The Cresset

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE,

THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TWENTY CENTS
Vol. XXIX, No. 10

OCTOBER, 1966
**IN THE OCTOBER CRESSET**

- **IN LUCE TUA** ........................................... The Editors .......................................................... 3
- **AD LIB.: THE IDIOT DRIVER** .......................... Alfred R. Looman ......................................................... 7
- **WHERE THE BLACKBIRD FUSSES** ................. Philip Raisor ............................................................. 8
- **POEMS BY GABRIEL BOISSY** .......................... Translated by Charles Guenther ......................................... 20
- **EXPERIMENT JOB CORPS** ......................... Lynn Mack ................................................................. 21
- **THE THEATRE: IN DEFENSE OF THE FUTURE—II** Walter Sorell ............................................................. 23
- **FROM THE CHAPEL: AN INVITATION TO FREEDOM** Arthur R. Simon .................................................... 24
- **ON SECOND THOUGHT** .................................. Robert J. Hoyer ......................................................... 25
- **EDITOR-AT-LARGE: THE NATIONAL STUDENT CONGRESS** Victor F. Hoffmann ..................................................... 26
- **THE MUSIC ROOM: SAD DAYS FOR COMPOSITION** Walter A. Hansen .......................................................... 27
- **THE PILGRIM** ............................................. O.P. Kretzmann ......................................................... 28

---

**The Cresset Associates**

- Louis F. Bartelt
- M. Alfred Bichsel
- Erwin J. Buls
- Daniel R. Gahl
- Luther P. Koepke
- Carl H. Krekel
- Van C. Kusserow, Jr.
- Richard H. Laube
- Jaroslav J. Pelikan
- Arthur C. Piepkorn
- James S. Savage
- Ross P. Scherer
- Allen E. Tuttle
- Leslie M. Zoss
- Robert W. Bertram
- Paul M. Bretscher
- Richard R. Caemmerer
- Ernest B. Koenker
- William T. Kowitz
- A. R. Kretzmann
- Fred W. Kruger
- Lester H. Lange
- Alfred R. Looman
- Paul F. Phipps
- Walter Riess
- Richard W. Scheimann
- Robert W. Schnabel
- Richard W. Wienhorst

**Contributing Editors**

- Walter H. Gross
- Alfred P. Klausler
- John E. Saveson
- Andrew Schulze
- Paul Simon
- Herbert H. Umbach
- Albert G. Huegli
- John R. Milton
- Robert C. Schultz
- Theodore C. Schwan
- Helmut Thielicke

**Departmental Editors**

- Richard P. Baepler ........................................... Religion Books
- Anne Hansen .................................................... Entertainment Arts
- Walter A. Hansen ............................................. Music
- Paul T. Heyne .................................................. General Books
- Richard H. Brauer ............................................. Fine Arts
- Walter G. Sanders ............................................ Poetry
- Walter Sorell .................................................. The Theatre
- Leslie M. Zoss .................................................. Science
- Walter Sorell .................................................. The Theatre

**WILBUR H. HUTCHINS, Business Manager**

---

**THE CRESSET is published monthly September through June by the Valparaiso University Press, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383. Second class postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana. Subscription rates: One year—$2.00; two years—$3.75; three years—$5.50. Single copy 20 cents.**

**Entire contents copyrighted 1966 by the Valparaiso University Press**
August in the City

Copy deadline for the October issue of this magazine is the first day of September, which means that these pages have to be written in August. Ordinarily the only people who work in August are unskilled laborers, resort personnel, and journalists. In previous years we have, therefore, felt a bit put upon sitting here at our hot typewriter while everybody else was out splashing in the lake or gathering wildflowers in the mountains. But this year it's different. We have company.

Among those who are neither splashing in lakes nor gathering wildflowers this August are mayors, sheriffs, chiefs of police, and officers of the National Guard. They are staying close to home because those blasted Negroes (most of whom, incidentally, have never been able to afford to take August off) are too blasted stubborn and unreasonable to knock off their blasted parades and demonstrations so that said mayors, sheriffs, chiefs of police, and officers of the National Guard can get away from the heat and the congestion of the city for a relaxing couple of weeks at the lake or up in the mountains.

Our heart goes out to these Top People, and we don't doubt that they are completely sincere when they call in the TV cameras and appeal for law and order. They're right. If we don't have a little more law and order life isn't going to be very pleasant for any of us. On the other hand, one can see the point of those Negroes on the West Side of Chicago. It wasn't law and order that got them those plastic swimming pools; it was a ruckus that forced the mayor to call in the National Guard. So maybe law and order aren't quite the sum of the commandments. Maybe there is still something to be said for loving thy neighbor as evidenced by doing justice and loving mercy and otherwise treating him as one would like to be treated.

Having lived almost half a century in one of the most lawless and disorderly ages in man's history, we have a respect bordering on passion for law and order. But as a white man we simply can not ask the Negro — much less demand it of him as a moral duty — to respect law and order. We can and do hope that he will. We think we can offer him persuasive arguments that, in the long run, it would be to his advantage to do so. But let us be honest with ourselves. The law under which the Negro has lived in this country has been discrimination and the order under which he has lived has been segregation. He has not been treated as a citizen of the Republic, it is by no means clear to him that he stands to benefit from law and order, and there is no reason why he should feel bound by any of the obligations of citizenship. The fact that he has, in these circumstances, continued to love this country and to obey its laws about as well as most of us do is one of the miracles of the ages.

But a generation of Negroes is growing up that does not believe in miracles. Whitey told the Negro that he would have to "earn" the respect of the white man before he could enjoy the white man's rights, privileges, and opportunities. And that is what the parades and demonstrations are all about. "Respect," the Negro has finally doped out, is what they call "clout" in Chicago. In Whitey's world, if you've got clout you don't need law, order, or love to get what you want. And if you haven't got clout, it doesn't really matter much what it says in the Constitution and the law books. So they're out to get clout, even if it means that a few mayors, sheriffs, chiefs of police, and National Guard officers have to spend the summer in the hot, muggy city, rather than at the little place where they go to get away from it all every August.

We sure hope the poor devils have air-conditioning. It can be murder in town on one of those hot, muggy nights if you haven't got air-conditioning.

HUAC

The Duke of Wellington is said to have commented on one occasion after reviewing his troops, "They may not frighten the enemy, but, by God, they frighten me." This sums up, about as succinctly as we can put it, our feelings about the House UnAmerican Activities Committee.

Before proceeding with this theme, we want to make it perfectly clear that we have no sympathy with most of the witnesses that have been summoned to appear before
the committee. By and large, they have been an unsavory lot. The point is, though, that it is not against any law of the United States to be unsavory. We live in this country under a social contract which requires us to get along with all sorts of people we don’t like, including quite a number for whom we believe we have just cause to entertain the heartiest of dislikes. In our case, this number includes fanatics of all kinds, authoritarians of both Right and Left, flagwavers, boors, bores, and pseudo-intellectuals. If wishing could make it so, we would have them all modestly but decently housed somewhere in the highlands of the Malagasy Republic. But wishing doesn’t make things so, and meanwhile the Constitution guarantees them certain rights which they insist on availing themselves of even when they know that in doing so they are irritating us, Congressman Joe Pool, and probably the vast majority of the American people.

The House UnAmerican Activities Committee has operated in the past as a legislative agency with quasi-judicial status to accomplish by harassment and embarrassment what the executive has not been able to do by law. It exists to bring before the bar of public opinion men and women against whom there is no evidence that would make them subject to indictment and trial in a court of law. It renders no verdicts from which a man can appeal; it merely creates impressions which, because of their very vagueness, can not be controverted.

We doubt that this committee frightens the enemy, whoever he may be. It does frighten us. It frightens us because it measures actual living, thinking, talking, working Americans against some prototype of The American which, so far as we can tell, exists only as an abstraction in the collective mind of the committee. It frightens us because it postulates an authoritative political creed “which, unless a man keep whole and undefiled, assuredly he can not be” an American. It frightens us because it puts men on trial in a spectacular setting which provides few, indeed almost none, of the ancient Anglo-American safeguards of the rights of the accused.

There are, no doubt, a certain number of traitors among the almost 200,000,000 citizens of this country. Let them be arrested by the executive and tried by the courts under laws which are already on the books. There are no doubt others who are practicing sedition and espionage against the United States. We have laws which provide for their arrest and confinement. Let the laws be enforced. And if the executive will not execute the laws nor the courts try men under them, let Congress proceed under its powers of impeachment to remedy the situation. But the sight of a lawyer being dragged from a HUAC committee room with a United States marshal’s arm pressing against his windpipe was, for us at least, one of those moments of truth when one either has to applaud or hiss. We are hissing — in the tradition, we think, of that snake with the words, “Don’t tread on me,” that the fathers of this Republic put on one of their battle flags.

Another Costly Sacrifice

One does not have to have any reasons of high policy for mourning the death of a friend. The New York Herald-Tribune held a special place in the affections of all of us who were fortunate enough to have known it in its great days; it won our sympathy and respect in its gallant fight to stay alive; and it will be remembered and missed for many years to come.

But while the Trib deserves to be mourning for its own sake, its passing does also raise certain questions of policy which ought not be settled by default. Newspapers and magazines are business enterprises. They may be more than that, but they are not less. As business enterprises they come under the same rules that govern any other business enterprise. They must make a profit or they will go bankrupt.

Where magazines and newspapers differ most fundamentally from most businesses is in the fact that there is a tendency for demand to decline as quality rises. In New York, for example, the Daily News, which enjoys no great reputation among newspapermen, has a circulation of 2.1 million while The New York Times, unquestionably one of the two or three greatest newspapers in the world, has a circulation of only 635,000.

To complicate the problem, the newspaper unions in recent years have seemed hell-bent on the destruction of their own jobs. In New York City, particularly, the unions have shown no interest in the survival of the papers and certainly no inclination to show any special consideration to those papers which have made unusually significant contributions to the life and thought of the nation. So, while John Hay Whitney was pumping an estimated fifteen to twenty million dollars of his own money into a vain attempt to save one of the nation’s great newspapers, the unions were upping their demands for wages and working conditions to the point where it became obvious that even Whitney’s fortune could not keep the paper going indefinitely. And so he closed it.

The question of public policy that confronts us is how many mergers and closures of newspapers we can afford. For while newspapers are business enterprises, they are also, along with magazines and other printed matter, “the press,” the one branch of business or industry whose freedom is considered so essential to a free society that it is guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. This freedom suffers some diminution every time another newspaper folds or merges with a former competitor. It is not a matter of the wrong men getting a monopoly in one city after another; it is a matter of only one voice being heard where other and differing voices deserve a hearing. What we want is not unbiased newspapers, but an unbiased press: i.e., we want, at least in every metropolitan area, enough good newspapers that every respectable shade of opinion from William F. Buckley, Jr. to Howard K. Smith can get a fair hearing.
How this is to be accomplished we do not pretend to know. Judging by the situation in New York (reinforced by the disgraceful business of the airline mechanics’ strike) some form of legislation establishing compulsory arbitration may be needed. We suspect that management does not consist entirely of little white ewes and lambs either, for that matter. But if some foundation is looking for a project on which to do a job that would really be in the national interest we suggest that it undertake a thoroughgoing study of ways to restore diversity and freedom to our increasingly monolithic and monopolistic press.

About Cops

What follows has to be read in the light of the fact that we consider few people more socially valuable than a smart and honest cop. The last thing in the world that we would want to do would be to make their already difficult and hazardous job more difficult or more dangerous.

But the psychologists have done some interesting speculating about sublimation, which Webster defines as directing the energy of an impulse from its primitive aim to one that is culturally or ethically higher. We all sublimate, so there is nothing particularly shameful about it, but it is well to bear in mind that the sublimation of an impulse does not guarantee that it will never express itself in its primitive form. The surgeon who went into surgery because of a primitive urge to cut people will probably never use his scalpel except for the highest of cultural and ethical purposes. But the mutilator lies dormant beneath the surface, and who knows what combination of circumstances might bring him raging through?

By the same token, the cop’s primitive impulse may be toward violence, toward brutality. In its sublimated form, the energy of this impulse may be directed toward maintaining law and order, i.e., opposing socially-disapproved forms of violence with socially-acceptable forms of violence. This is not to say that all or even most cops are basically violent men who are sublimating their impulse towards violence, any more than one would want to suggest that all or even most surgeons are crypto-sadists. All that we are saying is that all of us are sublimators, which is to say that all of us are drawn toward the socially-acceptable outlet of that primitive urge which is the chief driving force of our lives. In the case of cops, one should not dismiss too lightly the fact that cops and robbers tend to come largely from the same socio-economic groups and, especially in large cities, from the same neighborhoods.

All of this is intended as background to two comments. The first is that, while a great deal of the yelling about police brutality is patently unjustified, there remains a very large residue of justifiable criticism which can not be met by inane exhortations to “support your local police.” And the second comment is that there are sound psychological as well as constitutional reasons for protecting suspects from unsupervised police interrogation. There is a man under that uniform — a man who, like all of us, is a mixture of decent, ignoble, and usually unknown motives. We have asked him to do a job which involves risking his life, and therefore we owe him respect and support. But we have also armed him with broad powers and deadly weapons, and therefore we must never forget that he is potentially dangerous — to all of us as people, and to our liberties as citizens.

Rat Finks

Despite the strong case made against the two-party system in the new nations of Africa by Tom Mboya in our May-June issue, we still believe that free institutions have the best chance of survival where there is a government capable of governing and an opposition capable of alienating the respect, if not necessarily the affections, of the electorate.

There are, of course, certain built-in defects in a two-party system. One serious defect is the vulnerability of the minority party to invasion by basically irresponsible people who enjoy being mixed up in public affairs but (perhaps subconsciously) dread the demands of power. For half a century after the Civil War these people tended to gravitate towards the Democratic party; in William Jennings Bryan they found a symbol and a spokesman whom they were content to follow three times down the road to clearly foreordained defeat. And the price which the nation paid for those fifty years of irresponsible opposition was a long period (broken twice by Grover Cleveland and ended finally by Theodore Roosevelt) of government which was, at its worst, corrupt and, at its best, ineffective.

The same kinds of people who gravitated towards the Democratic party during its long years in the political wilderness seem now to be gravitating towards the Republican party — ideologues, racists, anarchists, political romantics, the whole sorry lot of sick people whose great dream is to contract out of a world which they do not understand and, therefore, fear. And this is a tragedy, for the nation, for the party, and for those responsible men within the party who actually do have reasonable, workable alternatives to offer to the policies and programs of the Democratic leaders.

What prompted this editorial was a news account of the rise in the New Jersey Young Republicans of a faction which rejoices in the name of the Rat Finks and which, allegedly, amuses itself by singing anti-Negro and anti-Semitic songs. We have no quarrel with the name this faction has chosen for itself; we confess that we could not have thought of a more appropriate name ourselves. What we do quarrel with is their assumption of a right to identify their aberrations with Republican policy. And they make us wonder whether there might not be considerable merit in a suggestion by William String-fellow in his recently-published book, Dissenter in a

October 1966
Great Society (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston): “I think a forceful argument can be made for becoming a Republican, active at the ward and precinct level in order to fight the totalitarians at the point of their initial infiltration in politics.” Power tends to corrupt, as Lord Acton has warned us. But so does opposition. And what is the point of “throwing the rascals out” if the only alternative is another, but less experienced, set of rascals?

A Naive Question

We understand via Time that “for eight months, an erudite debate has rolled the letters column of the journal Science. At sober issue: How did man lose his body hair?”

Some interesting suggestions have been offered, but if an amateur may get into the act we would like to raise a prior question, to wit: How do we know that our pre-human ancestors were noticeably hairier than we are?

We know that it is reasonable to suppose that they were, what with glaciers looming down upon them and presumably little in the way of clothing to cover them. But the point is that we don’t know. What we have in the way of data about these chaps is (are) 1. bones; 2. artifacts; 3. other evidences of their presence and/or activity. Among the activities in which they did not engage were portrait-painting and photography. So while we can reconstruct the cast of a jaw dating from some remote time, we can not with any certainty say whether that jaw was bearded or smooth. And while a recovered femur may enable us to gauge the height and weight of the man to whom it belonged, it offers no clues to the abundance or sparsity of body hair.

Neither do we have any artifacts from these ages that would, or even could, illuminate the subject. It is not even possible to tell, from the actual fossil record, whether these pre-humans wore clothing, much less whether they wore it for cover or adornment or both. So what we have done is reconstruct ancient skeletons from impressively substantial fossil evidence and then hang upon them a surface of skin and hair and facial expression derived almost entirely from certain a priori assumptions which, for all we know, may be true, but certainly are not, in any scientific sense, demonstrable.

And this is a pity, for the life sciences (biology, anthropology, and geology) have not yet altogether cleared themselves of the charge of replacing one mythology with another. This means that they ought to impose upon their practitioners the same reserve and caution which the nature of his data imposes upon the chemist or the physicist. For some of us this is a matter of urgent necessity for we occupy positions which compel us to tell people whose scruples we respect that their present views of the age of the earth and the ancestry of man are scientifically untenable, and we would rather not have the issue clouded with ingenious reconstructions of some hairy beast staring out from the page with savage eyes. We’re not saying there was no such chap. We’re saying only that the picture goes far beyond the evidence, and at this stage we, like Sam Spade, want “just the facts, Ma’am, just the facts.”

Not That Again

Several years ago in these columns we took a firm line against the use of the double that (e.g., “I feel that, if the party really insisted on my becoming a candidate, that I would have to give it very serious consideration.”) We regret to say that we have seen little evidence of repentance and amendment of speech since that time, and we are therefore compelled to repeat our warning that there are those of us who are prepared to resist the spread of any usage which will further debase the language.

Former Vice-President Nixon, the unquestioned double-thattering champion of the United States, is a very busy man, what with his law practice and his having to visit every city and town in the nation to squelch spontaneous outbreaks of a Nixon-for-President-in-’68 movement; we would not, therefore, expect him to have time for such light reading as The Cresset and we shall forgive his redundancies as we forgive President Johnson’s well-intended but cloying attempts to project an image of kindliness in his public speeches. But unless a man is President of the United States or is feverishly engaged in blocking a Presidential draft he can not seriously contend that he is so busy talking that he has no time to listen to what he is saying. A man can reasonably be expected to know that he has already spoken the necessary that, and if he can not resist repeating it after a lengthy parenthetical clause, the thing to do is avoid lengthy parenthetical clauses.

“Tempest in a teapot!” snorts the Practical Man. Not so, we would insist. It seems that every time a shipment intended for Sitka, Alaska, ends up in Port Moresby, New Guinea; every time a village on the wrong side of the international boundary gets bombed; every time church administrators find themselves with a doctrinal hassle on their hands; every time a middle-aged couple finds itself on the brink of divorce the cry goes up, “There has been a breakdown in communications!” Whether the cry is, indeed, a statement of fact or whether it is a rationalization contrary to the facts is not germane to our present argument. We all insist that breakdowns in communication can cause shipments to go astray, marriages to founder, heresies to infect the church, and villagers to die needlessly, but we write off as pedantic the concern of those “purists” who are as serious about maintaining the value of grammar and rhetoric as the means of communications as the Federal Reserve Board is to maintain the value of money as a medium of exchange.

Grammar is, essentially, logic modified by usage. When public men double-that their sentences they debase the currency of communication and, to that extent, decivilize society. Diximus.
The Idiot Driver

BY ALFRED R. LOOMAN

Some time before the end of this year, a victim of an automobile accident will have the dubious distinction of being the 1,500,000th person to die in the United States as the result of an accident in or with a motor vehicle since such records were kept. Does this little bit of information shock anyone? I doubt it.

When it comes to death on the highway, statistics are meaningless to most of us, or, more accurately, we are calloused to them. The fact that many more than twice as many Americans have been killed in automobile accidents since 1913 as have been killed in all of the wars in which we have engaged from the Revolutionary War to Viet Nam (603,000) is one we just shrug off. Historians consider the Civil War to have been one of the most bloody, yet in the same period of time as that war was fought just as many are killed in automobiles. The number of Americans killed in the Korean Conflict was 10,000 less than the number killed on U.S. highways last year.

We have all heard these statistics before and agree they tell a ghastly story, but even aware of this none of us changes his driving habits. In an attempt to scare drivers into some type of sanity, the National Safety Council predicts the casualty rate over certain holiday weekends, but it is considering dropping the practise, not only because it has been ineffective, but also because the Council feels many Americans derive a ghoulish pleasure from the news a new death record has been set over a specific weekend.

The Congress has been hot on the subject of car safety and has now passed legislation which sets standards for greater safety in the automobile. Presumably in a year or two cars will be safer if Detroit can figure out a way of making them safer without sacrificing too much the appearance or the horsepower we demand. While the automobile manufacturers have borne the brunt of the criticism for the high death rate from accidents, and they are not entirely blameless, their product is not the basic cause of the slaughter.

When safer cars come out, will casualties be reduced? Did the introduction of safety belts in cars make a difference? Perhaps they did, although the death rate last year was 9,000 higher than it was five years ago when safety belts first came into general use. Perhaps the answer lies in safer highways. This, too, is questionable, because highways have been becoming more safe in recent years and yet this is not reflected in the casualty figures.

No, the basic cause for the high accident and death rate is that nut behind the wheel. He drives blithely along unaware of the fact that he has under his control a machine that has proved to be much more deadly than an armored tank. He sits behind the wheel oblivious to speed and oblivious to the rights of other drivers. Who is this idiot driver, a teen-ager, a drunk? Perhaps in some cases, but usually it is someone like you or me. The great majority of the accidents are caused by sober and supposedly sane people and I am sure you will agree that no driver reading this can say he has never driven too fast, has never taken a chance, and has never broken a traffic law. All of us change when we get into the driver's seat. On a highway the shrinking violet becomes a raging lion and at the intersection the courteous gentleman becomes a selfish lout. And have you tried to change lanes on a freeway around 5 p.m. when all the cars around were driven by gracious and loving husbands and fathers hurrying home to their loved ones?

There is nothing to indicate that there will be anything except an increase in the annual casualty rate from automobile accidents so long as we remain indifferent to the statistics. I never hear anyone express outrage at the death rate from accidents, nor do I recall anyone ever taking the blame for an accident in which he was involved. What militates against an early end to this slaughter is our feeling of dependence on the automobile. We can't do without it and we are willing to try anything within reason to slow down the death rate, just so long as it does not interfere too much with our use of a car. We won't put up with laws which would make it fairly easy to have our driving licenses revoked and so we will go along as we are until that day when you and I are finally ready to do something about us.
Where The Blackbird Fusses

By PHILIP RAISOR
Teaching Fellow in English
Kent State University

It was settled, thought Jason Gold. He'd not paint this year, or any year. Storms were coming; the birds never lied.

Across the street, at one of the brick houses he'd passed by, a woman leaned over the rail of a shallow porch impatiently banging her hand against a tin pan. At her hip a young boy steadied a BB gun on the rail and fired into the trees at the dark cluster of raucous blackbirds that dispersed abruptly, forming again without loss a few trees away.

Each fall, presaging winter, they screeched and scattered and hung like leaves in the barren trees, dropped their dark, mealy excretions on the dying grass, on the cold sidewalks. They blotched the roof tops and left feathers in the troughs. And when the winds and lightning came, they shouted their last warning and retreated south like a mob escaping a formidable, but hesitant, authority. Only a few brave or innocent or broken ones remained.

Overhead the sky was gray, aphanitic, threatening. Jason knew it was settled.

Watching the boy, he believed it and he didn't, but for the moment his last chance, his old age, didn't matter. Seventy years of living, forty years a housepainter, a short while before dying—all that too was settled, and didn't matter. A moment like this, watching the boy lean over his gun, fire with certainty, straighten up in amazement when no birds dropped from the cluster, served the old man a new growth of pleasure that rendered facts remote and unimportant.

Holding the gun at arm's length, the boy shook it, and then tucked it back into his shoulder and fired again. Jason smiled. Before the boy cocked his gun again, the old man knew the next shots would be fired more urgently, with less care, and finally the boy would shout as he fired, and fired again, and eventually he would either cry or laugh out of disbelief. Dark and evil birds. Out of reach: And at them he would run, shouting, for a moment even cursing his mother.

Caught up in the expected series of responses, Jason grasped at a fragment of a childhood memory fastened to a farm in the Wabash Valley with his father standing at his side along a broken fence next to a plumage of ripe wheat speckled with black splotches of fluttering, screaming birds that darted from the fence back to the field devouring the nitflies and the blowflies and the golden wheat; unperturbed birds that screamed away from the shotgun blasts and a boy's rifle, but swarmed back, only to repeat the pattern when the boy ran shouting through the field while his father's loud and sympathetic laughter ran with him. "You can't kill them," his father had shouted. The boy, running blindly, saw that it was the truth.

And now, for the first time since he was a child, the old man wanted to shoot a gun or throw a rock or shout at the birds. On his leathern face the smile broadened and he felt his oldness dissolve before the flush of the youthful impulse. "Foolish, flat out foolish," he told himself, but the feeling was strong and good. Breathing deeply, holding his breath for another second, he then yelled sharply into the trees:

"Awww, Awwwwww, yo-o-uu birds!"

They broke again. Drawn out laughter, caught deep in his chest, bent him quickly into a necrotic, spewing cough, purging his youthful pretensions.

The woman turned and stared at him as he tried to wave, doubled up, but she abruptly pulled her child into the house, closing her door against the stranger.

"You Bit..."

He swallowed his brand, and then less at the woman than at the blackbirds and at the dark clouds which inched diabolically one victory closer, he only nodded and shuffled unevenly like an unspent and dangerous ash down the sidewalk toward the next house.

IT HAD BEEN LIKE THAT all afternoon—the blackbirds and the darkening clouds, and always the women in the subdivision frowning at the old man as though he were a disheveled and useless doll or a vagrant thief or a radical minister with pamphlets inside his coat. They frowned at his right shoulder that slanted under his double-breasted coat, at his coughing and spitting into the gutters or the leaves in their yards. Across backyard fences, they whispered. One woman who held her daughter from peering through the curtains had insisted he wanted handouts.

"I don't want no handouts, lady," Jason had said. "You got rust on the eaves; the nailheads are rusting and it's spreading down the sideboards; the paint's shriveling on the left side around that big picture window and you'd better get it scraped off and repainted afore winter comes." He'd thought the exaggeration was minimal, but it was never easy to accept, to listen to himself blather the hard-sell of a vacuum salesman.

At noon, as he'd passed the fluorescent WELCOME sign (the sign which blinked palely, almost imperceptibly, in the afternoon grayness), and passed the yards dotted with tricycles, swings and a few lawn chairs, charcoal grills and scattered toys, he'd seen then, as now, that the houses, fascicled like barracks, were clean and well-painted, the awnings unrusted, and the foundations had not suffered the erosion of progressive winters. He'd
seen, too, that the paints had seeped into the soft wood of the pre-built, frame houses and the reds and yellows and off-colors were as dull as wasted land. Not many jobs here, he'd thought. 'd take a miracle. He'd counted on a miracle all day. It was simply a matter of pushing on, of catching the right person in the right mood, of having enough time, he'd thought. Through the dark clouds Jason had tried to glimpse the orange light of Indian Summer that would tear away the oppression of final judgment.

Now, with only two houses left, he felt weak and childish, prisoned by his congeries of blind and foolish hopes. He could not control his coughing. He could not stop feeling old and tired. At the next house he knocked more softly on the door than he'd intended. Waiting restlessly, he looked ahead to the last house narrowing slowly in the shadows. On the bank of the leaf-cluttered yard, a boy, his arms pyramided behind his head, watched the blackbirds.

WHEN THE DOOR OPENED, Jason turned around. A small, blonde-haired child stood in the light. She was no more than four and over her smile was a half-moon of jelly.

"My mommy's in the tub. You wanna come in?" she asked opening the screen door.

Jason chuckled weakly. "No, child," he said. "Your mother wouldn't like that. Is your father home?"

"I were eating supper and daddy's at work and mommym's in the tub."

"Your father's at work," Jason said. "Do you know when he'll be home?"

"You wanna see my brother? He's these many,..." she said holding up two fingers. "You wanna come in?"

The child was pretty, smiling. Jason thought that here was a chance to get inside, to be sitting on the couch when the lady walked into the room. It would embarrass her maybe, but what could she do? The child had let him in. "Her face is too pretty," Jason thought unexpectedly. For a moment he didn't know why her face seemed exceptional. It was fragile, unblemished, her eyelashes were long; a child's face.

When her head bobbed in the light, Jason could see that the vertical shadow above her lip was a thin scar that attractively gave depth to her face. Slowly, concentrating on the scar, gradually enlarging, another face evolved behind his eyes and he could see the limpid transformation of a thin scar extend into deep furrows around a child's eyes, bland and colorless, deep-set in an expressionless face, but yet a face that pleaded out of a thin, textureless skin which tightened at the throat and at the chest and tightened again at the palm of an upturned hand. She was not pretty, but it was a child's face. Where had he seen it? There had been a face like that.

"You wanna see my mommy, mister?"

Jason could not hold the image.

"Mister, I have a tricycle."

He turned from the girl and started down the steps. "I'll come back later," Jason said. "You tell your mother and daddy I'll come back later."

"My daddy works in an office," she said.

"I'll come back later, child." Behind him the child looked quickly over her shoulder and then quietly opened the screen again. She rushed into the yard, dancing on the leaves. "You wanna see my tricycle?" she shouted. "It was over here on the side of the house."

Jason stopped, and frowning he looked at the open door and then at the girl. Where was her mother? Inside he could hear water running and a voice singing. "You better go in," he said. "Your mother doesn't want you out."

"But I wanna stay," she said and dashed around the side of the house. Jason knew he had no choice and started through the leaves toward the child. This disruption quickened and then absorbed his tethered energy. He had not even talked to the lady, not even seen her. Anger mingled with the weariness he felt, and increased when he could not find the girl. He looked along the yard, behind the bushes, resolved to capture her quickly. "Don't these parents pay no mind to their children," he thought. Then he thought of the boy's mother across the street, and rebuffed, he warily decided it was none of his business. From behind one of the bushes the girl darted into the yard, pedaling her tricycle toward him. As she passed, Jason bent swiftly, and with one arm plucked her off the tricycle pulling her firmly against his chest. She pushed against his shoulders playfully struggling to slip under his arm.

"I don't wanna go in," she said shaking his shoulders like a hobby horse.

Jason walked silently toward the porch feeling the gestic rhythm of the heel of her hand against his chest. It has been a long time since he'd held a child. She was soft. Her hair smelled clean and talcumed and her dress crackled. When was the last time? He thought a moment. Eddie Regents. Great God! he thought. Little Eddie Regents! Had it been so long since he'd touched a child? He loosened his grip on the girl. Buck's boy, he thought and smiled. He sniffed the child's hair again, but suddenly mixed with her smell was an effluence of smoke and mud heavy with decaying vegetation and human waste. Embarrassed, he lightly touched the child's pants. But she was clean, and greatly relieved he began to laugh. His ignorance of children and the abrupt shock of feeling helpless seemed ridiculous, more so because he unconsciously wiped his hand on his pants.

But the strange mixture lingered, caught him in his laughter, and unnerving the old man left him suspended for a moment. The smell seemed to come from inside himself. He inhaled lightly, and then deeply, but this time snared only the rasping in his chest and the odor of the child. The mixture was gone, and confused Jason sifted quickly through his memory for an incident that had been so impressive to regurgitate such a foul smell in the midst of such freshness. But the child pounding...
He felt her hand reach in his coat and fumble around. "I don't wanna go in!" she said, her voice rising with each step Jason took toward the porch. She pulled at his shoulder, and then pounded on his chest, but Jason would not set her down. "Please get my tricycle!" she shouted. Her eyes were pleading. Jason stopped. For a moment he hesitated, then walked back through the leaves and with his weak arm picked up the tricycle.

"Child," he said. "You're a great cause of trouble." Looking around him he then asked, "Now what do we do with this thing."

"I wanna ride," she said, again trying to slip through his arms.

"Hold still now," he said. "Your daddy'll ride you tomorrow."

"My daddy works in an office," she said. Jason looked at the child and the frown that creased her prettiness. He glanced at the door and then quickly set her on the tricycle.

"One time around," he said. He leaned over the handlebars and began guiding her around the yard. As he pushed the girl through the leaves and the expanding shadows, bouncing over the rough ground, feeling his legs tighten, he felt a strong impulse to push faster, to hear her chuckling turn into laughter. They shuffled through the yard, and at a bump that almost jarred her off the seat she laughed compulsively holding tighter to the handlebars, laughed as though she had been freed from silence. It was high-pitched and explosive. She held to his wrist and her hair whipped against his chin.

Abruptly Jason stopped. "Good Lord, child," he said. "Your mother'll skin me. You'll catch your death of cold." He pulled the girl, still laughing, off the tricycle, and bundling her close to his chest started for the door. He felt her hand reach in his coat and fumble around.

"Do you have gum, mister?"

"No gum, paisaini, no gum." The words caught in his throat. "No gum, paisaini." The words were not his; not now, a long time ago maybe. Where had he said that? Not in a dream. Maybe it was a dream. No! he wanted none of it. Drawing her closer he walked toward the porch bouncing the child who kept plumbing his pockets.

From above him a woman's voice cut the girl's hand from his coat.

"What are you doing with my child?"

Jason placed the child on the porch, gently, hesitantly. He nodded to the woman dressed in a bright satin robe. Her face was dour and glistening and her hair was damp at the ends. "Do you want something?" she asked. She pulled the child close.

He gave his name and asked for her husband. The woman glanced at her daughter, who was smiling at the old man, and then, watching Jason, she reached back and opened the screen door. "I'm sorry he's not...I'm busy right now." She flicked an uneasy smile and patted her daughter's head, then tightly cupped the front of her robe. Bending, she whispered to the girl. The child's face puckered. "Answer me," the woman said stiffly.

The child began crying softly in her mother's robe, shaking her head.

"I'm a housepainter, ma'am. That daughter of yours ran into the yard. I was bringing her back in."

"Yes, thank you. You might try somewhere else," she said. "All the houses are pretty new here."

"Mommy?" The child pulled at her mother's robe.

"Be quiet, Cynthia." The girl's hand was lifted from her mother's robe, and she lapsed into silence.

"They are pretty new, ma'am," Jason said. "But your house...

"You shouldn't run into the yard, Cynthia. Come in now."

"Lady?" The door closed and immediately Jason parried his words, forcing back the slowly advancing, useless explanation.

Useless. He thought the word, rolled it around in his mind. "Aww, da-amn," he breathed. For a long time he stared toward the window at the right of the porch, at the outline of a lampshade lighting an intricately barred pattern on tightly closed drapery. Inside the lady must be watching him from somewhere, like a frightened chipmunk, treed but not a prey. But he felt no anger. Her rejection of him had been so quick, so frenzied, his own response so slow, that he felt pillaged. No gesture could have held her, no explanation could have touched her, but he hadn't been ready anyway. She was quicker in her fear than he was in his poise and he felt only that his old age was bearing heavily on his tongue. Finally, noticing that a few porchlights were on and the sky was almost black, he turned and walked down the sidewalk.

**THE BLACKBIRDS WERE QUIET NOW.** Only the wind blowing and the leaves cracking under his footsteps were audible and quick. For a moment he listened,
inhaled, and tried to net the late bloom of summer that as a child he could catch in any season. "Cynthia. That's a pretty name," he thought.

A single leaf blew in front of him. Jason watched it ricochet down the street. It leaped against the wind. It slid along the gutter, and then popped out again into the middle of the street. It rolled and tossed until it was almost out of Jason's sight. As he was turning away, he saw the leaf land in a pile of smoldering ashes. There was a flicker of light and a quick thread of smoke.

In Jason's mind there was a Sunday morning when the parson was holding church in Byron Samson's barn across from the courthouse and two miles from Leonard Gold's bonanza of capped natural gas in the middle of a ready-to-be-harvested wheat field from which young Jason ran when he saw the sky turn erosely yellow and the land blacken beneath and the blackbirds screech south from the smoke, into his father's and a mob of men's arms who ripped from a burning sermon on sinLOWERED at the boy, a truant from church ("Play scarecrow today, son. But be alive and watch how the birds fly," his father had said before he left).

"I'll bet he's got matches in his pockets," one man had said.

The boy had stared in awe at the great crackling, blazing fire, the tremendous reach of the flames, the black smoke, and he'd blustered, "Pa, it just thundered and went yellow. I don't have no matches, pa."

And his father staring past him for a moment, crying for no reason Jason could understand unless it was because the blackbirds were gone, finally looked directly at the boy, spanned his face as though sighting birds, and then touched him on the shoulder.

"He's not lying," he'd said. "Help me with the hoses, son."

Through those endless days and nights (four, he learned later), the boy had carried handfuls of sand and saucepans of water to his father who smelled burnt all over and who smiled quickly through a blackened face that then went strained and furrowed when he leaned to lift more cumbersome sandbags. And once the boy saw his father standing straight up, shouting into the smoke, his face streaked again and his eyes lifted upward. His voice was loud and pained and threatening. He yelled that way for a while, but then his back bent again and he pulled at the sandbags and the dark shadows of the smoke and of the sky fell over him. Young Jason had stood in wonder and he'd felt very close to his father then, though the man had seemed very much alone.

The old man stood alone now, watching, for a moment longer, the smoldering pile. He thought the embers, sparked by the single leaf, might gash through the crust of ashes and shine once again out of their dark confines. But the spot was black and he turned away.

He walked slowly toward the next house, the last house on a long day's odyssey, trying not to think of another winter in his apartment with the harsh wind outside swirling snow past his window and the solitude drawing heavily on a promiscuous memory. He tried not to think of the postman's bootprints leading away from his porch — OCCUPANT in the mailbox; of empty sleds in the snow. He tried not to think of children or of his retirement. But he stopped and leaned against a tree, breathing heavily.

It had been four years since the Regents' Paint Company announced his retirement. On that Friday Jason had spit on the self-winding gold watch that young Eddie Regents had dropped in his rough palm, and only the oldtimers, a few years left to climb the ladders, had hummed their approval for the good old bastard who did what he said he would when that day came. Jason alone had howled at the tobacco Juice splayed across the last five o'clock that would matter, for this was his final puff against the new methods and the new executives who, since old Buck Regents had died, hung on a man a stanchred white uniform, payment plans shoved in his pockets, and sent him out in a big truck full of cheap paints and huge advertising signs to an address that had been thumbtacked to a bulletin board in a bronzemouthed, dead-eyed secretary's office.

"Jee-sus, Jason, now what'd you do that for?" Eddie Regents had asked.

"Boy, Buck would turn hard in his grave if he knew his son was pandering my years to a ritual that flat out mocks a man's life. A new watch? It's got none of those years in it, boy."

Red-faced before the mention of his father's name, the young man blinked slowly, inhaled, and waved away the past with a dangling arc of a limp hand. "We don't have any old watches," he'd said.

"Then don't turn me ou..." Jason had stopped, turned, and walked past the blank, uninterested stare of the secretary, away from them, back to his apartment where for the next four years the stained watch ticked in his room under a saber, faded pictures, dust and crumpled handkerchiefs while his body, once small, marked by wounds, but calloused and supple, his legs and forearms of pioneer strength, grew into a contingent of flaccid muscle and wrinkles.

Occasionally he'd thought of looking for other jobs — odd jobs that would keep him outside where he could work with his hands and let his senses shift with the undulations of trees and wind. But it seemed to him that he'd always been a housepainter, that working in the hot sun or the cool gray of an afternoon would not be complete unless he was spreading paint across a house that could be finished. His body and mind were tuned to that unity. A new job would leave him with a sense of discord and soon, he reasoned, he'd work mechanically and the mornings and afternoons would be no more than dull ploddings to the end of his days, the same steps Buck had taken once he buried himself behind a big oak desk. The same steps young Eddie was taking.

Eventually he had adapted to the stuffiness of a closed room and, finally, tired of foraging too long into the meek and terrifying chaos of his memory for the vitality he
had done after the Great War when they'd believed that street, walking toward his first house, as he and Buck presented honestly and directly, Jason had thought that and Jason had prodded and waved at it but it continued on us, Buck. They let it come back on of trucks and explosions, the indefinite faces that darted to float, hang, eddy, dip around him, and he'd kicked at window as though it were contained in a narrow ditch, streaked through the venetian blinds at the top of the floor. Dust had ricocheted in the morning light that a table full of old photographs and tried to yell and was thought. Unless there was no dirt at all?

He shook his handkerchief, and wrapping it around his finger he'd begun digging into crevices to loosen the window. Dust had eddied around his head. He'd gagged and coughed and continued digging, but soon his eyes and throat clogged and his chest heaved.

Towards dawn he'd begun to disgorge yellow bits of phlegm. Dizzily he'd wandered away from the window, brushing tables and knocking loose pots and plates to the floor. Dust had ricocheted in the morning light that streaked through the venetian blinds at the top of the window as though it were contained in a narrow ditch, and Jason had prodded and waved at it but it continued to float, hang, eddy, dip around him, and he'd kicked at a table full of old photographs and tried to yell and was back with it — back with the dirt and gas, the rumblings of trucks and explosions, the indefinite faces that darted away before he could recognize them; back with the jolt that knocked him ten feet into a ditch and the blood that ran from the shoulder that was gone, the shoulder that had cushioned the gun that he had fired at faces which turned into blood, falling at his feet or in the distance, hanging over the jungle of barbed wire still screaming in the dust and the yellow haze; back crawling along the ditch, the yellow haze falling over him, choking him, and then a hand pulling him over a bank, out of the dirt, away from the yellow haze. "Buck, Buck. It came back on us, Buck. They let it come back on us."

"We're out of it, Jason. We're out of it!"

And in the morning, when he'd found himself on the street, walking toward his first house, as he and Buck had done after the Great War when they'd believed that quality paints and skill could be sold door-to-door if presented honestly and directly, Jason had thought that he was moving away from an unconquerable, marauding memory which could not kill him, nor be destroyed, nor do nor be anything but a reminder that he wasn't out of it yet.

"Hey there, Old Man! Hey there! You need a doctor?"

"What!" Startled, Jason stared blindly around him, his eyes focusing slowly and finally settling on the boy who still watched the blackbirds now cradled in the trees like entangled leaves. A few more porchlights were on and in ten minutes it would be cavernously dark. Several cars passed, headlights dimmed, and the drivers, men, turned their heads slightly and watched the old man as they passed, finally curving into separate driveways.

"Hell, no. I don't need a doctor," Jason said as he walked past the boy and started up the long sidewalk to the last house. He stopped halfway up the sidewalk and saw before him a plain, white, inauspicious house; little different from the others. But as he stood there watching the shadows limn the shutters he suddenly felt that this was the one. He could feel it, could feel it mount and grow as though an old and renovated spirit, deep and tenacious, had sprouted again. He would paint again — paint an even stroke across the white house that he had scraped clean of residue and washed of embedded dirt. He would paint as he had painted for forty years and the house would be white and clean, and if he coughed on the new paint he would paint it over and there would be no dirt on the house when he left. Cut his price if he had to; down to cost, even less.

Jason barely heard the voice behind him.

"You ever shoot birds, mister?"

"You ever shoot birds?"

Still drawn by his vision, Jason faltered between answering the boy and moving rapidly up the sidewalk. He answered curtly. "Used to. When I was on the farm."

"Birds ever look like your father?" the boy asked. His voice was monotone and distant.

Jason, drawn curiously by the voice, walked quickly back toward the boy. He lay in the grass with a BB gun along his side, his small hand around the stock. His features were smooth except for a hooked nose that leaned slightly to one side. Because of the boy's directionless stare, Jason was not sure the boy was aware of his presence. Feeling awkward standing above him and apparently unseen, Jason started back up the sidewalk thinking that maybe he was hearing voices.

"You didn't answer my question, old man," the voice said.

Jason spun around. "To you, son, I'm mister or sir, not — old man."

The boy looked back over his shoulder, hesitated a moment, then, as though it were of no importance, nodded. "I've killed seven birds," he said pointing the gun at the trees. "They all looked like my father. You ever
..
“Well, he sure seems to like that gun,” he began.

“I should never have bought it for him,” the man said. “Does he know how to shoot it?” Jason asked.

“I guess he does. He shoots it all the time.”

“Well, that’s sure one way to learn.” Jason said. “You ever shoot it with him?”

The man’s eyes narrowed as though he was trying to recall unfinished projects he’d not put on a list. Then he looked toward Jason and his eyes were clear unsteady. “Never mind,” he said.

“When I was a kid, little younger than your boy,” Jason said...

“Never mind, old man, never mind. You’d better leave now.”

“Now here you go again,” Jason said.

“Come off it, old man.” His voice was rising in a soft, tired whimper. “Now we don’t want any trouble... “You stop it,” Jason shouted. “Now you just stop one minute and listen.” He leaned forward, his eyes flaring, glaring at the man whose eyes widened, then abruptly narrowed, contracting his momentary surprise.

“This is my house, my house, old man. What in the...”

“What is going on out there, Norman?” a woman asked from inside the house. Then she was in front of him, her hand holding open the screen door. Small and pretty, she stood confidently, her chin slightly raised. Behind her, her husband’s face seemed to nest in her black hair. Together they looked formidable, haughty, blank as brazed stone.

“This crazy old man. The one Mildred just called about,” the man said.

She turned slowly toward her husband, smiled. “I’ll talk with him, Norman,” she said. “You go check the fire under the peas.”

“Hell no, I won’t go check the fire under the peas,” he said. “This crazy old man...”

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, Norman, don’t be stuffy.”

She turned back to Jason and gently closed the screen door. “He’s just a harmless old man. Excuse my husband, mister. He’s just tired. Teaching and coaching high school students can get tiring.”

Jason remained silent. His anger, lit, burning, flaming in a single direction had been subverted, contained by a stronger barricade. She was a barricade, he saw that. He was just getting started, just getting under the man’s skin. Her smile was plaited on her face. Jason’s words had now turned inward, subtly smothering the openness of his anger. It seemed ridiculous, futile to shout at her. But she was there and waiting. “I’m a housepainter,” he said finally.

Inside the screen the woman began sniffing the air. Suddenly she shouted, “The peas, Norman, check the damn peas.” Her husband hesitated and then darted back into the room. In a moment he yelled back that the damn peas had been burnt.

The woman’s head fell back and then drooped slowly forward. She breathed deeply, but in the middle of her breath, caught it, held it, and then let it out easily in time with the gradual hardening of her expression, pointed directly at Jason.

“Old man,” she said. “We have salesmen coming to our door every day. All they want to do is sell something — sweepers, brushes, doormats — we get tired of that. But at least they don’t bother our children. No, we don’t want our house painted. But at least they don’t do what Mildred Barrett says, but you’d better leave the neighborhood anyway.”

Jason could only look at the woman. Anger and weariness warred within him, contesting in the pit of his body, driving upward, until he could almost scream his strength and his impotence. Why this matter of children? He had none of his own and they were not his responsibility. Maybe in another country, maybe where he’d seen children who were everyone’s responsibility — but here in this subdivision he would leave them alone to play and grow, just leave them alone.

Now, as the woman called her son, and then slammed the door in front of him, Jason felt the last fragments of hope dissolve into enigma.

SLOWLY, HE TURNED and walked down the sidewalk. Apathy settled where the war had ended, and he felt an oldness that was not born of isolation or sickness but of a weariness that neither seemed to affect his mind or body, but something deeper — maybe his soul. It was all over wasn’t it, he thought; all over. There was nothing left. No more houses, no more people, no more time. A black cloud swooped over the last bit of gray and the blackbirds were quiet. The winter and the barren room and the uncontrollable memories, they’d get him soon; swallow him up and make him one of their own. As a defense against that kind of destruction, as though attack was his last and only defense, he tried to shout, to muster the birds, but his voice would not rise, and he ended by speaking softly into the night. “It ain’t the way it used to be, Buck. It ain’t knockin’ on a door and building a business and lookin’ forward to next year. We used to laugh and ride over our hurts, Buck. You remember that? Well, I don’t hurt no more, Buck, and I can’t laugh either. I’m an old man, Buck. And these folks have taken the hurt right out of me — an’ left me dry.” And now void of anger or pain or weariness he sensed only a vast sodden hollowness and, standing there, his body seemed to dismember slowly and effortlessly floating upward into the dark regions of the trees and the birds and the clouds, gliding unobstructed through them until the fragments spread into total darkness, floating aimlessly. There where it was dark and always moving. And it was not until Jason felt himself gag and almost retch along the sidewalk that his body reminded him that he was not yet imprisoned.

As he walked past the boy still fondling the gun, he said nothing. The boy jumped off the grass, catching him by the arm.

“You see what I mean, mister? I can’t talk to him either.”
Jason looked dully at the boy. His face was angry, sullen, his nose looked broken.

"Someday I'm going to kill him, mister."

Jason numbly shook his head. "You don't know what that is, son," he said. "You just leave that idea alone."

The boy's laugh was abrupt and contemptuous. Jason pulled away, and mechanically tightening his coat around his collar, he started down the sidewalk.

"Don't turn away from me again!" the boy shouted.

There was a click and a hollow "POW" and Jason felt a thud against his back which became a sharp bite on the next shot and before he could jump and rip the gun from the boy's hand another BB had smacked against his ear. Grabbing the gun by the stock, Jason smashed it against the bank until it shattered. Turning on the boy, he shook him by the shoulders like a fouled machine and the boy's body hung flaccid, quivering, until Jason's arms were jerked away and pinned behind him.

"What are you doing, kid?" Jason shouted. "What the hell are you doing?"

The boy shivered, struggled to break the old man's strong grip, and then shouted, "Dad, where are... Dad!"

For a moment there was the boy's shouting and Jason's heavy breathing, and then porclights and small spotlights severed the darkness, doors slammed sporadically, and across the yards men and women and a few children shuffled through the leaves. Above them the blackbirds awakened and screeched from tree to tree caught in the throes of a sudden, ominous disruption. The people were slow, hesitant in coming, and Jason continued shaking the boy with the ineffable anger of a man helpless in his own confusion. The boy's face bobbed and his body hung flaccid, quivering, until Jason's arms were jerked away and pinned behind him.

"What is it, Norman?" a woman asked out of the crowd that had formed. "What's the old man done?"

The boy, falling to the ground into a hump of congested appendages, writhed, frantically rubbing his shoulders. Staring wildly, he crawled like a furtive, wounded animal toward his lair, trying to hide from his shadow and the enemy that still hovered near. He reached out and touched an object — his mother just leaning over — and recoiled knotting himself into a whimpering cell of defeat, estranged and terrified, unable to realize that the pursuer had been trapped by the jungle.

Embarrassment catapulted through Jason. Looking at the boy huddled on the ground, he thought reality had been suspended, shattered, racked once again for no child should react so violently to a simple shaking. Had he done this? Suddenly he wanted to throw the boy out of sight, like a pebble, like a shout that dies in the wind. But the moment passed and before he knew it, before he could stop it, Jason was sick to death with himself. "God what have I done," he thought. Revulsion settled like a sullen, his nose looked broken.

"Why that's the old man was down by Ellen's house," a woman said peering through the men's shoulders. "I was out on the porch with Timmy. He was there on the corner of her yard — Ellen, here's that old man — I think he was looking in your window."

"He said he was a housepainter. I didn't think so. Rude? I've never seen anyone so rude. In my window?"

Then she nodded and frowned simultaneously and stepped back into the crowd, away from the old man's view.

"I knew it," a woman said. "The first time I laid eyes on that man this afternoon. I knew he was up to something."

"Is the boy all right? What'd the old man do?" another woman asked.

Jason felt his arms released. "I don't know," the voice behind him said. Then the body of the boy's father slid around him, his face, distorted with disbelief, peered into the stark, limp expression of the old man. "Old man. I thought I asked you, three, four times it was, asked you four times to leave. Said there'd be no trouble then. This kind of thing..."

"What happened, Norm? Find that out," a man said. "Well, let's stop jibbering and get this straight," a woman said.

"Lizbeth says he was looking in Ellen's window. That right, Liz?"

"I believe I'd swear to it."

"On what text, Elizabeth?"

"Oh, for crying-out-loud, Harold."

"Just ask the boy."

"Who said that? I want to leave the boy out of this."

"Ebert. James Ebert. You're the boy's father, aren't you? I live five doors down the street."

"Ebert. Yes, I've seen you," Norman said. "Still, I want to leave the boy out of this."

The boy sat on the grass, his body doubled. A few women rubbed his arms. Parents were trying to shoo their children back into the houses, but they twined around the boy and at their parent's legs. The boy looked at his father, at the old man whose eyes were glazed and moving, and then the boy dropped his head. Unusually, the crowd shifted. Jason stared out into the dark evening, at the grim, unpolluted sky that threw no light on the small gathering beneath the harassed blackbirds. Gauging the darkness, he knew there'd be no Indian Summer this year, but it didn't seem important now. Voices hummed in his ears and Jason waited, surrounded and yet alone, like a man with an unclear burden of guilt and sorrow pressing him deeper into silence and separation.

A woman stepped through the crowd holding her bright robe around her. For a moment she stared at Jason; then brought her hands to her face. "Hi, my daddy's home now."

"Cynthia!" screamed the woman. And quickly the October 1966
child's wrist was clamped in her mother's hand and her body pulled back through the crowd which closed after them; no one looked behind.

Waving the woman away, the boy's father proclaimed his embarrassment and his innocence by drawing, with a mournful shake of his head, affirmation from the crowd. "Well," he said, "now what are we going to do about this?"

"The boy looks all right. I mean he's not hurt."

"Yeah, look, he's OK. I was just sitting down to this steak."

"You wouldn't say that if he was your kid, Johnson," Norman said.

"Maybe we should do like on T.V. You know, call for a rope." The speaker, a thin, sprite-like figure, chuckled heavily.

"Yeah, or ring Eliot Ness."

"Or J. Edgar Hoover."

Jason listened past them, listened to the muffled and mournful crying of the child who though wired tightly in her mother's arms cried not the muscles sobbing from loss nor a frenzied, panicked wail from pain, but a lonely and bodiless profusion of distended sounds like distant sirens contending with heavy breathing from a nearby room; a montage of inexorable confusion carried by the wind.

"Now what'd she do that for?" Jason said. "Just why'd she do that?"

The crowd turned toward the old man, their chuckles cut short in the middle of the rhythm. Several women began pushing their children toward the houses, but returned to pull away their husbands who had moved back a step from the old man. Jason watched them now, saw them wavering back and forth like tall bent sprigs uneasily brushing, scratching each other; then still, quiet, to be whipped again into an abrupt, flailing tug-of-war. He looked away. The children stood quietly enmeshed against their parent's legs; their faces, pinched with coldness and shrouded with ignorance and apprehension, intently followed the expressions on the faces above them. The boy was now standing, looking down at his shoes that mechanically cracked the leaves. He tried to lift his eyes to look at the old man, but still trembling, he could only flash suspicious, unseeing glances at the ground.

"Look, get the boy to say something," a man suggested.

"He doesn't have to say anything," Norman said.

"Well, for heaven's sake. Do something." It was the boy's mother. She patted her son's shoulder and then walked to her husband, turned in front of him, and stared at the old man. Jason's return look was indomitable, penetrating. Quickly, she looked away; then turned angrily toward her neighbors as though they had called her a name or seen weakness and mockingly were patronizing her. "This boy has been hurt," she said.

"That's obvious, whatever else happened. And you people just stand here talking." She leaned toward her husband. "Damn you, Norman."

They all nodded tolerantly.

"What do you have in mind, Eleanor?" a man asked.

"Well, for heaven's sake, call the police — They all looked away.

"Or beat him up, beat him up, if nothing else — "Oh, for Pete's sake. Really now," a man said. Around them the children stood in the grass, in the smell of burnt leaves and dying ashes in the incinerators, gesturing along with their parents. Several men drifted away. Somebody laughed lightly, then choked it off. Jason was held to the children, hypnotized by their mimicry.

ABRUPTLY THE BOY BROKE toward a garage, running swiftly, a few children scrambling after trying to catch up with him. He darted along a patio. Jason pursued him with his eyes, went with him, followed, sensed the boy's free loping across the leaves and the grass and was with him at the sudden jolt on the cement when the toes tightened, adjusted, without breaking the pace. There would be the cold, peppermint air in his throat. Around the corner; then, shortly, back again, children following, the boy, a shadow, crept and bobbed leaping furtively over the leaves toward the crowd ("Jeb? Someone was calling. His mother). The shadow dropped heavily, stopped to listen to the pointed echo that sounded like a hand tersely slapped against a wall. The voice must have resounded even more thunderous to the shadow, for it froze, quivered in the grass, and then, at last, docilely gougued the leaves aside as it felt its way forward. The boy returned with a thin clothesline rope, and reaching the edge of the crowd, he stepped quickly up to Jason and held the rope in front of the old man as though d angling a cobweb before another child.

"What's he got there?"

"Will you look at that!"

The boy's father bounded forward and jerked the rope from the boy's hand. "What kind of silly joke is this, Jeb?"

The boy ducked his head and stumbled back. Several children hid behind him. He shook his head slowly, and then rapidly, and then slowly again.

"Why you silly kid," a woman said.

Jason tried to catch the boy's eyes. Jeb's face, frail and wasted, leaned toward the ground again. His arms hung limply outstretched, and pliant hands, wrinkled from the cold, dropped to his knees, palms turned down. He slumped hard to the ground and one hand slid silently off his knee and he remained inert like a wilted stubble on barren land: Jason, his senses pricked by the boy's run, stood excited, ennervated, and stared helplessly at the broken figure. It looked unalterable, deep in rigid listlessness. Jason had seen it before. Somewhere. It was a fixed thing, a posture that was limp and mindless and food for a festering parasite. It was a weed eaten in side. It was a form that was empty like a child begging for heaven's sake. Do something," a man asked. "Well, for heaven's sake, call the police — They all looked away.

"Or beat him up, beat him up, if nothing else — "Oh, for Pete's sake. Really now," a man said. Around them the children stood in the grass, in the smell of burnt leaves and dying ashes in the incinerators, gesturing along with their parents. Several men drifted away. Somebody laughed lightly, then choked it off. Jason was held to the children, hypnotized by their mimicry.

ABRUPTLY THE BOY BROKE toward a garage, running swiftly, a few children scrambling after trying to catch up with him. He darted along a patio. Jason pursued him with his eyes, went with him, followed, sensed the boy's free loping across the leaves and the grass and was with him at the sudden jolt on the cement when the toes tightened, adjusted, without breaking the pace. There would be the cold, peppermint air in his throat. Around the corner; then, shortly, back again, children following, the boy, a shadow, crept and bobbed leaping furtively over the leaves toward the crowd ("Jeb? Someone was calling. His mother). The shadow dropped heavily, stopped to listen to the pointed echo that sounded like a hand tersely slapped against a wall. The voice must have resounded even more thunderous to the shadow, for it froze, quivered in the grass, and then, at last, docilely gouged the leaves aside as it felt its way forward. The boy returned with a thin clothesline rope, and reaching the edge of the crowd, he stepped quickly up to Jason and held the rope in front of the old man as though d angling a cobweb before another child.

"What's he got there?"

"Will you look at that!"

The boy's father bounded forward and jerked the rope from the boy's hand. "What kind of silly joke is this, Jeb?"

The boy ducked his head and stumbled back. Several children hid behind him. He shook his head slowly, and then rapidly, and then slowly again.

"Why you silly kid," a woman said.

Jason tried to catch the boy's eyes. Jeb's face, frail and wasted, leaned toward the ground again. His arms hung limply outstretched, and pliant hands, wrinkled from the cold, dropped to his knees, palms turned down. He slumped hard to the ground and one hand slid silently off his knee and he remained inert like a wilted stubble on barren land: Jason, his senses pricked by the boy's run, stood excited, ennervated, and stared helplessly at the broken figure. It looked unalterable, deep in rigid listlessness. Jason had seen it before. Somewhere. It was a fixed thing, a posture that was limp and mindless and food for a festering parasite. It was a weed eaten in side. It was a form that was empty like a child begging for heaven's sake. Do something," a man asked. "Well, for heaven's sake, call the police — They all looked away.

"Or beat him up, beat him up, if nothing else — "Oh, for Pete's sake. Really now," a man said. Around them the children stood in the grass, in the smell of burnt leaves and dying ashes in the incinerators, gesturing along with their parents. Several men drifted away. Somebody laughed lightly, then choked it off. Jason was held to the children, hypnotized by their mimicry.

ABRUPTLY THE BOY BROKE toward a garage, running swiftly, a few children scrambling after trying to catch up with him. He darted along a patio. Jason pursued him with his eyes, went with him, followed, sensed the boy's free loping across the leaves and the grass and was with him at the sudden jolt on the cement when the toes tightened, adjusted, without breaking the pace. There would be the cold, peppermint air in his throat. Around the corner; then, shortly, back again, children following, the boy, a shadow, crept and bobbed leaping furtively over the leaves toward the crowd ("Jeb? Someone was calling. His mother). The shadow dropped heavily, stopped to listen to the pointed echo that sounded like a hand tersely slapped against a wall. The voice must have resounded even more thunderous to the shadow, for it froze, quivered in the grass, and then, at last, docilely gouged the leaves aside as it felt its way forward. The boy returned with a thin clothesline rope, and reaching the edge of the crowd, he stepped quickly up to Jason and held the rope in front of the old man as though d angling a cobweb before another child.

"What's he got there?"

"Will you look at that!"

The boy's father bounded forward and jerked the rope from the boy's hand. "What kind of silly joke is this, Jeb?"

The boy ducked his head and stumbled back. Several children hid behind him. He shook his head slowly, and then rapidly, and then slowly again.

"Why you silly kid," a woman said.

Jason tried to catch the boy's eyes. Jeb's face, frail and wasted, leaned toward the ground again. His arms hung limply outstretched, and pliant hands, wrinkled from the cold, dropped to his knees, palms turned down. He slumped hard to the ground and one hand slid silently off his knee and he remained inert like a wilted stubble on barren land: Jason, his senses pricked by the boy's run, stood excited, ennervated, and stared helplessly at the broken figure. It looked unalterable, deep in rigid listlessness. Jason had seen it before. Somewhere. It was a fixed thing, a posture that was limp and mindless and food for a festering parasite. It was a weed eaten in side. It was a form that was empty like a child begging for heaven's sake. Do something," a man asked. "Well, for heaven's sake, call the police — They all looked away.

"Or beat him up, beat him up, if nothing else — "Oh, for Pete's sake. Really now," a man said. Around them the children stood in the grass, in the smell of burnt leaves and dying ashes in the incinerators, gesturing along with their parents. Several men drifted away. Somebody laughed lightly, then choked it off. Jason was held to the children, hypnotized by their mimicry.
bated and aimless children whose hands reached for gum and rations which he'd filled until one day the mud and stench and endless proliferation of hands had wearied him and he found it easy to turn away from a small, featureless child whose first response was the sensuous argot of pleading eyes and a garbled curse. That hadn't mattered. Then she had touched his hand lightly, turned it over gently, and spit in the rough cup of his palm. And that hadn't mattered either. It was tough-luck and thin-margins all around. It was a face and eyes and a curse mottled amidst many, and soon forgotten. But two days later — and it came back now, pushed out of the deep well of his haggard memory and the child's face and form, long buried, hung in the old man's mind — he had seen her again, as he saw her now, huddled, yellow and bloated, at the rim of a dugout full of empty ration cans. And all the children had gathered, watching, just watching, and waiting maybe. What had he felt then? His mind knotted and then abruptly opened. Nothing. He had felt nothing, no pain or sadness, for her or them. They were weeds and animals scraping and shuffling through rubble and mud. It was their world, all they knew, and they had adjusted as animals and weeds. It was necessary. It was right. And he'd just turned away then, walked away, numbly moving through the next few months until Buck had dragged him from a ditch.

Now he was riven by shame. He'd taken away the gesture. He'd taken away the handout. That too was a part of their condition and if he'd taken that, what else had he taken with it? He turned back to the boy and looked with profound sadness on the molding figure. Glancing at the crowd, Jason saw that he would have no trouble leaving, just walking away, but he was held there by a force he didn't understand, by a feeling that seemed new and painful and yet much too deep to be fresh. It angered him and he stepped abruptly toward the boy. "Well, he got the rope and brought it here," he said. He looked toward the children, grounded at the feet of their parents, grim spots in the maze of leaves, ignored now as though dropped and forgotten. "Well, shall we stand here? Go away? Call the police? Which one?" Jason looked gently at the boy. "Do like on T.V.? Let's let him use the rope."

The crowd shifted quickly, incensed but confused. Jason stared at each man, who looked away quickly hunting for the boy's father. Stirring restlessly and then jumping forward, the boy grabbed the rope. "He wants to die," he shouted. "You heard him. Old man, I'd shoot you again a hundred times. You want me to do that for you. Look at his ear, everybody, where I shot him."

"No," Jason whispered to the boy. "That's not it. That's not it at all." He tried to lay his hand on the boy's shoulder.

Stepping in front of Jason the boy's father swiftly pulled the rope from Jeb's hand. The crowd peered at Jason's ears. Impatiently Jason stepped away and tried to catch the boy's eyes.

"You didn't say before that you shot him," Norman said. "What with...that damned BB gun?"

Everyone looked at the gun broken on the grass. "Mister, why did my son shoot you?" Norman asked cautiously.

Jason nodded toward the boy.

The man turned toward his son. "Well?" he asked, cupping the boy under the chin. "Why did you shoot him?"

The boy shook his head.

"Did you shoot him first?" his father shouted.

The boy looked at his father, at the rigid, immovable, unbelieving stare that forced Jeb to falter and look helplessly toward the old man. Their eyes caught uneasily. It was a tenuous, momentary fusion, unstable because of its intensity, unsettling because it engaged the old man and the young boy in a new and familiar relationship that would be permanently fastened on their minds, and for Jason it was more, for he saw that they were both frail and dependent and very tired, and as he saw the boy trying to hold that moment, to gain courage or sympathy, Jason knew that he alone understood the depths of that connection. It had been his before — on that day when the mob of men converged on him with doubts and threats on the tips of their tongues while the sky burned in front of them. And his father there — did his father know, in his despair, that his sad eyes had touched Jason to the core, had touched him, but had not given him courage? As the boy continued to stare, Jason grew almost frantic, for this moment was so full of his past that the ground reeled beneath him.

"Well," Jeb's father shouted. "Did you?"

Futilely and for no reason, Jason tried to hold the boy's eyes, but Jeb crumbled at his father's voice, and his eyes darting everywhere, he breathed an almost inaudible "no" and then slumped out of his father's reach.

And when the "no" pulsed out of Jeb's mouth, Jason knew, even before he'd said it, even before the boy had thought it, that "no" was the inevitable answer. Jason's lips had moved with the boy's. The old man's thick, hard jaw jutted forward and his eyes, momentarily, were steady, but he too had said no against the fateful mutilation of his childhood freedom — a thing the boy did not yet understand, a thing that Jason saw through the flames of a burning field that slapped the wind and spiraled away from the wooden match he'd accidentally, or purposely, or vaguously dropped into the tinder at his feet — a flame that gnawed, tasted, swallowed the bramble and the rabbit traps, the full wheat and the fences, climbed the new derrick and billowed black smoke into the oak trees and caught the blackbirds in mid-air; his world burning and there was no thought of it ever stopping. How bright and small the world seemed then and dark and evil seemed his act. And the blackbirds had screeched over him and he'd felt their eyes and so how could he tell his father that he'd burned the world. How could he acknowledge the blame for that?

The eyes were all around Jeb now, but Jason could...
only see that the boy cowered before his father, trembled at his voice. Norman shook his head, unsure, but convinced enough to slowly clench his fist. "Damn you, boy," he whispered. Jeb's head slid lower and his tongue dropped slightly out of the corner of his mouth. Jason looked at the boy's father, at the red, palpitating face, and knew immediately, in the sudden blight of an old and treasured idea, that the language of the eyes no longer mattered, that the roots from the eyes to the heart had been withered by the stony voice of judgment. Glaring at the boy's father, Jason shouted, "He said no. What's wrong with that answer? You weren't past the boy's father who had jerked his son aside, out in front and hobbling almost comically along the fences like a puppet with a broken shoulder string. Kicking the leaves high and rapping the fences as he passed, Jason bumbled down the street, tottering in the shadows, toward the corner where the crowd heard the beginning rhythms of mounting laughter punctuate the uneasy stillness.

DRAWING TOGETHER, THE CROWD watched the old man drift into darkness. They looked at each other and then back into the darkness listening to the high-pitched stociocto laughter.

Abruptly there was silence.

"That's the craziest old man I've ever seen," a woman said.

A man walked a few steps ahead. "He damned near knocked me over," he said.

"Anybody remember his name?"

They all shrugged. They listened carefully to the darkness again and then began walking towards their homes.

"I had an uncle like that," the man named Harold said. "Plain off his rocker. His father was a cowboy. Really. A drifter, a bum. A real wheeler and dealer though. Struck it rich on some half-assed scheme down in Louisiana and was just mean enough (my dad says he used to beat uncle Eldon about every other day), just mean enough and sly enough, how I don't know, to get the whole of Tibbidoux Parish in his back pocket."

"And your uncle?" a woman said, half-listening curiously watching the darkness. "Get to the point."

"A nut. A real nut. He was a World War I veteran (Belleau Wood, Chateau-Thierry, Sedan, all those places. They're real, you know. After my father told me about this uncle, I looked all those names up in an encyclopedia. They leave me cold though). Well, later with medals and all, he turned politician — mayor of Plaquemine for three terms. Some people said he was shell-shocked. I didn't know him. Never saw him. Those Southern relatives of mine can just stay down there for all I care. The things that go on down there! This was in '41, just a couple of months before Pearl Harbor. This uncle, outside of being mayor, was also, I regret to say, a con man. They say he was conning some Northern tourists and small businessmen into buying land in one of those bayous, Causian country — swamp land, mind you."

"Come on, Harold, get to the point," a woman said. A few people had dropped away from the crowd, wearily pushing their children ahead of them.

"They caught up with him eventually. But politics being what they are down there, he got away. All he took with him were his uniforms and medals. A real nut, I tell you. Now here's the point. About seven months later, they found him in New Orleans. He was dressed in his uniform, bowl hat, leggings and all, standing on a street corner in front of the Post Office throwing his medals at a sign that has Uncle Sam pointing directly at your gut and saying: I WANT YOU. Standing there throwing medals at that sign! A nut. A real All-American nut."
“What for?” a man asked.

The crowd laughed lightly. “Not much of a story,” the woman who had been spanning the darkness said. Harold shrugged. Silently, they continued walking.

When they heard the recrudescant, hollow laughter, they stopped and leaned toward the sound, holding every muscle in place and not breathing, for this time an attendant tinkling, intermittently soft and flat and then sharp and sonic, both echoing abruptly, chimed a dissonant cord in the already inharmonious night. The crowd listened as the splintered improvisation, mixed with wind and scratching leaves and raving blackbirds, rashly varied in nuance and direction, but persisted in an endless pause and crash that disturbed the laughter, they stopped and leaned toward the sound, mixed with wind and scratching leaves and raving blackbirds.

The crowd, moving forward and not returning—birds going south, flying freely over caverns and mountains, houses, cities, land he'd never seen. People he'd never met. Voltatile and dirty, but free, harassed interminably, and yet persisting, returning each year, unmoved by their losses, unconscious of the residue they'd dropped, of ravaging land, unconscious of never lying, of stirring an old man's heart, untouched by the perpetual cycle they repeated. An anarchic freedom that, momentarily, mocked the old man's mind. He went with them as far as the steady cadence of their wings was audible and then he was back with the darkness and the shouting behind him. It sounded even better now, pushed him on, and running he overturned charcoal grills and smashed the locks on fences, feeling clean and pure as though he'd just finished painting a house and all was new and smooth, fresh and permanent, a coat that could not be destroyed by winds and rain, by age, a coat that needed washing now and then but was always clean and bright beneath.

And then when he ran past a hedgerow, Jason abruptly found himself confronting the WELCOME sign and he knew the journey was over. Breathing heavily, his legs and chest heaving, he looked at the sign that towered over him, now blinking brightly against the dark night. He began coughing, a deep and swelling profusion. The shouting was distant, buoyed back and forth by the wind. The air smelled clean now and looking back at the subdivision, Jason stood and let the intermittent light and dark fall over him. Through the alteration he saw the land right around him—pine, evergreen, spruce stanchioned the entrance and the bright, clear span of fluorescent light fell over bushes and leaves, a yellow haze flicked through a crevice, and then a translucent, misty light spread momentarily at the end of the brightness and beyond that, where the shadows intruded, a wan ligature was chained by the darkness. He watched it and stood in the midst of it and let the light fall over him and the land. For a moment it was his alone and the world seemed to blossom until he looked back through the no-man's land of darkness to the subdivision and he felt like a pioneer who had taken another path through a jungle he'd once known, a jungle that in the years between had grown more colorful but less spirited, less fertile and more dangerous, a hostile jungle that looked as placid as a wood-
land, but was barbed with the refuse of eons of muted and decaying vegetation.

But out of that jungle came the shouting again. It turned the corner in separate voices and then, shortly, congealed into a single unit that raged toward the old man in the flickering light as he stood there and listened to their voices, tinged with anger and exasperation; but streaming closer their shouting grew louder and more confident. They ran hard now, unhesitatingly. Their feet pounded on the ground in unison. For a quick pulsating moment Jason felt warm and full as their voices rose and fell. He'd thought the shouting was all over. It was a hard clear sound that grew from the earth and rattled against the dark sky. He listened for an echo, a sonorous and dream-like progeny, but their shouting was abrupt and pervasive directly challenging the old man. He smiled, he was indeed getting old. Hoping to see the boy once more, he glanced back, half-looking, half-knowing their voices would never contain his. Well, he thought, for now, if they wanted an old man, they would have to find him in the night, and buttressing his body for a final effort, he turned and in conspiracy with the darkness slithered out along the route of the natural migrants.

ON THE STEPS OF A HOUSE the boy sat alone and watched his parents returning, gesturing still, walking back and forth through the yards, waving helplessly at shattered windows, and a spiteful laughter began deep in his throat, and as he watched them, it rose out of him, away from what he saw, and his head lifted and his laughter, empty, bitter, passionless, breached the dark sky already frayed by the disheveled thread of a jet plane's exhaust that hovered above like a broken man left alone with his anguish.

Still cursing the stranger while searching for unbroken windows, no one seemed to hear his laughter.

Poems By Gabriel Boissy

Translated from the French
By CHARLES GUENTHER

WIND

From what perfumed gardens
Come these cruel winds
That make the spring so prized?
From the graveyard where under the bay trees
Rests the rose that made you insensible to roses.

ROSES

Tremble before those roses
Illusory as love,
They perfume your morning
And tonight they'll shed
The sadness of death.

NOCTURNE

Now the evening wind comes with night scents,
A celestial rustling stirs
And, more divine, the song of a nightingale.
Let's be quiet, friends! Let's not clash our crystal cups.

MISTAKE

You told him you loved him?
Yes I told him.
And he believed you?
Don't doubt it!
Then cry, my child, cry over your love.

COQUETTE

When she passed by she threw me
A flowering almond branch.
But why O why did she run away so fast?

MUTED

Ah, how the night falls!
I wouldn't know.
What did you say?
I wouldn't know. I'm near you and you're smiling.

THEFT

Moon over the syringas.
Envious girl!
Would she steal their scent?

GIVEN UP

I hear the south wind.
But what's the use?
It's nothing but the wind to me now.
Experiment Job Corps
By LYNN MACK

The Job Corps has been functioning for more than a year, and in general, is pretty much misunderstood. Stories about riot, murder, assault, drugs, and general misconduct and law breaking have been displayed before the public. For a number of reasons little has been presented of a positive nature. However, both the praise and criticism of the program have come from individuals who do not have a great deal of information about the accomplishments of the Job Corps today, and of course no one knows what the overall impact of this experiment will be in the future.

Most negative reactions to Job Corps have been motivated by one, or the combination, of the following three factors: a., a negative reaction to so called "federal social programs"; b., a fear on the part of communities surrounding Job Corps Centers that the "young hoodlums" of Job Corps will cause trouble; and c., a suspicion that the program is not sound and the people running Job Corps do not know what they are doing.

Those who criticize the program because it is "another step down the road to socialism" might well recall the words of one of the architects of capitalism, Adam Smith: In some cases the state of the society necessarily places the greater part of individuals in such situations as naturally form in them, without any attention of government, almost all the abilities and virtues which that state requires, or perhaps can admit of. In other cases the state of the society does not place the greater part of individuals in such situations, and some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people.

Churches, educators, parent-teacher organizations, employers, criminologists, and many other groups have tried to solve growing problems of school drop-outs, crime, youth unemployment, and poverty; but these problems have continued to expand and society has not formed "abilities and virtues" in a sizeable number of American youth today, and "some attention of government is necessary."

Negative community reaction has been encountered by more than one Job Corps Center. In some cases the degree of negative reaction has been distorted by newspapers which have traditionally criticized "government give away programs" and have capitalized on every opportunity to discredit the Job Corps. However, not all the negative feeling is generated by newspaper editorials. In the case of men's urban centers, the large two- and three-thousand men centers, the rapid influx of hundreds of young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one into surrounding communities can cause problems.

"I agree with what you are trying to do," people often say, "but why did the Center have to be located here?" The location of larger centers is simply a matter of the utilization of existing government facilities, former military installations. They had to be located somewhere. Why not in camps already built and paid for by the government during war circumstances? This makes sense in terms of saving tax dollars, but still is not satisfying to many in communities who are not accustomed to seeing large groups of Negroes on their streets; having groups of teenagers from virtually every section of the country and "sub-middle class social level" attend their dances and social gatherings; or listening to their daughter tell about the young man she is dating who is from "the big city." It must be pointed out, however, that in the main significant segments of communities surrounding Job Corps Centers have made commendable efforts to welcome Job Corpsmen into their communities.

The criticism about the program itself and the people running it is the most difficult to deal with.

Does the Job Corps cost too much? The cost per student in the public school system is far less. Cost per year of college education is generally less. So, on the surface, this criticism seems to have merit. However, certain factors must be considered. Job Corps Centers are a twelve-month, every-day-of-the-year operation. The total needs of the individual must be provided; not only education, but housing, clothing, food, recreation, medical and dental care, transportation, counseling, supervision, and living allowance. Few Corpsmen receive financial help from home, and the monthly "take home pay" of a Corpsman is less than one dollar a day. The way to reduce the cost of the Job Corps is to get more young men into existing training centers and to improve the operation of present centers and future centers by learning from the experience of the past two years. That the per-student cost of the Job Corps will be reduced to that achieved by public schools is doubtful; that the cost will decline as the program matures is probable.

It is said that the changing labor market, automation, product innovation, and regional population shifts make it impossible to train young men for occupations which will insure job stability over a period of time. You cannot predict today, with any certainty, what the labor needs of various regions of the country will be five, ten, or twenty years from now. You may be spending a great deal of money today to train a young man for an occupation in which, a few years from now, he may not be able to find work.

In the long range, this argument may be valid; within the immediate employment market it is not. Skills select-
ed for training at the major Job Corps centers are primarily within the service industries. Most occupations within service industries have provided increased employment opportunities since World War II. Techniques within such occupations have changed somewhat, but most workers in these occupations have been able to keep up with these changes if they have maintained interest in their occupation and have possessed the basic educational skills necessary to learning.

This latter fact is the main reason why Job Corps programs stress general education, as well as vocational education. Employment counselors pretty well agree that an individual with a sound basic education at the high school level will maintain employment in a changing labor market while another man without a good basic education will find a job hard to find. The key to stable employment over an extended period of time, however, is dependent upon the attitude of an individual as much as it is on general and vocational education.

You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days, and if one has only one good memory left in one's heart, even that may sometime be the means of saving us.  

Many young men come to the Job Corps without "good memories of childhood." Broken homes, unknown fathers, over-crowded living conditions, trouble with the law, institutional confinement, no job, poverty, and no hope are the memories of many who arrive at a Job Corps center. Often incoming Corpsmen can be described as belligerent, arrogant, without inhibitions, lacking self-reliance, defensive, and resistant to all authority. Some join the Job Corps because they want to start again in life and want to learn a trade; others "had nothing better to do," or were talked into it by a relative, a youth counselor, or an official of the Court.

Managers of centers do not pick the young men who are assigned to their centers; they work with the Corpsmen they receive. Corpsmen volunteer for the program, and they are free to leave it when they desire. There is no obligatory tour of duty, such as in the military, and, therefore, the relationship between Corpsmen and staff is not that of forced compliances to elaborate rules and standards. Staff and Corpsmen must meet on a middle ground, must learn to understand each other quickly, and must get to the heart of problems jointly.

Centers do not graduate all of the Corpsmen they receive. Some leave voluntarily, some involuntarily, others just walk away. Some cannot adjust to institutional life, others do not find that the Job Corps is what they expected it to be, others will not live with other races, and some are just plain homesick. Most losses occur in the first sixty days.

The staff at Job Corps centers have learned more than the Corpsmen in the early history of the program. Many an idea about how to relate to youth, learned in a traditional classroom or absorbed from a college professor or textbook, was found wanting in a Job Corps center. Directive, indirective, and non-directive theories were tried, some through elaborate systems, others by simple trial and error, and eventually those staff members who managed to stick it out or who were not thrown out, grew with Corpsmen and developed meaningful relationships and effective programs.

Who can say whether or not the Job Corps will be a success? It is an experiment and for that very reason not a certainty. Success must be measured by what Corpsmen graduates are doing five, ten, and twenty years from now. Whatever the final result, this can be said now. Those who have stayed with the Job Corps, both Corpsmen and staff, have given it everything they have.


Truth is truth, whosoever hath spoken it, or howsoever itt hath been abused: but if this libertie may not be allowed to the universitie, wherefore do wee study? Wee have nothing to do, but to gett good memories and to learn by heart.

—Benjamin Whichcote, quoted in Eight Letters of Dr. Anthony Tuckney and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote, ed. Salter, 1753, p. 57.
There are signs in the present state of the theater that make me believe in its future. My hope is not only anchored in the obvious manifestations of what is usually associated with the term “culture explosion.” We may very soon have many theaters all over the States, but we haven’t enough actors and directors to fill those theaters. Moreover, most of our actors are badly trained and lack the most essential requisite of their craft: continuity. This will be a weakness for quite some time to come. Neither are my expectations raised because foundations pour their money out generously for the benefit of certain artistic enterprises, although their grants no doubt help a great deal toward the establishment of a decentralized theater wresting some of the power from Broadway.

Art can grow only from within. And rebellion which may spell renewal emerges from yet unestablished forces “within.” In this struggle for new form and content the churches have begun to play a vital role in the last ten years. The four more important institutions are equally divided into a rather conservative and a “way-out” wing. The dramatic program at Union Theological Seminary, under the direction of Professor Robert Seaver, has been the focal point of drama activities for many years, an inspiration for innumerable church organizations outside New York City. The Seminary has always believed in a far-reaching scope in its programming from the genuinely religious play to the most controversial drama, often posing questions for which there are no answers. Many new dramatists were heard there.

Although the American Place Theater emerged from St. Clement’s Church, it severed its artistic relation with the Church, a fact also demonstrated by Sidney Lanier, the founder of The American Place Theater, who sought and received dispensation from his clerical office to devote all his time to the theater. Supported by handsome grants, the work of this theater may become important in giving the new playwright a place to unfold and to secure a place of artistic dignity for him, unknown on Broadway and hard to come by off-Broadway.

The Reverend Al Carmines of the Judson Memorial Church, a former student at Union Theological Seminary and a gifted composer himself, has thrown open his Church to the avant-garde playwright, choreographer, and composer with something daring to say. He is — to judge from all past productions — interested in the unusual, the play of social protest or poetic protest for that matter, not in any of the many vehicles of corny messages. He realizes the dangers in the calculated inefficiency of his productions, which are in the manner of the off-off-Broadway style or simply in the nature of a happening. He rejects the esoteric and strives for complete freedom of the imagination. Here it is the experiment that counts.

To revitalize the church through the arts is basically the aim of the Reverend William Glensk, too. His Spencer Memorial Church in Brooklyn (it is used as a synagogue on Fridays and Saturdays) has been host to many dramatic events, art exhibits, and discussion groups. Mr. Glensk opposes most of what is considered the “establishment”; he is a fighter for the yet unknown artist. There is, by the way, not one of his sermons which he would not base on or accompany with artistic events — contemporary, of-tomorrow, shocking, and thought-provoking. His plans for the immediate future are the creation of a stage in the Church which would then keep an artistic balance between the policies of The American Place Theater and the Judson Memorial Church activities. His program will be eclectic, trying to be a testing ground for the theater that may be the theater of the 70s.

Besides the church having a successful dramatic dialogue with the world, other forces are at work to stimulate the beginning of a new era in the American theater. One of the many vital steps in the right direction was the banding together of the university theaters to choose one play which is then performed by several of them as a magnificent act of tryout before the author (a writer of established reputation) dares to show it at a commercial Broadway theater. In spite of the tremendous lack of good actors to fit in the framework of an ensemble, some of the regional theaters have created a high level of programming and producing — such as Jacques Cartier’s Hartford Stage Company, Andre Gregory’s Theater of the Living Arts in Philadelphia, the Arena Stage in Washington, or Baltimore’s Center Stage. It is there — and not on Broadway — that new theater is created. All the plays done by these theaters fare far better than their productions on Broadway, even though some of their actors may suffer by comparison. But it is the play’s conception and style, not one good part played by an outstanding actor or a dazzling decor, that generates theater excitement.

I strongly believe that the many experiments that have been conducted in a spiritual vacuum have run their course. We begin slowly to realize that theater is imagined reality and that the best of it is some kind of total theater that involves us in one way or another. Despite the truism that experimentation is basic to all arts, it must find its form-fulfillment at one point. The real value of any work of art lies in its inner truth. It exists only when it speaks to us in a language which must strike a chord in our being, which relates and helps us find our self.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be con-
forted. —Saint Matthew 5:4

The Word of God always speaks to man in his situa-
tion.

This word of Jesus, too, is addressed to us in our situa-
tion. That may seem unlikely at first glance. Our Lord
here clearly says a word to people whose lives are weighed
down with agony and sorrow. But that doesn't describe
most of us. And so to us it speaks a very different word,
an embarrassing word.

Perhaps we can put the matter this way: If Jesus had
said, “Blessed are those who mourn” to a gathering of
scribes and Pharisees— to a well-heeled, well-churched,
prosperous assembly— what would the saying mean?
What then does the saying mean today to well-heeled,
well-churched, prosperous Christians who have nothing
to mourn? There lies our great embarrassment with this
word of Jesus.

Let's start where Jesus started. He spoke to a group
of His followers and His words were later gathered by
the young church so that the Lord could continue to in-
struct them in the way of life. As the Messiah-Savior
Jesus had announced— indeed He had brought— the
sovereign, merciful rule of God. But they are poor,
humble, of no particular account—yes, even despised
in the world. They know that God's moment has arrived,
human beings who were once a despised lot are now a
people of the Lord. They understand the world as
a dying world, a world in which sin and death appear to
rule, and so it is a world in which they, especially they,
experience profound sorrow, for evidence of sin and
death surrounds them. But the one who gathers and
speaks to them is one who has liberated them from sin
and death. It is the Liberator's voice they hear saying,
“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be com-
forted.”

Lots of people I live among in the tenements of Man-
hattan face a life that holds virtually no prospect of con-
tentment. They have been scarred and beaten by too
many things too long: poverty, betrayal, brokenness,
pain, hatred, loneliness. Their hopes have been rup-
tured. To them this word of Jesus speaks with simple
force. To them it may be discerned as a freeing word, a
word of hope and joy. It is, admittedly, a hard word for
them to hear, a difficult word to believe, because they
suffer through so much that appears to contradict it.
Nevertheless the word is spoken to them, precisely in
their situation.

But what about us in our situation?

We say we have our share of headaches, and we prob-
dly do, but for most of us life offers a great deal of ful-
fillment. We have a lot to live for and much to enjoy. We
have plenty to eat and we can come to church with well-
dressed respectability. The atmosphere for the most
part is one of prosperity and achievement. We are even
highly conditioned against thinking seriously about
death. For all these reasons we do not really feel that we
are in hostile, alien territory. Can this word of Jesus
speak, really, to affluent American Christians like our-
selves?

Some months ago I was at a state pastors' conference.
We began one session by singing

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee:
Destitute, despised, forsaken....

Then we heard a report on how the district proposed to
bring our salaries up to the level of professionals such as
doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Somehow this kind of
casual, uncritical mixture of themes ought to be pro-
foundly disturbing to us, but it is not, and so we do not
let the word speak to us in our situation. How can we
look for comfort when we are not mourning?

Something disturbs me even more.

Much of the mourning I see is a consequence of suffer-
ing imposed on others by Christians who do not care.
Lots of Christians did not care about the new people who
were crowding into the Lower East Side, and our tiny
congregation is a living reminder of that. Many who
should have cared did very well for themselves, but their
prosperity only hardened them against the poverty of
those who were left behind. Church-goers now ring th e
city in hundreds of self-sufficient little communities,
earning their money in the city, but refusing to pay taxes
there; insisting that their children get the finest of ed-

cuations, but not realizing that other children are aban-
doned to the most deficient schools in consequence:
sleeping peacefully in a nice neighborhood while the
slums become slimmer.

The results of this are grim for everyone.

They are grim for those who mourn. Those who mourn
cannot hear or believe the word of Jesus and be com-
forted, because that word comes to them through people
who claim to represent Christ as His Body on earth.
Through them those who mourn see Christ as one who
doesn’t give a damn. Or at least as one who is too weak
to rule among people on earth. So they are not com-
forted.
The results are also grim for those of us who do not mourn—precisely because we do not mourn. That prevents us also from perceiving the word of comfort from Jesus.

But how are we to mourn?
The apostle admonishes us to "weep with those who weep" and to "bear one another's burdens."

So what does the word of Jesus, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," say to people who have nothing to mourn? Does it not invite us to repent; to seek a new direction; to do something with our lives in order to bear the burdens of others and through them learn to weep and mourn? Are we not asked to commit ourselves and our resources to the boy with a bloated stomach on the streets of Calcutta? To the anguished Vietnamese mother hurrying away from a burning village? And to cries of countless others near and far that beg us to remember we are all God's creatures?

In a world that mourns, to run away and indulge thoughtlessly in the comfort of chosen surroundings is to forfeit the comfort of Christ.

Therefore it is urgent that we recognize in this word of Jesus also an invitation to freedom. Christ the Liberator speaks here a freeing word to us—to a man too stuck on passing enjoyments to know real joy: to a young Christian who is addicted to the American dream of abundance; to a woman imprisoned because her ambitions are riddled with triviality; to people filled with self-pity and guilt because they cannot turn their lives outward or upward. To us all this word of Jesus is an invitation to freedom, a call to share life with those who mourn. And for those who thus learn to mourn a surprise is in store. The magnificent news breaks through: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

There is another sense in which this word is embarrassing to us. It is embarrassingly other-worldly, hardly the "in" thing to parade before today's avant-garde thinkers. But there it is, Jesus offering a future to people who now suffer the toll of sin and death in the world. We cannot pass over this lightly, for the Gospel is a freeing word just because it is a word that frees us from an absolute anxiety about our earthly welfare. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, we no longer have to pin our hopes on making life a pleasant pastime. We have been set free to be people for others—free to mourn with those who mourn. So in the end, far from permitting us to evade the world, this other-worldly slant of Jesus turns us back into the world, free to care.

On Second Thought

By ROBERT J. HOYER

Someone charged that we no longer taught damnation. Our children do not know what they are saved from. "Is there a hell?" he asked, and demanded an answer without horns and teeth. But no such answer is possible. I know neither the image in the mind of the questioner when the word "hell" is spoken, nor the sound of the image he proposed with the words "teach damnation."

We cannot make a hell real by saying that it is, nor establish its color and dimension by our assertion. We communicate with words, but we do not communicate words. They are metaphoric symbols for the images we carry in our private minds. When we insist on agreement in words, we may be forcing disagreement in images. If I were asked: "Is there a tall building in St. Louis?" and if I answered "Yes," I may be impressing an entirely false image of the building, of St. Louis, and possibly even of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod which has its headquarters there. Our scientific culture tells me that the only meaningful answer is: "The tallest building is 28 stories high. The arch is 630 feet high."

I cannot do that when the question is hell. The language of empirical science is altogether too feeble to carry the load of faith. No answer about hell can be verified statistically. No one has been there with a yardstick and a camera. A false image of St. Louis does not bother me. But a false image of hell and the teaching of damnation does, because it may imply a false image of Satan who has his headquarters there, and of God who made and governs all.

How can we answer the question except by repeating the words that have been given to us? "Reality includes a concept which Jesus expressed in the metaphors of a worm that does not die and a fire which is not quenched, of a darkness outside, of weeping and gnashing of teeth." But if we are to agree in the image these words convey, it will take much more than the passing agreement on the words.

We are saved from the envy and hatred and lust by which we are consumed in our sin, in order to live forever with God who loves and receives. We are saved from ourselves to live the life from God. In the relationship of Christ we can speak together with joy, even about the meaning of hell. But if our speaking together begins with the challenge to agree, to match words or be rejected, then the speaking together is part of that from which we have been saved. Even words about heaven spoken in harsh demand for conformity are words of hell. When teeth are gnashed and anger burns, that is hell. Yes, there is a hell. From this our Lord Christ has redeemed us.

October 1966
As Editor-At-Large I attended the nineteenth National Student Congress of the United States National Student Association at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, August 20 to September 1.

At one of the full sessions I sat next to a graduate of St. John’s College (Annapolis, Maryland) and its Great Books Program. Quiet, mature, graying, well-built, but firm in his dedications, he shared some of his observations with me: “These college students are a great bunch of kids, intelligent, sensitive, restrained, and with a lot of savvy. And gosh, they work hard. They begin at nine in the morning, go through morning, afternoon, and evening sessions, and then go to caucus meetings at midnight. They are dedicated, responsible, and serious.”

For me personally, these were good words to hear. In the first place, it was comforting to hear someone else say something I had been saying for a number of years. In the second place, some of my students were working members of this Congress and had been conducting themselves in a high and noble manner, just as my friend said, with poise and dispatch.

In everything I saw and heard at the Congress I was reminded over and over again that I did not come across much of the behavior which is conventional at other conventions. Not once did I see the raucous behavior of veterans’ meetings. Not once did I notice the wholesale absenteeism that is prevalent at my professional meetings. In the cafeterias and dining halls at the University of Illinois the NSA delegates behaved like the ladies and gentlemen most of them are. Pushy, persistent, and insistent about their ideas for the future, but always ladies and gentlemen. Even where the dress and the beards were somewhat outlandish according to middle class rubrics, they were not nearly as outlandish as the fur coats, the short skirts, the garters, pennants, funny hats, and those high collars of the aspirin age of bathtub gin and goldfish.

In my books one of the major functions of the National Students Congress is to provide realistic practice in the science and arts of decision-making. If wisdom is knowledge in action, this certainly is one of the best places to learn it. What good is the intellectual enterprise if it does not come to the fore when and where the basic issues are on the line?

I was reminded of this especially while watching a floor fight over seating a delegate and permitting his nomination as a candidate for the presidency of the NSA. It was the usual kind of thing. Polite and restrained and careful, but a fight. Apparently student opinion runs the full length of the attitude spectrum: radicals, liberals, moderates, conservatives, reactionaries, and the “blah-blahs.” The liberals, a considerable majority at the Congress, had manipulated quite a bit to get their candidate duly certified and nominated. This had all the overtones of a Massachusetts Kennedy getting elected Senator in New York state. The conservatives, a considerable minority since the very inception of the NSA nineteen years ago and certainly with little chance of victory at this Congress, apparently rose to the bait of “rank injustice and impropriety” and to the fun of obstructionism. In the bargain, it seemed, they were trying to embarrass and minimize the obvious victory of the liberal candidate. The liberal candidate was seated.

But before he was seated, a plenary session debated the matter. What impressed me most about this debate was the delegates’ knowledge of parliamentary procedure and the elementary but significant rules of debate. I say this even though one of the scholars who spoke to this Congress once said in one of his books that the National Student Association was really “a psychodelic manipulation of the rules.” Be this all as it may, the delegates knew how to handle themselves in the arena.

I have visions of them, more competent and experienced than some of us are in the making of decisions, moving into leadership roles with ease, becoming politicians, senators, deans, and college presidents.

But even more than the psychodelic manipulation, these students knew what they were talking about. They had done their homework and they talked directly to the issues with little bombast and pontification.

Knowledge and wisdom beyond their years also marked their seminar discussions on student government and the educational process, student government and the total community, student government and student freedoms, student government participation in the university community, and international affairs.

Wherever I sat, talked, ate, and drank I heard conversations on the draft, culture, experimental colleges, black power, educational reform, education in a democracy, and the meaning of life.

What more can I ask from the college generation?
Sad Days for Composition

By WALTER A. HANSEN

The Music Room

Sometimes the heat of summertime generates a feeling of sluggishness. Sometimes, however, it induces fond recollections and white-hot enthusiasm.

I have just picked up a book at random. I turn the pages in a desultory fashion. At the moment nothing engages my attention until I see four musical examples. All are from the miracle-working pen of a man named Johann Sebastian Bach. I recognize them at once, for they are old friends. I read the black notes on the white paper, and in my mind I hear the sounds they represent. Suddenly I forget about the summer heat as I bid four deathless melodies a heartfelt welcome.

Before I identify these pearls of great price, I shall tell you that every one of them is the melodic basis of a fugue. Do not be frightened.

Many well-meaning devotees of music have told me in all candor that the very word "fugue" bores them to distraction. What do I do when this ubiquitous remark assails my ears? Do I undertake at once to describe what a fugue is? I do not. "Dismiss the term 'fugue' from your minds for the time being," I say, "and direct your attention to the music. I know, of course, that there are fugues and fugues in this vale of tears. Sometimes one hears fugues that are good; sometimes one encounters fugues that are commonplace and exceedingly vile. Occasionally the fugues one listens to are outstanding masterpieces that do not fail to assert themselves as genuine jewels."

Now I shall identify the four Bachian fugues that have inspired the column I am writing today. The first is the gem usually called The Little Fugue in G Minor; the second is regularly spoken of as The Great Fugue in G Minor; the third is the Fugue in E Flat Major, which is often referred to as St. Anne's; the fourth is the basis of The Art of Fugue. It is more than likely that you have often heard capable organists play at least three of these works. Maybe you have become acquainted with them in orchestral transcription. Unfortunately, one has few opportunities to listen to complete performances of The Art of Fugue; but nearly every public presentation of this masterpiece is part of an organ recital.

Listen to these fugues again and again without attempting to analyze them from a structural point of view. Let them go over into your flesh and blood, so to speak. Then, by way of contrast, turn your attention to countless works coughed into being by so-called masters of recent years. Mr. Bach will hold his own, believe me. Indeed, he will do far more than this. For a long time the art of creating music has been undergoing what I like to describe as pitiful degeneration.

My own ironclad conviction with regard to this matter is re-inforced and greatly intensified as I continue to turn the pages of the book I have picked up at random. I read illustrations from Franz Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and from this great melodist's wonderful setting of Goethe's Der Erlkoenig. There are brief excerpts from Johannes Brahms' Symphony No. 1 and from Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Then I see quotations from Jean Sibelius's Symphony No. 2, Schubert's Symphony in C Major, Brahms' Symphony No. 2, and Beethoven's Eroica.

Incidentally, something smites me squarely between the eyes as I read the opening measures of Beethoven's Sonata Appassionata, Op. 57. Look carefully at the very beginning of this sonata. Then think of the setting of the first six words of The Star-Spangled Banner. I know that the tune for our national anthem is in a major tonality and that the sonata is in a minor key. Otherwise the melodic line is strikingly similar. Naturally, one must distinguish between major and minor intervals.

Have you ever noticed this similarity? I confess that I was totally unaware of it before I began to write my little article. If the discovery I am referring to spurs you on to renew your acquaintance with Beethoven's Sonata Appassionata, I have done you a great favor, even though I am by no means foolhardy enough to say that no one else has ever been aware of what I have pointed out. At all events, this is but one of thousands of similar happenings in the wonderful realm of music.

Indeed, the volume I am examining in great haste on this hot day has turned out to be a most valuable picture book to stir up fond thoughts of the marvelous heritage bequeathed to the world in times past. I cannot refrain from ruminating. Will books written about much of the music brought into being in our day conjure up similar reflections in the minds of those who peruse them fifty years from now? Will you consider me an incorrigible pessimist if I shake my head in doubt?

It seems to me that the art of composition has fallen on evil days.

NOTE

Anne Hansen has asked to be relieved of her assignment as entertainment arts editor and her request has been reluctantly granted. Charles R. Scolare has been appointed to succeed her and will write his first column for us next month. We shall have more to say about Anne editorially next month.
Autumn Leaf

I wonder if anyone has ever been fully prepared for the coming of autumn. Perhaps as little as we are ready for the end of anything in life. July and August meander along in their apparent endlessness, one bright or sullen day after another. There seems to be no change. The crickets grow louder, the dust lies dreaming on the trees and bushes, the thunder comes with every other twilight. Only when I look across the fence into my neighbor’s yard and see the apples turn red can I tell that summer is waning and the time of harvest is near. Then, inevitably and suddenly, there comes a morning when everything seems changed. From my window I observe that the maple has a few leaves which are brown. Others are already on the ground. The crickets chirp in a lower key, and a new note of melancholy appears in the whistle of the train down the valley. The leaves begin to fall, at first lazily and alone, but then faster and faster as the wind rises and the travail of change comes over the earth. The order and logic of inevitability are in them already on the ground. The crickets chirp in a lower key, and a new note of melancholy appears in the whistle of the train down the valley. The leaves begin to fall, at first lazily and alone, but then faster and faster as the wind rises and the travail of change comes over the earth.

When the leaves fall, the whole earth is a cemetery pleasant to walk in. I love to wander and muse over them in their graves. Here are no lying nor vain epitaphs. What though you own no lot at Mount Auburn? Your lot is surely cast somewhere in this vast cemetery, which has been consecrated from of old. You need attend no auction to secure a place. There is room enough here. The loosestrife shall bloom and the huckleberry-bird sing over your bones. The woodman and hunter shall be your sextons, and the children shall tread upon the borders as much as they will.

This, then, is the season of the elegy and the mourner. Certainly, however, there are meaning and purpose and knowledge, year after year, in the falling of a leaf from a dying tree. Once more we see the great paradox of life and time: To live well and greatly, our journeying through the world must be a repeated experience of death. We die, as the leaf dies, to the immaturities of childhood to be reborn for the responsibilities of maturity. We die to selfishness to live for others. We die to resentment against life for not giving us everything we desire to the glad acceptance of its hard discipline of sorrow. We die to sin to live to God. We die to the noise of time to live for the whisper of eternity. Surely this is always and forever true: If we have not learned to die we have not learned to live.

This, here and now, on this gray autumn morning I find curiously comforting. More than any other generation for two thousand years, my generation, the first-born of the twentieth century, has succumbed to the fatal pressure of immediacy. We live in a world of today’s headlines, up-to-the-minute broadcasts, this hour’s problems. Our catchwords are here, now, today. The autumn leaf drifting quietly to the earth in its good time tells the whole story of all the names and tears of our dark age. They, too, shall pass away. Their hour is as definite as the hour of the autumn leaf. Nineteen sixty-six will also, very soon now, be a tale that has been told. No, there is nothing new in all this, but it is desperately worth repeating in an hour when we are living only for the hour and looking for the man of the hour and fearing what the next hour may bring.

But there is yet one more thing to be said. The autumn leaf speaks indeed of change and death, but not of immortality. Slowly but surely we move from the hollow in which the leaf rests to the high altitudes of faith. Nothing which I observe either in spring or in autumn tells me anything about the intimations of immortality which lie deep in the human soul and in divine revelation. Between them and the human reason hangs an impenetrable veil. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.” As far as my mind can reach, the end comes when the curtain goes down. Whatever begins when the curtain goes up again lies on the other side of visibility. Beyond the nature of the existence which alone can be the object of scientific and reasonable knowledge, there may be something in the human soul which longs for eternity, but this desire is no proof for it. For that assurance I must turn to Easter. The Christian faith would have died out long ago if a miracle had not daily repeated itself—a miracle which remains just as great and incomprehensible as it was 1900 years ago. The miracle is that a human soul in the face of death, loaded down with guilt which it can never make good, finds rest and immortality in an Eternal High Priest who loved the dying world even unto death. This is the one unshakable foundation for our faith in immortality and eternity. The autumn leaf is not homesick for the earth from which it came. We are—and ought to be—because the warm, silent cradle of the grave is the open door to our true home.