

*Hayes
P. Elan*



You are receiving fire: the zone is hot

scholastic may 8 1970

This issue is given to all
those men and women who have
died in Vietnam, Laos and
Cambodia; and to Allison
Krause, Sandy Scheuer, Jeffrey
Miller and William Schroeder,
killed at Kent State College
on Monday, May 4, while demon-
strating so that the killing
might stop.

editor-in-chief: steven brion
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The opinions expressed in the SCHOLASTIC are those of the authors and editors of the SCHOLASTIC and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Notre Dame, its administration, faculty or student body.

Second class postage paid at Notre Dame, Ind. 46556. The magazine is represented for national advertising by National Educational Advertising Services, 360 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017. Published weekly during the school year except during vacation and examination periods, the SCHOLASTIC is printed at Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556. The subscription rate is \$5.00 a year (including all issues and the FOOTBALL REVIEW). Please address all manuscripts to the SCHOLASTIC, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556. All unsolicited material becomes the property of the SCHOLASTIC.

Prologue

It is a commonplace, and a dangerous one, that states categorically, "Those who remain neutral in times of moral crisis are the greatest sinners." Things are not that simple: the tension between action and meditation is much more difficult to resolve than such absolutes would indicate. This is especially true in a community that cherishes learning and the reasoned search for wisdom.

We had not planned to run this kind of issue: Monday night, a very confused but otherwise normal *Scholastic* was in process. However, the span of events stretching from last Thursday's Cambodia declaration to Monday's call for a nationwide student strike, and culminating, at least symbolically, in the deaths of four Kent State students . . . all these forced us to reevaluate our position.

The essays and poems that follow are born of and reflect that tense uncertainty. The prose attempts to explore three possible reactions to the moral anarchy of the President's address, the deaths at Kent State, and the recent Justice Department characterization of campus radicals as "sick kids." None claim to be right. None attempt to supply finished responses to what is swirling around us. What they do attempt is a perhaps Quixotic ordering of a chaos that must be met now.

And ultimately what is most central is exactly this collision with all those incomprehensible forces, within and without us, that would deny the sanctity of human life and the possibility of the beautiful. Viewed from any greater perspective, these affirmations may be minimal, futile, and delusive. But they must be made anyway. If minimal, Quixotic tilting at windmills is all that is allowed us, we must at least tilt with all the energy and nobility we have.

The responses are communal, because we need to share each other's strength and love; and intensely personal, because the revolution, if it is to be anything but the cyclical hell of Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, must be built on just those kinds of personal sacrifices and affirmations. What I am trying to say is that we *do* stand with our backs to the wall. That is by no means a melodramatic or heroic statement; that is fact. That kind of realization is the first step toward answering Dan Berrigan's question: "What can a few men and women offer to a few others by way of alternatives to the general, indeed universal reliance on death?"

We are in shadows. The forest is everywhere around us, and it is confusing. We begin to despair of ever finding our way out. To reject that despair necessitates action, an offering. And all we can offer is our lives. I find myself returning to Camus, and his simple truth:

I only know that one must do what one can to cease being plague-stricken, and that's the only way in which we can hope for some peace, or failing that, a decent death. This, and only this, can bring relief to men and, if not save them, at least do them the least harm possible and even, sometimes, a little good. *steven brion*





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the cossacks:1917

from our fence we watched
them in the early morning stirring
the still air with their dust we saw
their locust hooves moving like a huge
cloud of bees across the steppes the wind
increased an ominous chill in the air
closer they came rank upon rank proud
sabres sheathed faces marked
with skull-bone masks
of the dead
passing before us in the silence
of the sun and then gone in the temple gods
are eating brave men
into air

— *John Stupp*





To be born, to create, to love,
to win at games is to be born
to live in a time of peace.
But war teaches us to lose everything
and become what we are not.
It all becomes a question of style.

—*Albert Camus*

Insidious Normality

Alas, my brothers,
Helen did not walk
upon the ramparts,

she whom you cursed
was but the phantom and the shadow thrown
of a reflection.

From the mythology of war flows war. The idols placed upon the altar of the spirit of man are the most profound roots of the present. The present is crisis. Unless the roots are altered, the future will follow in the same mode. At this point in history, that implies no future. The heroism of *The Iliad*, that first great legend of war, records the destruction of Greek and Trojan civilizations; they dealt only with the war of the sword. The present deals with the war of cataclysm, of napalm, of germ, of uncontrolled strafing, of nuclear holocaust.

Examine the idols in this mythology that began with Troy. A less heralded legend also recounts that war made great in the poetry of Homer; and this legend tells that the cherished possession for which the Greeks destroyed, the beautiful Helen, did not walk the ramparts of Troy, had been transported to Egypt by the god Zeus. Understand that the Greeks destroyed for a phantom, an illusion. The potency of the truth within this legend must replace the romantic zealotry of that other mythology that sees any honor in war, that sees anything but futility there.

And Helen, as happens to all causes of suffering, was cursed by the dying. Yet she, as the legend goes, was but "the shadow thrown of a reflection." She was not the cause of a man lifting his arm to sever the head of another, the cause lay within him, reflected upon the walls of Troy.

The present is crisis. United States foreign policy, in Indo-China and analogous situations, pursues a phantom grail. The elements that conjure that phantom lie within the conjurer, who need not carry the armaments of war, those who see the phantom as real, as sacrosanct. Further, this nation has involved itself in violence continuously through this century. The element of war has wound its way into full acceptance in human culture; its prongs pierce all realms of the present society. The course of any normal events contributes to our war, because those idols legendized with Troy are firmly entrenched in normality as we know it. The present is crisis; it is the point where the peoples of this nation must face the potency of this truth. Immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Indo-China is essential, but it is an ephemeral resolution. It will not preclude repetition; repetition is almost insured. Usurpation of the idols demands absolute halt to mesmerization in normality, regardless of how fine that normality may be. Thus, a student, a people's strike. Simply because as students we contribute to the path our nation takes.

To face realities: we are a powerless people, disenfranchised, to ignore for a moment the dubious power of the franchise. Powerless; yet our normality is as great an underpinning for horror as the sighting of a village from ten thousand feet. If a strike affects national policy, a monumental victory. But ephemeral. The creation of an alternative, of new idols, a new mythology, these are the responsibilities of the less totally ensnared, the less fully mesmerized, those in the privileged position where rejection of idols is possible. The urgency of this attempt lies in the fact that we do not fight war of the sword, or of terrifying modern weaponry only, but of less easily recognized forms of violent oppression as well.





May 8, 1970

Suite for R. H.

Prologue:

"Sometimes human bones, that must have been at times before many feet from the top of the dune, are exposed by the winds. At the mouth of the Devil River, in Alpena County, an entire cemetery with large numbers of human skeletons was exposed. The same phenomenon happened at Cross Village and at other places."

Land:

gives back the snow
it can no longer hold;
picnic tables have been leaned vertically
against trees to keep
the snow from settling there;
we drive down a dirt road
that wanders toward
the lake's shore, toward
the edge of this bowl,
carved and filled how many thousands
of years
ago by ice moving slowly
south to melt in Indiana.
The frozen water in rough, high piles now
circles
Lake Michigan.
It has been this way (exactly) since

Time:

These sand hills
that dance with the water
as it moves were once
the home of fishers
and hunters.

Here, where the Devil River loses itself in
Lake Michigan,
the Miami built with bark
their homes, they
took for their families from
these marshes and conifer woods: birds,
aquatic animals.

Each winter they hid
deeper in these hills
from winds that shift the sand and sting,
and drive toward shore
lake waves
now dead piled white, & waiting
to be born again.
Potawatomi, the peoples called them-
selves:
Pokagon. Miami.
In villages that touched the lake they
hunted & fished,
ate, lived ritual lives,
fought wars, hated, they
lay with women.

In homes built within these hills
they raised their children.

They taught them to celebrate these

Distances:

We lay beneath two blankets, beneath
the trees that have stood here watching
this ritual as now one Annamese man
lies beside his love
beneath tall trees, beneath
the oblong shadow
of death disseminated mechanically

by other Asians, by Americans. He must
raise his children beneath
the death we daily bring him.

He has not known for one hundred years
the safety that shades us now, yet

he knows the distances
within which love must move he knows
it makes us one, all these peoples,
all of us who
live inside these rituals
and eat of these dreams for our children's
peace,
who lie beside someone to celebrate
a mirrored Michigan winter

Sun:

moves lower now. Settling into
the mounds of ice, thrown
toward us by this gorged & cratered mirror
it
gives birth to shadows
advancing toward
these high sand hills.

We are in shadows.
Planning for a time when the wars will end.

The ice that circles this shore
will last long after we have gone
long after we have passed into these
distances long after
the fires of Asia
have burned us
all.

— Steve Brion

May 8, 1970



The Form of Dissent

This is the first time in its history that the United States has been forced to consider seriously the rightness of its actions. We are a very moralistic nation, so the shock has been severe. Opinion is polarized, and the intellectual community finds itself at one pole, facing the industrial and current political establishments at the other. The considerable tension that exists between these elements of the society extends beyond the question of the war: they oppose each other over most important questions. Since the intellectual community's ability to effect things physically is limited, it must impress its feelings upon those who do possess that ability, the polis and its leaders.

Because of the great tensions working now, the usual means of communication, such as drafting statements and holding demonstrations, have failed to impress, and so a stronger means must be found. A University strike seems to answer that imperative, but at the same time it can imperil the community which uses it. The problem is this. The tone of Agnew's anti-intellectual pronouncements, and the way that tone has been generally applauded, suggest that some of the forces behind the political establishment oppose even the existence of a genuine intellectual community. The community should be aware of this pressure against it, and of the strength of the structures from which that opposition proceeds. The community isn't usually bothered by the pressure because it is sustained by its own solid structures, which are those of the University. But when those structures are abandoned, as they are likely to be during a strike, the balance is destroyed, and the community becomes vulnerable. Perhaps that is what happened at Kent State.

The forms of the University have advantage: they mean education, and education has come to be esteemed by almost everyone in the country. When dissent occurs in conjunction with something so valuable as education — when it occurs within the system — the public is willing to listen to and tolerate what it otherwise might not. But when educative functions cease, or even when the public thinks they have ceased, dissent loses the advantage of the conjunction, and public response becomes negative.

For these reasons, University structure is important. Of course finding an effective means of communication is important, too, but whatever that means is, it should recognize the need for a durable structure. The duration and form of a strike should be planned very carefully, and those of us involved should proceed with the idea of incorporating the energies now displayed into the University system. It can be changed to accommodate them.





The Mylai Ode

Thank God
William Calley
I
am still
breathing
I
have come
to remeasure
the unvarying distance
between two stars
to remeasure
my breath
By some grace
I have paths
endless
about me
fed by streams
of cool water:
to remeasure
my breath
and dispose
my prayers,
if I pray,
my thanks
made to no one
Thanks to God
William Calley
I am still
breathing
here first
to dispose of
love
and your place,
William Calley.
*
If any man
William Calley
is lucky enough
in prizes
or wealth
and doesn't let it
go to his head
he is fit
to be wedded
to his townsmen's praises.
I call
the people
of the city:

Honor him,
be happy
and rejoice longer.
Remember still,
I say:
Don't flirt
with twisted minds
but honor
him
and rejoice,
sing of him,
I sing of him,
in return
for his glorious doings.
Thus the first
measure
of my breath.

*
Then I
found out
that an act
like murder
could be done
by just about anybody
So Michael Bernhardt.

*
He has given us
life together
William Calley
sanctions you
holiest
of men
William Calley
Water is best
of all
and the light
alone at night
shines more
than all
a rich man's
money
William Calley
Water
is gone
You are
receiving fire
It is
hot

William Calley
Ernest Medina
Michael Bernhardt
Heat
 flames down
upon the kiss
 You are
 receiving fire
Flames down
 draws you
 toward it
The second measure
 of my breath
 tells this:
the zone is hot
 and is consumed
 by momentum.
Water is
 vaporized.
 My breath
grows dry.
 The paths
 once fed
by streams
 of cool water
 continue
but the streams
 give no reflections
 now tar,
William Calley,
 black bitumen
 it is the rot
of the ice age
 You are receiving
 fire.
The zone is hot
 William Calley
 Water is best
of all
Heat
 is drawn to heat
consumes the space
 between.
 My third measure:
after the heat
 has fulfilled itself
 I am breathing
bitumen.

Michael Patrick O'Connor



To Reflect & To Decide

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for any man to know what response is appropriate in the face of an intolerable breach of what he believes is right. And yet, as Father David Burrell offered in October, "it is our glory as men precisely to reflect and to decide." Today, the words of the prophet Zephania are worth considering:

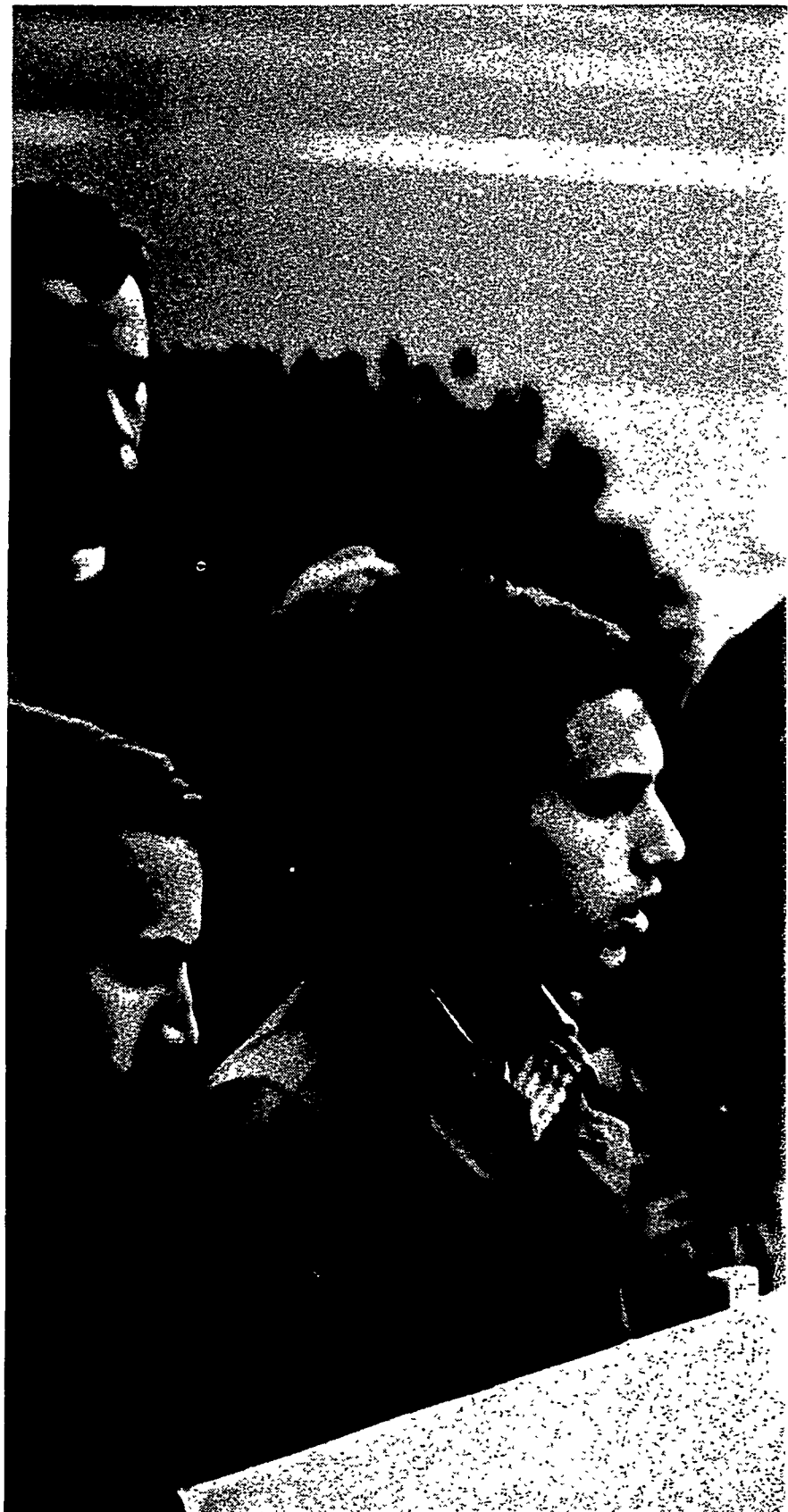
*Woe to her that is rebellious and defiled
the oppressing city!
She listens to no voice,
She accepts no correction.
She does not trust in the Lord,
She does not draw near to her God.*

In the face of such a nation, a man must live and respond. He must understand his fellows and meet them where they are. In faith, we offer this response:

President Richard Nixon
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Nixon:

Enclosed please find our draft cards. Please consider our reasons for sending them to you. We acknowledge the complexities of your making decisions for an entire nation. We acknowledge, too, that democracy demands that each citizen take part in, or at least be represented in the decisions which determine his fate and the fate of his fellowmen. In refusing to recognize the authority of our elected representatives in the Senate and the House of Representatives, you have denied us the rights upon which our democratic obligation to society rests. Your decision to escalate the war into Cambodia is not our decision, nor is it our representatives' decision. It is your decision, and because of your abandonment of the Constitution, it is your decision alone — it can in no way be construed as a decision representative of or binding upon your countrymen. Your decision would have meaning only in a totalitarian state. We refuse to accept America as such a dictatorship, and act accordingly. We believe the continued merciless killing in Southeast Asia is immoral. Now you have made America's part in that fighting illegal as well. As we realize that foreign policy decisions are not made in a frame of reference of morality, we confront you legally: we cannot obey the laws of a nation whose leader prostitutes the basis of those laws, i.e., the Constitution. Please keep our draft cards until such time as your decision to continue and expand the war becomes a decision of the representatives most of us were denied the right to help elect. Obviously, we have no pretensions to power; rather what we ask of you is justice for all. We send our draft cards to you not in defiance, but in personal efforts for peace.







Trains

These days pass without rain,
and I no longer welcome
a train's dry thunder
as a voice of April,
nor do I rejoice as we often did,
to see its wheel sparks
burning in the dead siding brush.

It moves out, carrying soldiers who were
my friends. Soon they will
fight across new ground, where the enemy
is boiling
and without trains. My friends
and I lose each other when their
soldiers' hair becomes
like his, a cage of fire.

— *Rory Holscher*



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