TYGR 1999: Olivet's Art and Literary Journal

Jill Forrestal
Olivet Nazarene University, JForrest@ Olivet.edu

Catherine Swallow
Olivet Nazarene University

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TYGR

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"One in a dOzen"

my heart
is a dOnut
"mmm, dOnut," yOu think
"hOw sweet"
but wOn’t yOu be disappOinted
when yOu discOver that the
mOst tangible part Of this treat
is the hOle
left in the center
by a cOrrOsive lack Of
sugar On yOur part
nOw anyOne can enter and
take a bite

Jen Matthews
SHHHHHH...

I have
crackers in my bed,
and dust under my rug.
I am the busy husband
who promised to clean the house for his wife
and instead
stuffs the closet.
I am the college student who hides the cigarettes
deep inside the glove compartment
when mom comes for a ride.
I am the saintly wrinkled woman at church
with the long skirt and dark hose
to hide the old blood rich veins.
Venetian blinds shut.
Baggy sweater hides the bulge.
Masks march by on parade
and we never know
the men, women, and children
carrying the balloons
wearing the bright colors
playing the happy music
around us
beside us
within us
yet we laugh and we play
and we
live.
All of us
with crackers in our beds
and dust under our rugs
and no one talks about
anything that means
something.

Amy Boone
First Kiss

Screen kisses and years of pillow practice could never prepare you.

Faces converge, breathing shallows, thoughts diverge as his touch sends a tingle up your arm clearing the top of your feverish brain.

With this kiss, you are caught unaware.

Like a tornado meeting a trailer park, it leaves you winded.

Keely Long
Learning

Sharp shovel
Deep dirt
screams
human rapes
womb empty
metronome rhythm
earth pile
dark hole
fresh soil
good growth
sharp dirt
deep shovel

Amy Boone
SKI LIFT

snow pants hang in circles
around my boots
buckled to gravity-pulling
snowboard
sun burns on my back
ice wind blows harsh
on sun-crisp ears
fingers soak and prune
in glove cocoons,
clinging to the seat-bar

the mountain proudly unrolls
its diamond-white
sugar-coated
ermine fur
below and beyond
out of ice-cream mounds
moss-covered branches point
to cloud angels and dragons
rushing, gulping
up the fragments
of liquid blue dome

I am suspended through

space
where hourglasses break
sundials play
with skier’s fuzzy shadows
and grandfather clocks retire
on Natures’s

lazy

wing

Elizabeth Lundmark

Where

The boy you love, the man you feel,
Inside this wall, without my shield
Of doubt to pierce
The love of pain so near,
It is the sting of death I fear.

David Allen
Horrific Veneration

When you stop
suddenly
you can hear
and see.
and feel.
When you stop,
you may realize
the person who’s been going
is not who you thought.
And you begin to listen
to yourself.
Finding you know nothing
about this person
who you spend all day and night with.

When I stopped
I met myself.
And then cried for busy-ness.

Because being quiet
is like chaining yourself to a stranger
when you stop
Dead silent
and look into each other’s eyes
knowing you are breathing the same air
and there isn’t enough for both of you
and when you start again,
one of you will have to die.

Amy Boone
Consider

Subterranean motives
Blast away a harbor
Stinking interior leaves nothing
And nothing, is left to fear
The hope of an age
Melts down like soap
Sliding down a wet sink
Bubbles stick to the side, they
Pop
And you hide
The structure is not to fear
Frustration is a point of departure
Releasing boiling tears of lost hope.
If hope can be restored
Can it be through you?
I can not see through the glass
The reflection I run from
You forced me to see
To view the world
Not laden with violent despair
The former mists clear
And the glass broke
The structure could not hold
Somewhere in me
There beats a courage
Driven by your hope
With courage I must declare courage found.

Stephanie Rhodabarger
God in Heaven, you who tried your best to kill me, what’s next?

“What did you do today, son?”
“Woke up this morning at seven, prayed to Alla. Made a couple baby steps toward my future.”
“Oh? Got a job, huh?”
“No, I woke up this morning.”
“Oh... good for you.”

Even though it wasn’t evident in what he said – it never is – I could hear it in his voice. My relationship with my dad is probably a lot like yours, I know I shouldn’t assume, but my dad’s typical.

He grew up at the same time as yours, he’s been raised the same way your dad’s been raised, the way I imagine every father born before 1960 has been raised. And I hate him for it. My mom tells me that he loves me, that he cried when I left for the first time, that he wants me to be everything I can be, but I think that’s all crap.

Why can’t he show me? Why can’t I see his love like I can see my breath in the cold? Even though I have to breathe to live, it’s nice to be reminded once in a while that everything’s working alright.

You see, I have been reluctantly aware that you have been spectator and player in the destruction of my being the last couple of years, and once or twice, I even think that I heard you laughing.
Yesterday I walked in the house and my mom and dad were in the middle of fighting over this and that. They always tell me that it sounds worse than it is, that they’re adults and that’s just the way they communicate.

“But do you have to yell?”
“This isn’t yelling.”
“Do you think I’m yelling at your mother?”
“I don’t know.”
“Your mom and I are grown ups and that’s just the way we talk. Do you have any homework to do?”
“Dad, I dropped out of school the end of last year.”

“Oh, yes, do you have a job yet?”
And I answer him, and he’s forgotten any of what he and mom were yelling about. Now, he just sees me and all that he wants me to be. At least that’s what mom says he means when he’s looking at me like that.

Were you laughing at me? I remember trying to join in, trying to find the humor in the madness, trying to see what was so funny in the massacre, and I watched as you or someone you know ripped every single limb from my body and ate them, so that even if I wanted to sew them back on, I couldn’t. What the hell is that?

When I was a kid, maybe three or four, my parents took me for the very first time to fly a kite. The day was perfect for flying a kite, my mom said. And they took my sister and me to an open field outside of town where the wind would be perfect. And my mom, back when she was beautiful, unraveled the
string of the kite and began to run, dragging the kite along the ground behind her, hoping, I imagine now, that the swirling wind around us would reach into the kite and teach it to fly. Now that I remember, she looked possessed, insane, crazed. I don’t remember that as being bad, though. She just wanted desperately to show my sister and me that she could be good at something. She wanted the wind to pick that kite up and throw it to Heaven more than anyone in the field that day.

But, I don’t think the wind was concerned with the kite, and as my mom ran past my dad, he slapped her hard in the face, just like that. I can still hear it.

He slapped her.

So, you brought me to this place, this scenic landfill, and you asked me if I wouldn’t just put my arm around you so that I could stand in the sinking filth.

Today my dad took me to look for a job. He asked me this morning if I wanted to go with him, said he knew a couple of places that were hiring – friends of his. He had arranged some interviews. I agreed to go, reluctantly. He picked out what he wanted me to wear: a shirt and tie of his, a pair of pants in the back of the closet, shoes handed down from Grandpa.

I needed a job, I guess. If for no other reason, I needed to please my dad.

The interviews that day were a disaster. I don’t think it was anything that I said, but who I was. My dad couldn’t understand.

“What did you say to him?”
“I just answered his questions.”
“No, you had to have said something.”
“I don’t think so.”
“Look, these are my friends, people I asked to do a favor for me. I thought you would appreciate that. I thought you would take it seriously.”

And then, when I refused, you had the audacity to embrace me! You tried to reach me, save me. And I fought against that, I’m still fighting against that.

My dad gave up on helping me find a job. He told me just like that the other day. I was sitting in my room, eating corn chips and concentrating on teaching the dog to sit, and he came in and told me that he didn’t care if I got a job.

He told me that even if I never got a job, I could live off him. He made enough. He didn’t want me to leave again, to forget.

And then he shut the door and left me alone with my dog, my stupid, filthy dog who would never learn to sit. I don’t think it even knows its name.

This disgust that you’re trying to keep me from bathing in smells better to me now than any sweet fragrance you were misting through my ventilation before. I don’t want to smell pretty. I don’t want to make people smile when they are around me and see that I’m clean, fresh. I want to offend and disgust. I want to drag others down, and I want you to let me.

I robbed a liquor store today. Stuck the barrel of my 38 in that poor bastard’s face and asked him if he cared at all about his family, if he ever wanted to see them again.
I guess I supposed most people would appreciate the respect I had for family, the desire I had for this ugly trash behind the counter to remember his family, the wife I supposed he loved, the newborn daughter I supposed he held every night until she fell asleep.

But, he just looked at me and reached for the shotgun he kept underneath the register. The alcohol on his breath was leveling.

I wonder if you wish you hadn’t died for me? I wonder whether or not I’m even worth submitting to death for? I wonder if it was worth it for you to commit suicide for me? I don’t think so. Let me walk away. Let me turn my head to this side or that so that I can’t see you crying anymore, so that I can’t see you on your knees rubbing the filth over yourself trying to find some common ground between us that I will eternally refuse to admit is there.

I guess I wasn’t ready to kill him. I don’t think that I wanted to. I was too busy remembering my family, the family I left behind. I didn’t want my dad’s charity. I still didn’t.

I remembered the time that we went to that field to fly the kite. I remembered the horrible way my mom looked at my dad, the hatred – the disbelief. And, I remembered how I always used to cling to that slap as the ultimate example of my dad’s disinterest in me.

But, I realized something in those two or three seconds in that liquor store while the man with no family wanted me to shoot him as he reached for his 12 gauge. I realized that my dad didn’t slap my mom for all the reasons I’d given him, all the hatred I’d attributed to him. He slapped her because he was terrified. He looked up at the big open sky and down at
his two small children smiling and across the field at my mom, and he wanted desperately for that kite to fly. More than me. More than my sister. More than my mom.

Stay away, please, so I can suffer the eternal hell of my loneliness alone, without you or anyone else stopping to give me flowers. Then, I'll give thanks. Then, we'll be friends.

Imagine the nerve of that poor man and his shotgun blast to interrupt me in the most important realization of my life.

At least I realized.

Amen?
Innocent Blue

The colors of innocence are blue.
The oceans and horizons stand still when compared to images of you.

You inspire my perception of light.
The glimmer is evident that shines from within your circular shapes of sight.

Your azure gleam intercepts my brood.
The sapphires that verify you’re chaste seem to ignite and illuminate my mood.

J-son Ward
 Escape

1 Spinning, turning,
2 Coming fast
3 Pushing, fighting
4 Until the last
5 Running, escaping
6 From your past.
7 Closer, closer
8 Its coming near
9 Stop and listen
10 You will hear
11 Laughing, taunting,
12 Its hateful jeer.
13 Keep going, running,
14 Don’t dare turn
15 Aching, throbbing,
16 Your muscles burn
17 Run forever
18 You'll never learn

Allison Bridget
PRISTINE EYES

I see you’re disenchanted, frustrated by clouds of nothing and forever. These hopeless days mark the end of what was never really that grand for you.

_They told you to hold on tight to what you have and everything passed you by._

Exhausted by your faithless prayers? All I can do is cry for you my religious junkie. Dear heart, your dreams of heaven never really were.

_Step back and grow a little. Meet it with a more keen eye. The walls of Jericho came tumbling down and Jesus met the woman at the well._

Saddened by hearts that never loved you and hands that never held you. I will not deny the promise of brighter days, rather, I will join in that search.

_Together we sit staring at these clouds. At any moment now, the Messiah will break through. Come now, let us meet these clouds with a more keen eye._
The degradation of your soul is the beginning of your new life? Slap the rock; I promise there is water inside. The clouds burst open and rain for you a divine sign of forty days and forty nights.

_Now can you meet that with a more keen eye._

Shannon D. Swilley

_Dedicated lovingly and respectfully to the Darling Miss Jillian Newsome. May she read with a keen eye._
There She Goes

O.K., I’ll sit here and close these ill forsaken eyes, which only see what the visual perceives, so I, one fine day, may truly look past what I have been programmed to find as wrong and correct.

Left brained democracy, full of hypocrisy, Can veto any majority or any well thought out poem. Actually, I was going to write these lines silly, short, iambic time, but then she stood and time did too, then, in her, I saw right through.

David Allen
There has been a clock which my family has in a living room even now. I don’t know when my parents got it. As far as I know, the clock has supposedly been working for at least 34 years. The clock is covered with dark brown wood, and the board on the clock case and numbers are made of cheap gold. This clock might not be an expensive clock, but my parents still have this clock.

I am 25 years old now. The clock has watched me crawling on the floor and crying when I was a baby. It might be weird to say the clock is a part of my family, but he has been living 10 years longer than me. He is, so to speak, my older brother. He can’t speak to us even though he feels hungry because his battery is running out. All he can do for us is tick, and let us know an accurate time. I have seen his face over and over when I need to know the time. He would give me a smile and be glad for my growth. He is still observing my family and what’s going on in our lives in silence.

Naohito Fukumori
"Midmorning Mourning"

Quick-stepping cautiously to the overturned nest,
Halted from its fall by the soft summer lawn,
I expected to explore its magnificent depths
And find what this failed mother bird had formerly hoarded.
In innocence, I admit, I did not dream
That as I righted the firm branch home
(with my smooth poplar poking-stick)
My eyes would be assailed by
An abhorrent, gory stop-time scene
Of four broken, bent, abandoned bodies
Clustered as one, Dali-esque
Pinkish-gray, what skin was left
The rest coated in brown-red soldiers
Tearing flesh to feed their queen
Pungent reek of rotting peaches
Punching at my shaking lungs
Where eyes had been now eight black voids
Caverns housing flicking flies
And one bloodied yellow beak
Jarred open by the cruel tumble
Now a scream transfixed in place
As maggots wriggled in and out.
Swallowing again my lunch and blinking to erase the slate,
This awakening to Nature’s hatred.
My innards begged the rest of me to turn about
and call my mom, and hide my eyes in her comfort
And forget
But the rest of me stood still and staring,
Mesmerized, devoid of words
So much life here
A mass of movement
...yet none of it the birds'.

Jen Matthews
Editor's note: The following essay, written by Emmalyn J. Jerome, is the winning selection of the Reed Institute for the Advancement of Leadership essay competition. This is a response to the prompt "What qualities must leaders possess in order to promote positive changes in our society as we cross the much talked-about threshold into the 21st century?"

Millennium Navigators

"God is dead," declared Friedrich Nietzsche. To some, this statement might seem to be blasphemous or offensive. To others, it might just be a good way of summarizing the present state of Western civilization. From the revolutionary invention of the light bulb to the devastating effects of the atomic bomb, we have witnessed a century of scientific and technological breakthroughs as well as the atrocities of two world wars resulting in a holocaust which claimed the lives of millions of people. In recent news, we are witnessing economic disparities between the Global North and the Global South, the ethnic fighting between Kosovo and Serbia, and the brutal beating deaths of college students and persons of color. All in all, one can see what happens when a
society or nation declares “God is dead,” or at least not relevant anymore. Looking at it from this vantage point, Nietzsche’s proclamation does not seem so unbelievable or offensive. Yale Divinity School professor Miroslav Volf asks the poignant question, “When we have killed God . . . what happens next?” He offers that humanity is forced to create “God substitutes.” One can see the effects of these “God substitutes” by flipping through a history book or a current newspaper.

In light of our postmodern culture, we are about to embark on a new journey, a journey into the new millennium. For this new journey, we need navigators who possess the skills and qualities necessary in guiding us. These navigators need not be politicians, Nobel laureates, or economists. They need to be what author David Aikman describes as “great souls,” or “someone of preeminent attainment characterized by one or more character qualities of greatness.” Exactly what character qualities must a millennium navigator possess? In this essay, I am proposing three qualities which I consider to be imperative. The three qualities required of a millennium navigator are character of unwavering strength, including moral consciousness and honesty, a sense of being commissioned by a Transcendent Source, and a
coherent vision in which one has the ability to see above the
chaos and into reality.

What does it mean for a person to possess character?
Webster defines character as being “moral or ethical strength,
integrity, and fortitude.” In William Thayer’s book, Gaining
 Favor with God and Man, he cautions that one must be careful
not to confuse reputation with character. For “character is one’s
intrinsic value; reputation is what is thought of him- his value in the
market of public opinion.” In other words, reputation is a by­
product of one’s character. We have witnessed a year of what
can happen to one’s reputation when character is not exercised.

A millennium navigator must be one who is willing to stand alone
based on moral consciousness, even when public opinion is
against him or her. One such example of this is the Reformer
Martin Luther. He possessed the moral strength to stand in the
presence of opposition and refused to recant what he believed to
be true based on his relationship with a Transcendent God and his
knowledge of the moral authority of the Scriptures. Luther wrote
that “the prosperity of a country depends, not on the abundance
of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor the
beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its
cultivated citizens, its men of education, enlightenment, and character.” The French statesman Alexis de Tocqueville once remarked, “America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” What is it that causes America or any other nation to be great? I would venture to say that it is the country’s character.

The second quality required of a millennium navigator is a sense of being commissioned by a Transcendent Source. When being commissioned to do something, one is being entrusted by a higher power or authority to carry out a specific responsibility. The problem with leaders today is that they fail to recognize that their power has been ordained to them by an authority higher than themselves. Romans 13:1-2 states that “the authorities that exist have been established by God.” The commissioned leader is the one who recognizes the calling of God in his or her life. By this, I echo the sentiments of Os Guiness in saying that the commissioned leader is the one who has “answered the primary calling of Christ by seeking out the life of faith and making God a relevant and active portion of one’s life.” After this primary calling is recognized and fulfilled, then the secondary calling of service is lived out as a natural expression. When one seeks to lead a
nation, a company, a school, or even a family, it is essential to distinguish God’s call and purpose in one’s own life before ever seeking to govern others. In his book entitled *The Call*, Os Guinness quotes Danish philosopher Kierkegaard as writing in his *Journal*: “The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wants me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die.” Once the commissioned leader has answered the call of God in his or her life, then the life of service is one lived out in obedience and responsibility to God.

The final quality which a millennium navigator must possess is a coherent vision. In our postmodern, apathetic culture, everyone seeks to live for oneself. The common goal is to see how much wealth one can acquire before the age of 65, rather than seeking to empower the single moms on public assistance or comfort the crack babies suffering alone in their private miseries. Our skewed and fragmented vision as a nation is in desperate need of a cohesive unity which seeks to apply biblical justice for all regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or creed. The millennium navigator must seek biblical justice and be wary in what the Old Testament prophet Isaiah warns: “making
unjust laws, depriving the poor of their rights, and withholding justice to the oppressed, and robbing the fatherless.” The leader possessing a coherent moral vision has the God-given ability to see above the chaos and fray of the “City of Man”, to the moral and ordered society of the “City of God.”

As we stand on the bow of the ship called 1999 and look behind us, we can observe a century of scientific discoveries and technological advancements as well as the barbed wire and ovens of Auschwitz. From this view, we can also see the “God substitutes” of materialism, greed, and self-interest which have permeated our culture. However, if we turn our gaze ahead and focus off into the horizon, we can see the rapidly approaching millennium straight ahead. What kinds of navigators do we need guiding us into the safe harbors? We need men and women who possess character of unwavering strength, including a moral consciousness and honesty; men and women who have a sense of being commissioned by a Transcendent Source, and men and women who possess a coherent moral vision providing them with the supernatural ability to see the “City of God” amidst the brokenness and ashes of the “City of Man.”

The questions to be asked are do such navigators exist,
and where are they to be found. In response to the first question, such people do exist. Although they are not perfect, nor do they claim to be, they are the Mother Teresas, Vaclav Havels, and the Billy Grahams of the world. They are the ones who have recognized the relevancy of God in a godless society. They are the ones who are heroes in that they "inspire people to moral excellence." To answer the second question, these heroes or great navigators are found in places where we least expect them. They are the ones serving soup in homeless shelters, teaching Sunday School classes, taking care of the sick in Third World countries, and writing legislation which seeks justice rather than self-interest. As we near the millennium, we need to recognize our roles as navigators. The type of navigator I have described does not have to be a governmental leader or famous evangelist. Navigating begins with you and me recognizing the call of Christ in our lives and choosing to follow Him into whatever area of service He leads us.

Emmalyn J. Jerome
The Tygr

Tygr! Tygr! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wing dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dreadful hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who make the Lamb make thee?

Tygr! Tygr! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry

William Blake