a racial or not.

But certainly it is impossible, having lived on 42nd Street, to grow up with the academic perspective that exists without the slightest knowledge of the everyday problems that plague living in a slum different from living in Penn Wynne, Long Island, Grove Point or Clayton, Ga.

Those who have been there know what the problem is not one of institutional racism as is the compulsory capitalist system or any other nebulous cloud. The problem of black people, the problems of the cities, is individual problems caused by individual people, real living breathing people, with name positions, and above all political affiliation.

So, in hopes of shedding some real light on the problem and by real light I mean the glare of a red car's spotlight rather than the reflected glint of a pipe, I offer what I have learned and what I feel about the cities and what I think are some questions that ought to be asked.

I learned about the building inspectors that never come around, because the slumlords make the payoffs to the Democratic City Committee.

I learned about the constables, the magistrates, and the credit merchants who have nice little three-way partnerships going.

I learned about how the big stores and the Tomasters get together to deprive everyone else of any chance to work for themselves.

I learned how the other unions, the construction workers, the plumbers, the electrical workers make sure nobody who is black gets anything.

I learned how highways always seem to go through certain neighborhoods, and how there never seems to be enough money to relocate everybody, and five years later the highway is everywhere because the contractors get 50 cent more water than it "legally" is allowed to be.

I learned how a bricklayer who builds hospitals that collapse gets to be ambassador to Ireland.

I learned all about how the Mon. James M. J Tate and Daley, and Cavanaugh, and their cronies run the city.

And I have learned something about my own feelings about race. I think of Afro-Americans as people. Not as a "race," not as either all good or all bad, some of whom work and some who don't, some of whom are criminals and some who aren't.

Certainly black people (as well as tan and brown people, who are becoming the nation's new most neglected minority groups) have some problems in common. But I have had too much personal contact with them, as buyer and from-sealer, as co-worker and underling to say either "All the slums are lazy, for nothing," or "We must do something to lift from our black brethren the burden of our guilt and shame." I am simply not a white racist, as some people would like me to be. Nor have I taken up the role expected of me, or people of that of the long-suffering but sympathetic liberals.

I do not have any guilt to assuage by pious liberal platitudes, by listening to people revile me by pretending there's "whites, " themselves darker than mine are guiltless of any sin or free from criticism.

(continued on page 11)

Tuesday, April 8, 1969

By ROGER HOWARD

Roger Howard, Detroit junior, is majoring in psychology. He is chairman of Students for White Community Action at NSU.

The White man in America today is a confusing sort of animal. Question him, and like a jack-in-the-box, he is up, asserting that consistantly arranging the particular mask he has grown to know and love and chosen for the particular occasion. Confront him, and he vigorously vocally, at times lashes out at the WASP hovering above his head, slamming him on all too rare, embarrassing occasion. Organize him, and his leader is left saying, "Where are my people?" I am his leader, I just follow them. Then, shock and disgust him. And the guilt builds up and lasts for a time, and the overreactive, collective behavior follows. He has examined his way of life in this country--has examined the value system, and has viewed conditions as they actually exist--and when he is able to see and begin to perceive, when he is able to understand and begin to feel, he discovers inconsistencies. He asserts his earlier skepticism, his belief that he is not a racist or not.

Today we talk of "White Racism." We "dedicate the absolute of our existence" to eliminating it; we hesitate to define it as such, we live and function under the institutions which propagate it. And the results are pequenism, xianism, and when the commitment so often spoken of, and the social disruption so often encountered, is seen as somehow out of place, and is viewed as inconsistent with the way in which our society is operating, we stand confused. We strangely enough, again arrive at where we began.

Any attempt at eliminating what so many have come to call "White Racism" is a term you will remember, so boldly discovered by the Kern Commission one year ago, is still inconsistent with the way in which our society is operating.

Some do talk of freedom: that ambiguous word so glorified, so nebulous, that few Americans care to do little more than merely accept it too. Task: freedom for whom? Freedom for what? Freedom from what?

Freedom to choose, perhaps: freedom to choose and to examine the alternatives, to grip and cling to the realization, and develop the courage to act upon that knowledge. For ideas, choices, are nothing unless they are acted upon.

But this freedom, you say, is guaranteed. Guaranteed, yes, but is it taken advantage of? Is it taken advantage of by the white man who finds himself "playing a role" in the interpersonal relationships he may experience with blacks? Is the "freedom to be myself" an advantage of by those in the "golden ghetto" who find themselves psychologically at ease and tense upon the arrival of a black neighbor? Or is this freedom taken advantage of by the black man who compromises himself to be "accepted" by white society?

Perhaps it is a freedom which will allow the white man to act like a human being, a freedom which will allow us to act, ignoring custom, and freed from the strong "cultural pattern" present in our society today. Gordon Allport, in his book "The Nature of Prejudice," has stated that about half of the prejudiced attitudes present today are based solely on this need to conform, this desire to accept and, in turn, to be accepted. And if this is the case, it is the black man who is deprived, or is it the white who is bound by the chains of custom, of tradition, of the idea that "to leave well enough alone" is acting in the American way? For what other than acting this lack of freedom will redeem our country from the "American Dilemma?"

But of course, you see, there is no "American Dilemma." The white man does not act unless he is directly threatened. He doesn't give an honest damn about the "rights of man" or "equality." After all, the North did not fight the Civil War to give blacks their equality (if indeed the North could give blacks that equality). The Men in Blue fought to preserve the Union, to put an end to slavery, but no black was allowed to fight for himself if he stood beside, on an "equal" footing with, a white soldier in the Union Army, and so

(continued on page 9)
Floating away from the Eye on the Wall

When I first nail the eye on the wall, it stares at me and I stare at it. It bugs me. It whines, it knows it's inside me. Then two weeks later it's there, but I don't see it. It's there, but only some faded, washed-out abstracted environmental-complex reference frame in which everything 'fits' without being looked at. If someone took it off I'd notice it, but as long as it's there, it's no long-er 'there.' not it, it's changed.浮 away from me and I've floated away from it.

The girl who works in the Art India store, filled with exotic silks and cotton-prints, Indian musical instruments, sandals, the air thickened with incense, is 'there,' but can't 'see' there. The guy who works in the psyche-out poster shop has been there eight hours a day for a month. and the walls become blank for him. I walk in, turn on, he sits in the middle of it and doesn't Art India and poster shop change places and the magic happens again, reality up its po-tency, the 'thinesses' of things once out again, our eye escapes into the landscapes.

Potency of Perception

From which it follows that the shorter the 'ac-quaintance-time,' the greater the 'potency of perception': and within the limits of the per-civable, the greatest potency of perception should come from the fastest, shortest 'im-pulses.'

Which is essentially what Aldo Tambellini's Village Group Center means when it proclaims that its aim is to "de-bombard, de-propel and blast the audi-ence into what Group Center believes is the New Reality...."

Focus In and Fall all the Way Through

I go into the Princeton Dark Room—complete soundlessness, the total darkness, all my problems for the first 12 hours. Have food, bed, toilet. But after another day (how to measure it, count heart-beats) I push the panic button. I want out.

On a less dramatic level, I let the eye on the wall fade, close the blinds, move FM, SW, and AM, and try TV and filmless through time, move further into the world of the purely intuitive. The space-temporal, the momentary real-ism, the man-made reality (from the 'real' world- branch) and into a world of my own mind. That, anymore, not 'it,' but only some faded, washed-out, abstracted environmental complex reference frame that does not 'fit' without being looked at. If someone took it off I'd notice it, but as long as it's there, it's no longer 'there.' not it, it's changed, floated away from me and I've floated away from it.

The following is an excerpt from a volume-to-be by Hugh Fox, ass't. professor in ATL, to-wit, Chaing. One of several fellow and Elec-tronic Gadget. We recommend two readings, one for fun and one for philosophy. Fox is also editor of the International Quarterly of Experimental Poetry.

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Electronic Garbanel

The non-enlightened, unplugged-in, inflexible, impermeable, trapped with stale thought-habits tied around their heads, distant electronic humanism, but (conversely) electronic humanism, getting in to Heidegger's Esistence, snapping away and discarding the es- or anti-essential, inevitably creates permeability. I look up and see you in slow-motion moving through life-span-time on this planet-surface and-aware of the meaning of time-experience (experience in time)—seeing you more luminously toward me carrying your "thiness" with you, I see the total-you, present, past, future, in relation to the total-possible-you, in relation to this particular bleep on the world-contexted U.S.-centered historical-time screen, and I can stepinside you, see myself seen through your life-vision.

The "high or true art...that is an art which doesn't confirm people in what they already know...aoses (a) state of ecstasy...if you get into the presence of truth, It will create this ecstatic state...I and take it to be the function of...art to teach through this ecstatic state..."

Only the non-ecstatic, still linear, sequential, abstraction-based, non-curved-spatial, simultaneous and "reality" based, are ecstasy (peak experiences) illusory, not only do not participate in the mystique of electronic sanctity but want to destroy it. The linear moves in "to straighten out" curved space. Healthy paranoia.

Electronic "turn-on" is necessarily corporate and communal (permeability equals social permeability) but not automatic. "perceptual reality" can be learned and taught, in fact out to be learned and taught. "I. P. Adams Sitney in a kind of notebook-scratchpad in Film Culture quotes Artaud: "Cinema implies a total reversal of values, a complete smash-up of optics, perspectives and of logic." 8

Electronic communion, salvation, transfiguration IN LIFE. The generation gap is a gap between electronic humanism (the young) and electronic idiosyncrasy (the old). The en-turned as precisely because they smart (beyond an) focus out of NOW into MIND-ARTIFICIALITY which brands paranoia, schisms, gaps, on the circle and the world outside (the circle) continues to open while the whole inside (the circle) turns inside disembolishment (with its own half-closed). "The eye is a part of the mind." (Leo Steinberg)

Footnotes
13. George Amberg, Film Culture, (Fall) 1966. P. 27.
Maybe next time...  

—but don’t look back

By PAUL ANTHONY ORLOF

Shuffle the Library, up the steps, through the door, through the turnstile, into the warm of irrutability. Gotta forget about yesterday and all the other yesterdays, gotta go in and study and do the world’s work. Safe with the books, away from the competition and solitude and coldness of the outside-alone, you can cop out on living. Just doing your thing with your computer-sharp mind, keep those four points rollin’ in, so exact directions.

Wearin’ your uniform, cords, sweater, stampin’ boots, beard, cold eyes, keep on the facade like everybody, gotta look hard, self-contained, just shufflin’ along like you don’t give a damn, not feelin’ uptight about a thing, you know you’re too groovy to care—it seems all, but appearances can be deceiving. But then you never know for sure, so you can’t penetrate the facade you see walkin’ the streets and you’ve gotta keep your cool by meetin’ the strangers with your own Softness inside you make them, lookin’ for somebody—well, to groove with...behind the stoneface, could it be? Hell no, not me. Just rollin’ the steps through the next door—you see yourself in the glass of it as it slides sideways your pullin’ hand, seeing eyes hard and definitely afraid, could truth be known. But don’t you know, haven’t you heard? You can’t tell it like it is. But you have to be a fool to let it look like it is on your face, cause nobody plays the game that way. Everyone plays by the same rules or you know they’ve gotta be losers. Go ahead so simple now to enter the room, lookin’ shufflin’ the words, lose yourself in it and forget the people whose eyes are hard and averted on their own books. Like a realness of kids, absorbed in themselves and studin’ to find out what’s the word in words, knowin’ the words are only part of the story, but it’s so rough to hack the coldness you pass through to get at the real experiences. So much easier this way, and the system you know so well how it is in the books you quietly take inside you to fill all the voids of time and space.

Now comes the rough part, gotta bop up on to the desk, face the girl there, can she see it in your eyes? No couldn’t be. Look up the call number, like you’d look up the phone number of someone you’re afraid to call because you’re too afraid to admit that maybe you’re not totally self-sufficient. But it’s so easy with the book you get, just silence, give her the number, get the book, sign your name, you’ve got it and you’re set and you’re not like cloth to get a number you’re always ready to call and never do, to reach out and be set where it matters. After all, you start don’t that you’ve gotta talk, you’ve gotta let somebody see you where you really live. Cause you can’t come from inside but eyes and silence keep up the great facade. You’re way too safe with facade, you’re impregnable, you’re golden. Yeah, baby, golden, cause nobody else knows how it is deep and dark inside your being, inside your soul.

Book safely in hand, all you’ve gotta do now is get a table open the book and you’re away from all the world in the shadow of silent thoughts. Table empty, that’s where it’s gotta be, so nobody can sit there. So close to you, eyes glancing up awkwardly, wondering what you eyes say back. Just about to shut down at the empty table and you look up a last time and there she is. Some girl, catchin’ up her coat, lookin’ at you, ten feet away, through silent space, see you look up. Kinda widens her eyes as she look back at her. You both stop your mindmeat and look as hard at each other, but in the intensity, some of your soul comes up through your vision, so does here. Thinkin’ to yourself, I don’t she afraid, does she want me to dare to approach her soul through her eyes like by really talkin’ to her loss, the safety of being strangers, they look at and into each other. Maybe a mistake, you just surprised her by lookin’ back, she make a fool of yourself. She’s got her table to herself, you’ve got yours, that’s the only way to play it, nothing intended in a single meeting of eyes over ten feet of silence, wall of hardness. No way anything was intended.

Read the book awhile, still thinkin’ about her eyes. Did it mean anything, could it ever, even though shades of gray of winter weather? Finish the first reading assignment, time to shuffle back and get a different book, time to play a different call number for new experiences. You’ve picked this book, turn, return to the hard, wooden rectangle of afternoon-shopping only to glance at her again, quickly. But she catches the impulse, reaches out for the moment, looks back again. Again she widens her eyes slightly when the eyebrows in surprise, looking the question of what is meant, so deep, could something be? You sit down, your back to her, reading again. Eyes seeing black on white, growing hard and darkening into the minute, you see her face, you’re looking at your eyes again, silently wondering if she dares, if you dare. You start on a fantasy into the darkness of the coming night, you see her and your put down the hard exterior, to get a closer look inside each other’s soul. Can almost feel it now, almost feel the warmth, the other-ness of her there with you, so close and important. For at least one other cold, silent night of piercing darknessness within you. Maybe you should try, maybe you hope she’ll try like you hope she wants to. Maybe— you’ll see? Yeah, ok, but not her.

Time and silence roll on, reading finishes somehow, goodnight, make everybody so proud again with those golden grades, real bewonder of academia. Nothing left to do but leave now, unless maybe. Is she still there? Will she look at you that way again? Has she kept that thing for you too?

You push back the chair, getting up to put on the coat as if to say, that’s that, book, work’s done, not thinkin’ about what’s past. Coat on, fingers scrumbling up the buttons quickly, looking yourself in another layer of cover against the coldness of eyes and wind outside. A sound behind you like a chair pushing back from another table, another coat going on, other fingers scrumbling up buttons and gathering together. You pick up your books, walk to desk, return the leather package of instant truth, never looking back. Pause at the desk, looking, was she about to leave too? Turning eyes slowly toward the back of the room where you see her coming your way, going toward the doors, 10 feet across from the floor you walking slowly as you stand still, trying not to look at her, yet unable not to. She pauses, slows down.

turns her face toward the desk toward your face, and there it is the same look, the same moment again. Same silent questions being asked, louder than ever, intense between your eyes eyes her eyes wondering more than ever. Now or not at all. Should it be non, nob, baby? You think her eyes look yes, look come on, look risk it, look reach out. look maybe it’ll work out.

You have to decide now, before the moment is gone, before she lets the fear rise again, forcing her to turn her eyes away, to walk on. You hesitate, yelling inside yourself asking for what do you can she really be looking yes? Underneath the cold silence only uncertainty comes back to your mind in answer. You looked at her again, eyes deep and steady, reading the same doubts, hope fear, wonder in her eyes—she must be seeing the same in yours. Ten feet away, maybe closer, but gotta decide, gotta move now. Last long look, knowing right at once or forget it, her eyes holding steady, could be right, try. She starts moving slowly ahead looking back at you once more, same look of wondering in lifted eyebrows and widened eyes, you start moving too, looking at her, yelling at yourself inside. Then you finally know. You can’t do it don’t think so. She’s pushing open the door out on the landing to the stairs, glances back at you once quickly, you almost might have, you know it’s too late. Wanted too long, couldn’t do it now, could but she’s gone. Should you run down the stairs, catch up with her, tell her you still want to reach out, touch her, look eyes if she’ll do the same, showing it’s alright!

No. Impossible. You can’t play it like that. You couldn’t take one moment as it lingered across ten feet of silence as eyes met and questioned. So she’s gone, it’s over, what the hell. Maybe you were wrong anyway. How can you ever know now. Yeah, but maybe. So forget it, just another girl, another moment, nothing special. There’ve been lots of times of almosts before, so why not now? No reason why this should’ve been different than anything past. Gotta go places and do things anyway. Forget it, hop down the stairs, put the facade back in place. Hey eyes, just patriot, could be hard, no look back to her or anything behind in the times you’ve seen. Shuffle back out of the library, listen to the bell tower chime time going on like nothing happened or could have. so who regrets? Forget it, keep moving down the street, looking up at the cold, gray sky and taking some of its surface reflected back on your eyes as they meet other eyes impenetrable, unknown, quickly averted. You see that girl in your mind once more, wonder again, move steadily on, protected in your core of hardness, forget her. Don’t think about her, pointless. Softness inside you inside, others, lookin’ for someone behind the stoneface, could it be? No, couldn’t be not me. Well, maybe next time, but don’t ever look back.
A Quinn Smith

The Eighteenth Floor

By LINDA WAGNER


EDITOR'S NOTE: A Quinn Smith is a 26-year-old Wayne State dropout. The Eighteenth Floor is his first collection of poems except for a limited edition published previously. Linda Wagner is an asst. professor in English at MSU.

There aren't very many good "city" poems. Gwendolyn Brooks' recent "In the Mecca." Williams' "Paterson." Hart Crane's "The Bridge." the lyric tradition somehow turns away from all the discord usually associated with the urban. A Quinn Smith's "The Eighteenth Floor" sounds as if it might be a "city book." But even though Smith uses Detroit as background in some of the poems (Woodward Avenue, "great nagging snowdrifts"), his focus is primarily himself and his reactions. And Smith as a product of urban living seems not so very different from most of us.

Many of his best poems are self-realization studies. "Journey's End" recreates in strong images and well-paced understatement a man's coming awareness:

Don't you see, I knew the dark & winding road by heart. The white flowers were bits of strangeness. Or was it just me .

It has been a whole--this ride--but I was wearing the house. Then the small tail lamps came upon--a gaping, unexpected lair.

When we treated ourselves at the only, local bar,

the Drambuie tasted like the cashews that tasted like the coffee that tasted, too, like cold stars of sugar.

And then I saw that it was a black sky & no more a very frigid star with no taste to them.

These flowers, too, along the road were more than likely weeds.

I began to catch a cold.

The straight, idiomatic opening and closing are characteristic of Smith's writing. It is as if he literally begins with a statement and then pushes out past the colloquial into more impassioned levels of speech, coming back to the end into what seems his normal restraint: "A Return to Salón" ends with "I am a stranger within my own rooms." "Smith's Odyssey" mourns the poet's cigarette smoke, which carries with it "no recognition of the sender."

The awareness which Smith reaches in some of these poems--"Half Your Age," "Possession"--proves to be his greatest value. Technically, in his short poems, organic form and colloquial language too often give only a cute image or a flat description. But when Smith tries for the theme of man alone, separated, searching through love for love, and finally despairing--then the poems take on a surpris-
Calendar of Events: April 8-21

TUESDAY, APRIL 10
Goldiggers of 1927 - 7 & 9:16 Wells
Modern Dance Concert - 7:15, Wonders

THURSDAY, APRIL 10
 Winds of Change - Seminar (8:00, Erickson Kiva)
Ferrante and Teicher - 8:15, Auditorium
Two for the Road - 7 & 9:15, Brody

FRIDAY, APRIL 11
Whatever Happened to Baby Jane - 7 & 9:30, 106 Wells
Two for the Road - 7 & 9:15, Wells
Lord Jim - 7 & 9:10, Vet Clinic
Shop on Main Street - 7:30, Auditorium
Fahrenheit 451 - 7 & 9:10, Auditorium
Modern Dance Concert - PAC, 7:15, McDanel
Winds of Change - Seminar (8:00, Erickson Kiva)

SATURDAY, APRIL 12
Two for the Road - 7 & 9:15, Conrad
Fahrenheit 451 - 7 & 9:10, Auditorium
Whatever Happened to Baby Jane - 7 & 9:30, 106 Wells
Lord Jim - 7 & 9:10, Vet Clinic
Modern Dance Concert - PAC, 7:15, McDanel
Winds of Change - Seminar (All day, Erickson Kiva)

SUNDAY, APRIL 13
Easter Concert: University Chorus & MSU Symphony - 4:00, Auditorium
Senior Recital, Patricia Case, Soprano - 2:00, Music Aud
Graduate Recital, Dean Turner, Clarinet - 2:00, Music Aud
MONDAY, APRIL 14
* Champion - 7:30, Evening Public Library

TUESDAY, APRIL 15
Cleveland Orchestra - 8:15, Auditorium
Concert: Materials of Music - 2:00, Music Auditorium
Recital: Deborah Gale, Oboe - 8:15, Music Aud
Tennis, MSU vs Notre Dame - 8:00, Variety courts

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16
* Lifeline for Bliafra - 7 & 9:10, Wells
Casablanca - 7 & 9:16 Wells
Baseball: MSU vs Albion - 2:30, John Kobs Field
Baseball: MSU vs Michigan - 3:30, John Kobs Field
Tennis: MSU vs Northwestern - 3:00, Varsity courts
Green Splash Water Show - 6:00, Women's Dl

THURSDAY, APRIL 17
Point Blank - 7 & 9:15, Brody
Green Splash Water Show - 6:00, Women's Dl

FRIDAY, APRIL 18
Morgan - 7 & 9:10, Auditorium
Behold a Pale Horse - 7 & 9:30, 104 Wells
Point Blank - 7 & 9:15, Auditorium
Baseball: MSU vs Michigan - 3:30, John Kobs Field
Tennis: MSU vs Northwestern - 3:00, Varsity courts
Green Splash Water Show - 6:00, Women's Dl

SATURDAY, APRIL 19
Behold a Pale Horse - 7 & 9:30, 104 Wells
Morgan - 7 & 9:10, Auditorium
Point Blank - 7 & 9:15, Conrad
Green Splash Water Show - 6:00, Women's Dl
18th Century Literature Seminar - Kellogg Center
Tennis: MSU vs Wisconsin - 4:00, Women's courts
African Elephant - Cleveland Grant 8:00, Auditorium

SUNDAY, APRIL 20
Concert: Premiers of New Music - 4:00, Erickson Kiva

MONDAY, APRIL 21
Concert: Richards Quintet and Anthony Miller - 8:15, Music Aud
just as 'objective' history has. But neither advances its cause much when it too blatantly ignores historical facts and probabilities in order to create its own reality. It is probably, for example, that the real historical, condemned Nat Turner, after leading a long planned, bloody and devastating holy war against white slave owners, acted as Styron's Nat did? Is it probable that he managed at the very end to reconcile himself to his God and his fate, and to avoid analysis of the events and his role in it, by repeating his murder of a white Southern belle? I think not. Styron says that he is not an historical novel but a reconstruction on history. But how can he escape having taken Nat Turner's name? In taking the name, whether he real-ized it or not, Styron also necessarily took up the whole burden of fact and probability associated with that name. John Hersey's nonfictional study of black boys in Detroit is more effective than Styron's fictional study of a black man in Virginia, not because it is 'fact' rather than 'fiction,' but because Hersey's book is more credible. We believe Hersey, Styron, we think, tells us some im-portant truths. But Hersey gives us a clearer glimpse of that larger truth about race and love and hate in America that Styron tries so earnestly, so sweasily, to create for us.

This is not to say that Styron is all wrong and his black critics are all right. Certainly they are also often guilty of distorting facts and probabilities, of refusing to allow for the possibility that Nat Turner could have outraged their preconceptions. Before any critic sets about attacking Styron's novel, he should study 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X' and compare that richly complex and human character to Styron's Nat. Surely he would then find it difficult to assert that Nat Turner could never have been attracted to white women, or been both celibate and masculine, or left hatred as well as love for his black brothers.

Both Styron and his critics, then, are guilty of raiding the past for present-minded pur-poses. Styron writes as a twentieth-century integrationist and novelist. His black critics defend their black militant hero against an arrogant, despoothing, white racist. They are saying of Nat Turner, I think, what Ossie Davis said in 1965 of the assassinated Malcolm X:

Malcolm was our manhood, our living, black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves. And we will know him then for what he was and is - a Prince—our own black shining Price—who didn’t hesitate to die, because he loved us so. (Autobiography of Malcolm X, p. 454)

We can sympathize with them all, with William Styron and especially with his critics. And we can learn from them all. But we should not believe that we can learn from them the truth about the real Nat Turner.

I do not bear the burden of being a Jew-liberal. The Jew-liberals are too often workers, the welfare bureaucrats, the school-teachers who stopped thinking in 1922. They are the ones who have been perpetuating poverty by playing the liberal game. (It is immensely gratifying to me to see black people waking up to this fact and kicking the paternalists out, like at Ocean Hill-Brownsville.) It couldn't happen to a nicer bunch of people.

The question I find myself forced to ask is why Afro-Americans put up with all this nonsense for so many years? And why, in great new era of "black self-awareness" are they continuing to put up with it?

Why should blacks continue to vote 90 per cent for the party responsible for their op-presion North and South, the party of Daley and Maddox? Why should they vote for the crooked, constant and backing politicians, the county clerks and the deep-shifty sheriffs?

Why should they vote for the unions that keep them from getting jobs?

Why haven't they taken their political power by getting specific pledges and candidates in return for their votes?

Why do they permit the existence of primarily Jew-liberal welfare bureaucracy whose pur-pose is to perpetuate poverty rather than eliminate it?

Why did literally thousands of blacks turn down posts in the Nixon administration, up to and including cabinet-level jobs?

Could it possibly be that the old leaders are getting benefits from their association with the Democrats and the welfare bureau-cracy? Could it be that some people like their secure political plums?

Why haven't the militants done any really radical thinking, instead of simply following like puppy dogs the voices from Cuba and Red China? Maybe they are too interested in step-ping into the already existing roles played by the governors, than they like to see their names in the paper more than they really want to help their people.

The facts are these: there are laws on the books that would make a difference. But they are not enforced. The social welfare assistance to the racial/urban mess available, but they are met with opposition by the old guard and by the militants.

There is a way out of the mess, but it will not take study groups and presidential commissions, but people with brains and guts to look at a situation, come up with a solu-tion and implement it.

There is a way to build Black Power, but it's not with the obsolete economics of the 1930's and it is not by stick to the Demo-cratic party and getting nothing in return.

There are people who can do the job. And when the Jews move out of their stores in the black neighborhoods, these people will move in. When the rich politicians go, these people will move in. These are the people who will build and control their own neighbor-hoods, these are the people who will police them.

And here is the word from 42nd Street, for the "black leaders" and the "black mili-tants, for the Jew-liberals and the Demo-cratic party: You are going to be very sur-prised at what happens when they do.

Things are going to get better, and it is not going to be due to the efforts of any of you.

The "black leaders" are going to be sur-prised when they find fellows considerably less noble.

The "black militants" are going to be sur-prised when the first "Tom" they've been terrorizing shots one of them and is backed up by the black community and the black po-lice.

The Jew-liberals and the Democrats are going to be surprised when progress is being made without their being around.

And that, for me at least, was one of the most gratifying surprise of all.
HIS RETURN

It was a good day to return.
His arrival shook the air
Into snow. Cold and grief
Bit color equally, damply.
Into cheeks; while darkening slightly
The outside peered through windows
At traditional words, the traditional
Gathering. Solemn-suited men
Paired before the entrance
In a dark line. The ground
Stiffened the corners of a hole.
Waiting the winter hours for him.

Church was the same in childhood:
The cross, the candles, the altar.
The comfortable black of a cloak
Wrapped about the last priest.

--Kathy Ingleby