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The other evening when I strolled into our normally quiet college library to read the newspaper, I noticed that an unusual number of people were swarming around the READER'S GUIDE table. My wondering eyes scanned the checkout desk--it was sagging under a massive pile of PMLA's, PHILOLOGICAL JOURNALS, ENGLISH QUARTERLIES, and SHAKESPEARE REVIEWS. The library assistant, wild-eyed and dazed, was staggering out from the magazine stacks with yet another load of weighty journals, while about a dozen students impatiently awaited the chance to present to her their handfuls of magazine request slips. Then it hit me--I had no doubts about it; it was freshman term paper time with the English Department presenting its annual restaging of the St. Bartholomew's massacre.

Slowly struggling through the shifting throng of people fighting to get to the card catalogue, I secured the paper and elbowed my way over to a table on the periphery of the reading room. Fortunately, there was a vacant chair; the people at the table told me that the former occupant had just had a nervous breakdown and was now on the way to a local mental hospital. Just prior to collapse, according to my informants, he had discovered that he had omitted the dates on his bibliographical entries and would have to re-check each of his fifty sources. The students near him had heard a low, hysterical laugh, and then he was gone.

Across from me, a girl with a stoic facial expression was mechanically thumping through a thick HISTORY OF MODERN LITERATURE. She said that she was doing her paper on Shakespeare, and then I noticed that the HISTORY was printed in Leipzig, circa 1700. She had wanted to write on symbolism in the LADIES HOME JOURNAL, but someone else had nabbed the topic before she could get it. Sitting next to me was another freshman, diligently scrawling out data by which he hoped to prove that Wordsworth's sonnets were really written by Mark Twain. I settled down to read the paper and became a little, peaceful island in a world of anxiety, scratchy pens, footnotes, and writer's cramp.

Deep in the middle of another Berlin crisis, I felt a demanding nudge at my shoulder. It was the writer on the other side of me. I had noticed when I sat down that he appeared to be slightly nervous: he was vigorously humming a few bars from "Annie Laurie" and was keeping time to the music by loudly slapping the tabletop with his flattened palm. Now in a trembling, hoarse voice he asked me how to spell "Karamazov"; then in gratitude he grabbed my hand, thanked me profusely, and dived back into his paper and "Annie."

I finally made it through sports and the comics, nodded to the writers, and rose to leave. Shoving my way to the door, I looked back at the little table with its toiling occupants. In my sophisticated upperclassman soul, I knew that this was good for them; I knew that the intellectual strain, continual frustration, and possibility of neuroticism were outweighed by the gains in maturity, insight, and creative ability. Then I had a brilliant idea which I have sent to the chairman of the English department: why not give the freshmen an option to the term paper? My plan would free the library of congestion and give the students freedom to choice. It is designed to involve the same resultant injuries and rewards as the term paper. It consists of tossing freshmen into a pit of savage, hungry lions and coming back in three days to hoist them out. For this project embraces the same psychological principle as does the term paper: if you live through it, you're guaranteed to be more mature.

--Herold Jenkins

*Editor's note: The obvious psychotic fantasy that inspired the above article probably is a residual effect of a trauma in the author's early life; I judge the crushing experience to have occurred almost exactly three years ago.

Bacchanalia:	Live a little!	A Court Proverb:	Let him that serveth	--Dave
	While		Take heed lest he fault.	Llewellyn

Cobwebs gather
in the
corners
of my mind

As the muteness
of these
empty days
accumulates
like
dry ice
whose texture
adhesive
sears the touch

And I cry--
oh for a pick
to chip off
this
silence.

--Rosie deRosset

It Rains a Lot Around Here

Plump--plump--plump . . . those
raindrops express quite well how the world
seems to me--kind of slow and sloppy.
Grevness. It's appropriate that everything
is brown or black or grey. Nice, neutral,
no-sided personalities inhabit my slow and
sloppy world.

Sunday the world smelled like earth-
worms, mashed-under-your-feet-but-still-
wiggling earthworms. My world needs to
have its earthworms either cultivated or
killed--not crushed!

The air smelled faintly of rust Monday.
With every breath I take my world
decomposes a little more.

I hear thunder! Something in my world
is not dead or dying! Thunder promises a
storm, that desired horror which accompanies
glorious spring.

--Brenda Wikoff

From Vanity, To Conviction

Walk softly on my
mind--and don't disturb the tired
Love that sleeps inside.

Drops of hope fall in
Vain on the hell-centered mind
Echoing fresh death.
--Lynne Leopold

No definition
No feeling or attitude
Just listless being.

Raindrops on the mind
Sprinkling liberally thoughts
Of the better times.
--Joyce Lukridge

Just then,
when you looked at me,
I felt as if
you had never looked at me before.
I felt that for the first time,
you had seen me for what I am:
a soul and not a silhouette;
intangible substance, not clay.
Of course,
that was just a thought,
a passing whim.
I realize that
you have looked at me many times
and never seen me yet.

Silver Bridge

a cold river divides
the town is brought together
with a silver bridge
across a cold cold river

the town tonight alive
teases the binding bridge
silver strong at five
silver in the setting sun

silver with the town
across the cold divide
the silver bridge across
suddenly the loss

the fall and suddenly
a cold a cold river
divides the town divides
the silver bridge is down

--Mervin Lee Ziegler

The Way the World Ends

Apathetic ice consumes the pyre
Upon which, quick and soon, we'd burn
Were love or faith the equal of desire.
--Dave Llewellyn

--Pat Durham