

him and blocked the sunlight from the window. But he knew the secret that made this monster powerless. His thin blond hair hanging down across his forehead, his face damp with perspiration, the boy began a high-pitched, defiant laugh. He waved his arms hysterically and screamed, "You can't hurt me; you can't hurt me." One more step, and he would be triumphant. Searching in the blackness for a foothold two steps down, he lost his balance and began falling, falling, falling—

"Johnny, are you coming out to play?" A friend's voice came through the circular window from the outside. But inside, the only movement was that of the sunny oval as it left the staircase, moved up the wall, and then disappeared.

The Infernal Comedy

Harry Yankuner

"Midway in our life's journey, I went astray from the straight road and awoke to find myself alone in a dark wood."

—DANTE—*The Inferno*

MIDWAY in my ponderous journey through my freshman year, I recognized that I had strayed into the Valley of Erroneous Grammar. As I looked around, I saw The Mount of Precise Grammar and started to climb to the top. However, as I started, my path was blocked by three beasts: The Leopard of the Incorrect Sentence, The Lion of the Disorganized Paragraph, and The She-Wolf of the Diffuse Theme. Overawed by the horror of this sight, I was driven back. As I was losing hope, Noah Webster suddenly appeared, explaining that he could lead me from the valley, but that I would have to journey through Grammatical Hell. Exclaiming that I should be honored to be escorted by him, I joyously agreed to follow.

Webster explained that I would have Grammatical Grace in traveling through Hell, for I would be unable to make the journey unprotected. As we started our trip, we came to the Vestibule of Hell. At my first encounter with poor grammar, sentence fragments were crying out in pain, for they were neither making sense nor were they completely meaningless. Clinging to each other, they would try to steal a verb or a subject to become complete. Next we came to the River of the Misplaced Commas. At the bank towered an exclamation mark who wailed, "Now you shall see your butchery of the English Grammar."

After crossing the river, we came to the first of two circles I had to visit. As we walked, I noticed the path was strewn with commas and, the further we went, the more numerous and more grotesque they appeared. Continuing, we saw a clearing where a black mass of commas was crawling over four restrictive clauses. I started as I recognized one of the unfortunate clauses from my latest English

paper. Its verb and subject were totally covered while the direct object was screaming for help. Turning to leave, I saw that question marks were swinging in the lower limbs of the trees with their tops hooked around the branches. Passing underneath, we heard them whine "Why? Where? How?"

In the second circle, we entered a forest whose trees were gnarled and stunted. From each tree dangled a modifier, craning its verbal for a noun or pronoun to modify. Then I noticed a squinting modifier which reminded me of the cheshire cat's squinting eyes in *Alice in Wonderland*. Each time a dangling modifier would raise its head, the squinting modifier would cry out something unintelligible. In the middle of the circle, a constant rain of compound-complex sentences fell, forming a slush. As these sentences broke apart, a possessive noun walked among them using a prepositional phrase to violently split the infinitives.

The journey had inflamed my inflectional nerves. Webster, seeing that I recognized my sins, showed me the passage to the Mount of Precise Grammar. He explained that I would have to improve my writing or suffer the consequences that would await me in Hell. Happy to be out of the valley, I set out with a renewed determination to climb the mount as a better writer.

Human Existence: Material and Spiritual Equilibrium

Tammy Haines

MAN, since the beginning of time, has recognized that there must be some higher power which guides and protects him. This acknowledgement of a supreme creator has helped him surmount problems which might otherwise have proved unconquerable. For many, especially in this modern, scientific age, proof must be given. There are those who make the statement, "I believe in God, if there is a God." This is a declaration which provides security for one who is too indecisive to make a firm stand in any one direction. The agnostic is usually a small and insecure person, one who is constantly searching for some illusive quality which will magically provide a basis for his existence. Here, however, he finds unavoidable conflict. While fact or proof appeals to the intellect, only faith can touch the heart. The constant turmoil which results from these two similar but opposing factions produces the stable or shaky foundation on which we build our lives.

A particular phase of man's relation to God, which may only serve to increase the duel between the two, is his acceptance of death. The truly religious person does not fear death, nor think of it with apprehension. He has been taught that the whole purpose of living is to eventually die. Bryant, in his "view of death," "Thana-