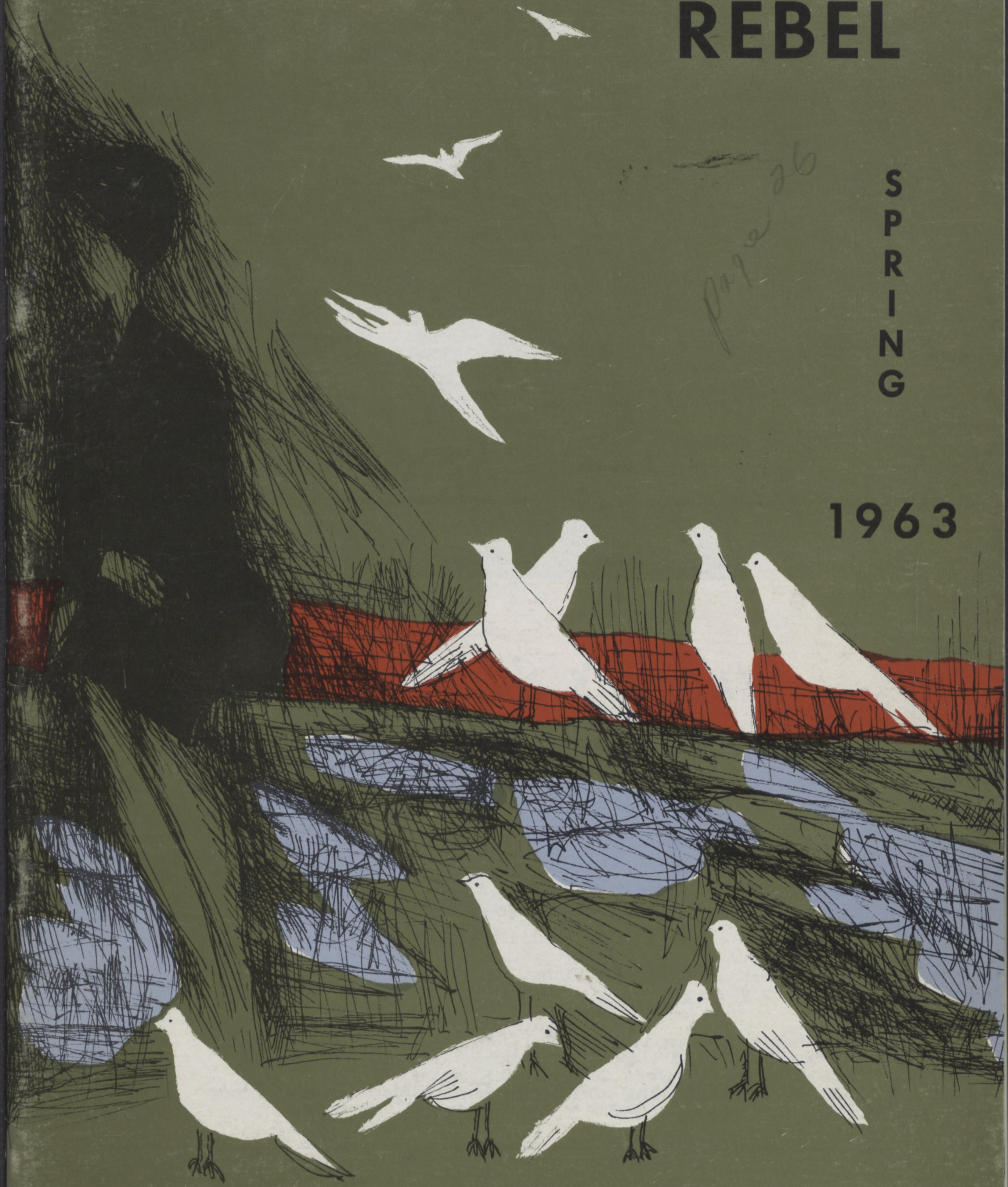


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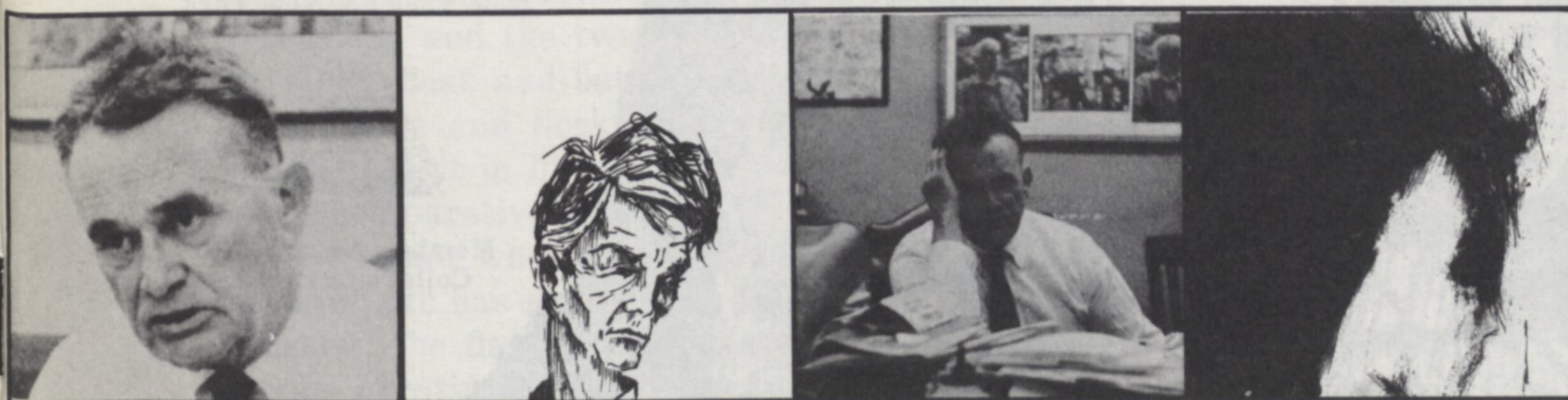
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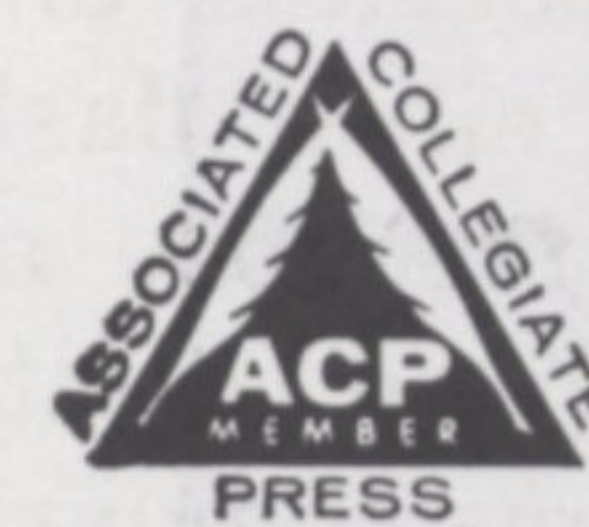
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# EDITORIAL

In the interview with Ralph McGill in this issue of the REBEL, he gives an interesting answer to a question concerning the morals of American youth. The question was, "Do you think that the morals of American youth are undergoing a transition today?" The basis for this question was an article by Fred and Mary Heschinger in a recent Sunday *New York Times Magazine*. Their feeling was that our morals are undergoing a definite liberalization, if indeed, they are not becoming libertine. Their chief basis for this is the open and frank discussion of sexual and moral problems which they say prevails on today's college campuses. They apparently disapprove, and feel that it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to exercise *in loco parentis* to force adherence to traditional moral standards where it appears that the students themselves have not been so reared prior to college as to make such measures unnecessary.

Mr. McGill's answer to the question was that he believes it is not that our morals are undergoing any tremendous transformation, but rather that the American youth of today are simply more honest than they were in the Victorian era or the era of the twenties. The Victorians were hypocrites, and the twenties he calls the days of the silver flask and bath-tub gin and the flapper, of free-love and necking, of Greenwich Village and the revolt in literature. Today, he continues, seems comparatively mild.

We are not wholly in accord with Mr. McGill. Bath-tub gin has simply been replaced by tax-paid whiskey; the flapper has been replaced by great groups gyrating some new craze called the thunderbird; Greenwich Village is still around and the revolt in literature has more or less quieted into commonplace acceptance. But the fact that these things are more above board does not make them necessarily quieter. It may make them noisier.

But we do agree with Mr. McGill on one point and disagree with the Heschingers. The open dis-

cussion and acceptance of the existence of problems of sex and morals is advantageous and should not be perverted or controlled extensively by anyone. If traditional moral standards are disappearing, then it is not the responsibility of individuals who still wish to adhere to them to enforce that adherence on others who do not. In fact, it seems natural enough that with the disappearance of the shibboleths and fears that sustained certain moral attitudes and practices long after their practical value had ceased to exist, the moral values themselves should change or at least become more honest.

As evidence of the benefits to be reaped from wider and more open acceptance and discussion of attitudes and practices that have existed all along, we would point out the number of books and movies that are accepted today that would never have passed a board of censors ten years ago. And these books and films are not trashy Fabian types, but make a real contribution to contemporary American art. Books like Miller's *Tropics* have only in the last five years been printed openly in the United States. *Catch 22*, by Joseph Heller, which may well be regarded as one of the great war novels of America, would not have had a chance for open publication had it been written ten years earlier. Certainly, it would have had nothing like the wide public discussion it is currently receiving.

A recent movie, *Hud*, according to the majority of the critics is an open and honest presentation of an S.O.B. (Something they seem to think is typical of contemporary society). It would not have been produced five years ago. And the failure to produce such a movie, or to publish such books would have been a failure to give to the American public the honesty and integrity they deserve from art. Consequently, if openness and honesty are to be viewed by the Heschingers, *et al* as indices of moral transition and decline, we are heartily in favor of it, tradition notwithstanding.



*Ralph McGill was born in Tennessee and educated in the public schools of that state and at Vanderbilt University. He came of age at a time when the South was being changed and shaken and as editor of the Atlanta Constitution has championed the rights of freedom for a new and better South. His recent book, The South and the Southerner was winner of the Atlantic non-fiction award.*



## *Interview with* **RALPH MCGILL**

**Interviewer:** Has there been a failure in leadership in the deep South?

**Mr. McGill:** Yes. I don't think there's any question but what there has been a failure of leadership in the deep South. I don't know that this was a conscious failure. I believe that in retrospect we ought to be ashamed of this failure, and probably are ashamed of it, because we should have known that change was coming; and we should have made some move to take care of it. This we did not do. Here in Atlanta, for example, I remember writing some months or weeks, at least, before the nineteen fifty-four school season that the decision was certainly coming, that it could not be anything except what it was—a desegregation decision, and that no one was doing anything about it. The school board was not, the city government was not, the newspapers were not, and none of the P.T.A.'s were discussing it. There

was a great silence, and yet everyone must have known this was coming.

Now this was true all over the South. Here was the great decision that broke the log jam. It had been in the works a long time. Some people acted surprised when it came, but it was not really a surprise. We had had the previous decisions in some years before. In fact we had already had Negroes in Southern universities before the nineteen fifty-four school decision. L.S.U. had given graduate degrees to two Negroes in nineteen fifty-two or three. At the University of Arkansas, there had been over a hundred graduate degrees given to Negroes before the '54 decision. Texas and Oklahoma had also admitted Negroes to graduate schools. And yet we all sat back and waited and waited, and did nothing . . . and acted, when the decision came in May, '54, as if this were a great unpleasant surprise. So there was failure, and there has been failure since.



*Interviewer:* To what extent do you think that this failure in the leadership has been responsible for the problems in the South?

*Mr. McGill:* I think largely responsible. Not wholly, perhaps, because I would be the last to ignore the facts of tradition and the facts of custom, cemented by years of observance. But none the less, I think I would have to say that failure of this leadership to act responsibly is in the main the reason for our troubles.

I don't know if you remember how it was after this decision. There was a period there of some weeks, really about a couple of months, in which there was a sort of silence. People said, "I don't like this school decision, but I guess I knew it was coming;" or "I wish it hadn't come; I hate it; I don't like the idea of my children going to school with Negroes, but the Supreme Court has ruled, and I guess we'll have to observe it." This was pretty general. In my analysis of it, I rather think that the fault lies chiefly in Virginia. Virginia is one of our most respected states, or was. Virginia has a great tradition of civil rights, human rights, the great tradition of Jefferson, and all the other Virginians who contributed so much to our history. At the time of this decision the demagogues, such as our Marvin Griffin, then governor of Georgia, and others over the South were not being listened to very much, because they weren't too respected, and people would choose the Supreme Court over them. But all the sudden, here came Virginia, led by Senator Byrd, a respected figure of conservatism, and Virginia began talking about interposition. We may laugh about this now, but for a time Virginia in effect threw the cloak of her great respectability and tradition about the backs of rascals and prejudiced demagogues, and all of the worst elements in the South suddenly found that they had a respectable leader, Virginia.

Then really the dam broke. All these people came screaming out; the legislatures met; they began to pass all sorts of foolish restrictive legislation; and the air was filled with defiance. But I think without any doubt, had the real business leaders and the decent political leadership and the clergy stepped forward, in that lull that followed the decision, there would not have been the travail we now have.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that the church, both black and white, has failed the South in the integration crises or in the time leading up to these crises?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, with certain notable excep-

tions, I don't think there's any doubt but that the church in general has failed. I know that this is probably the cause of more private agony on the part of Southern ministers than any other thing that has happened in their life time. I've talked to a great many. I have on my desk as we talk now letters that have come in just in the last few days. I have letters from ministers in Birmingham, and these are really pathetic letters. I've letters from others who just sort of pour out their agony. What can they do, they ask. The power structure of their churches, the big givers, the men who are the deacons, the elders, the vestry—they all along have been on the side of the *status quo*. They have joined in and supported the Bull Connors, the Ross Barnetts, and the George Wallaces. And the minister either makes a decision to resign or to speak out and be fired. Over a hundred Southern ministers have been booted out of their churches. Or shall they say, "Well, I will try to stay here and hold this together, and slowly work it out, if I can." And I don't criticize these men. I criticize some of these who have gone with the mob, and some of them have gone with the mob.

In Mississippi, some very fine young Methodist ministers have been kicked out of their churches. And there have been some loud voices of other churches down there going with the mob. And I'm an Episcopalian. We've had our own shameful ministers in some of the Southern states who have gone with the mob. The Baptists, Presbyterians, even some of the Roman Catholics have had trouble. But I think that there's a change, now. The Roman Catholic church has moved strongly, the Presbyterians recently have taken action, the Episcopal church, Methodist, others . . . So I think there's a change. But I don't think even the church itself would deny that it has been a failure in these early years of this great problem.

*Interviewer:* Do you feel, as Tom Pettigrew of Harvard, that integration is a function of urbanization, that it will come first in the large cities and then filter down to the rural areas?

*Mr. McGill:* Oh, I think this unquestionably, and I think this would be a wise plan and policy. I have editorially urged this from the beginning. Rural population is declining everywhere. It's moving to the cities and to the suburbs. This is where the people are, and I think this is where the energy and the money for legal cost should be spent, in the cities; and then, once this is won, the rural areas will have to fall into line. But I think it is folly to spend a lot of time and energy in the small town.



**Interviewer:** What do you feel is the real basis for segregation? Why do you think so many Southerners unreasonably hate the Negroes?

**Mr. McGill:** Well, I've thought about this a lot, as obviously you and your associates have. And it might be a good time for me to congratulate you on this magazine you get out up there. I've had the pleasure of reading the copies you've sent me before your coming. They're really tremendous. I haven't seen anything anywhere in the university life of America that's better than this.



Well, I think a lot of it is fear—economic fear. You take the poor white, and you know this problem of poverty and discrimination is not just the Negroes. This is where we make a great mistake in our thinking. Do you know that if you go up in Chicago, in Pittsburg, and Philadelphia, and New York, in all of these places, as well as in Detroit and Seattle, and other areas, there are some of the most pathetic people you've ever seen. They are referred to in these cities as "Southern hillbillies." Now these are the poor whites who are not skilled, who are not educated, who in the heyday of the industrial revolution had jobs in the tire factories and in the big automobile assembly plants. They don't have them now. They're mostly all on relief. Most of them live in little enclaves in Negro sections of these industrial cities. They are looked down on by everybody. And what we have got now in the great industrial cities all over this country is what I think might be classified sociologically as a new minority—a new minority of our time. This is the poor uneducated, unskilled, white man who is on relief just as badly as the uneducated, unskilled, unemployed Negro; and these people make up a class which is just about unemployable. I don't know that they'll ever really be able to hold well-paying jobs in this industrial society of ours ever again.

Now there are several million of these, and they are pretty well distributed all over this country. This is a phenomenon that we have not quite

caught on to, come aware of, rather. Now these people—you take a fellow whose world is pretty well crumbled around him, he isn't getting along, he's unemployed, and he's always believed that his white skin entitled him to something better in life, and he isn't getting it. You get out of this some real hatreds. You go down in the rural areas where farm life is pinching and where population is leaving and poverty and the great corrosive difficulties of trying to live on a small piece of land, stare them in the face daily and when they see the educated Negro, and they read about the rise of the African nations and they see on television the French-speaking or Oxford-English voices of Negroes from Africa, this doesn't set well.

I sometimes think that we're getting some bad reporting out of this violence of Birmingham or Little Rock or Oxford. After all, I think you and I—all Southerners—want to keep in mind that historically the Southern Negro has been and is a pretty fine, decent, amiable, kind, person. This is historically true. And if we allow this big picture of the American Negro, who is trying just to be American and who wants to share in the American promise—if we allow this big picture of a fine, decent person to be obscured by the little picture—let's say the photographs out of Birmingham, showing the dogs and police clubbing Negroes and knocking women down and carrying them and throwing them in wagons, their patrol wagons, or buses—in these small pictures you might have had say, twenty, thirty, maybe fifty persons. This is a very powerful picture, but this is a little picture. There are several millions of Southern Negroes, and if we look at our history they've made a remarkable contribution; and if we lose sight of the fact that they are trying just to share in this American promise . . . What's wrong with the Negro, if he's qualified, voting? What's wrong with him, if he's skilled, holding a job? What's wrong with him, if he can pay for it, and he's clothed and orderly, being able to eat in a restaurant? You don't have to sit at the table with him if you don't want to. What's wrong with him going to a movie in the front door, rather than having to go to the alley and climb up into a balcony?

I think we in the South have got to face these things and get the thing into perspective. After all the sky's not going to fall if the Negro has a lunch and he can pay for it. He isn't going to come over and sit with you unless you invite him. You don't have to sit with him unless he invites you and you wish to accept. We greet these great



fears which are based on nothing. You get people who actually say, "Well, the next thing, the government'll be saying you've got to invite them to your house." Well, this is bunk—you know that. And they say, "Well, you going to have to marry the Negro?" Well, I think the ordinary marriage is tough enough; and certainly the person contemplating any sort of "mixed" marriage with a person speaking a different language or a different color would certainly be wise to give great thought to it. But this is certainly a personal thing, and not a matter of law or social obligation or anything. We have allowed, I think, the makers of myths and the shouters of lies to take up too much of our time.

*Interviewer:* In the Negro's wish for integration, what value do you think rioting as in Birmingham has had?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, I think the Alabama thing has had, and is having, a therapeutic value, just as, I think, Little Rock did, and Oxford, and other lesser riots; but especially these big ones, especially Birmingham, which had a longer period of time, and which as we talk is still a hot spot. There comes a time in a man's thinking when he's got to make up his mind. Something like Birmingham happens, and he must at one time or another say to himself, "Is this what I really believe? Do Bull Connor and Governor Wallace—do they represent my thinking? Is this the sort of America I want? Is this the sort of South I want? Is this the real Southerner in action in Birmingham? Do I want to join him?" I think he must go through some kind of reasoning like this. Now, obviously there are some in this thing who say, "Yes, Bull Connor is my idea of a Southerner. Governor Wallace or Ross Barnett—they're my bold idea of a Southerner." But I think most Southerners are not thinking that. So I think these things have a therapeutic value. I know there must be a lot of cities saying, "I pray to God we never have a Birmingham here."



*Interviewer:* Perhaps we've just been lucky up until recently, but why do you think North Carolina has been able to handle the integration problem reasonably successfully, while some of the other Southern states have not?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, I think that you've had there some public leaders, and you have had some newspapers which have permitted, or rather, have insisted on a discussion of this. The people in North Carolina by and large have been made aware for a long period of time that this issue existed, and that some decisions had to be made. I think this is why we were able to do pretty well in Atlanta. This is why Nashville, Tennessee and other Southern cities that I could name and those in North Carolina have been able to do better than the deep South. Let's turn over to Mississippi and Alabama. With the exception of Hodding Carter's paper, and two weekly papers in Mississippi, the whole press was on the side of violence and of, well not violence; they were on the side of the extremists. This was true in the city of Jackson, Mississippi, the capital of the State, and Natchez, and in Vicksburg, and in all of the major cities of the state. There was no other coice; there was never a debate or, to use the new fangled word, dialogue. There was never a dialogue. The same is true in Alabama. It was just about four or five months ago that the papers in Birmingham began to turn against Bull Connor's ideas and methods. Just a few months ago they were saying what a great fellow Bull Connor was, and he was the sort of leader they wanted as Commissioner of Police. So the newspapers in Montgomery and Birmingham, the two major cities, have been very critical of the Supreme Court, of all of the decisions and talked a lot of nonsense about federal imposition of power and all this. The people of Mississippi and Birmingham never got an opportunity to be heard. There are many decent people down there . . . in both of these states, who don't think this way.

But I think that in North Carolina you were lucky in having some newspapers that spoke out, some clergymen, some business people, some educational leaders who were willing to take a stand. This means a great deal. This is the difference. Some of your students also took stands.

*Interviewer:* How has the distribution of the Negro and the Negro problem throughout the rest of the country affected the viewpoint of other areas toward the South?

*Mr. McGill:* I mentioned earlier this phenomenon, and a disturbing one of the national distribution of the product of several generations of seg-



regation. Here's a region which had, like all agricultural regions all over the world, a lower income than the rest of the nation. To this day the per capita income of the South is lower than the rest of the industrial states. We didn't have enough money for one good school system—we tried to maintain two. Until a year or two ago, there were many rural regions, areas in the South that had no Negro high schools whatever, and very poor white high schools. There are still high schools in the Southern states that do not teach any advanced mathematics. Georgia Tech has to flunk out about 40 percent of its freshman class, coming from the high schools largely of Georgia, because they are not prepared to stay at Georgia Tech. I don't know about the University of North Carolina, or your own college, but I would imagine you would find some very dismaying statistics of fine young men and women who have come from high schools which have simply not prepared them to stay. Now here in the South, we have grievously discriminated against generations of white and Negro children; and now they are in Washington, D. C. This is a dangerous situation. They, white and colored, are in all the great industrial cities, and they are not educated or skilled enough to hold jobs. This is a national fact which is beginning to, in some areas, cause people to think; in some areas it's causing animosity toward the South for sending up all these illiterate, uneducated people who drift off into crime. I think we ought to wake up to the fact and the meaning of two statistics: one is that for the first time in the history of the United States, for the very first time in the history of this great country of ours, the highest percentage age-group unemployment is in the youngest age-group, eighteen to twenty-six. For the first time the young people coming into the work force are increasingly unable to get jobs. Why? Too many of them are unable to fill jobs. Too many of them are the drop-outs, or poorly prepared, or the failures in high schools. This is a fact.

What's the other statistic? It is that the greatest increase in crime is in the same age group. Let's put two and two together. A great many of these youngsters get married. They can't get work, married or unmarried. So they turn to stealing, or to hold-ups, all forms of delinquency. And this is two and two, makes four. We needn't kid ourselves. We've got a very bad situation among a certain percentage of our young Americans. And this is not good. This has never happened before. This is a development of the last ten or fifteen years. It's just now beginning to

bear fruit, you might say; and a very ugly fruit it is.

*Interviewer:* I was reading an article recently in the *New York Times Magazine* on the change in morals in American youth, discussing primarily college students. Do you think that we are in a transition period morally today?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, I'm not sure that I do think so. Then we come back to what do we mean by "morally?"

*Interviewer:* Let's just say standard morals.

*Mr. McGill:* Standard morals. The Victorian standard morals, or the twentieth century standard morals? Standard morals? Gee. I'm sixty-five years old, just barely. I remember after the first World War. That was when there came the great revolt in America. And I would say that the generation of the nineteen-sixties is fairly calm, compared with the generation of the twenties. These were the days of the silver flask, and the bath tub gin, and the flapper, and of free love, and necking, and Greenwich Village, and the revolt in literature. This was when Southern writers began to come along, and they were all writers in rebellion. It was all literature of protest against the *status quo*, against the old South, and against the old Victorian confinements. These were the days of the novelists that shocked America, and so forth and so on.

I would say that the morals of American young people today are more honest. I think they have been getting more honest since the twenties than they ever were before. I was asked out the other night by some youngsters to go to a college dramatic group giving readings from *John Brown's Body*. And when it was over, they asked me to go to one of the little sort of coffee house clubs, except it was more beer than coffee. I was sitting around, and they weren't drinking any beer. They were having coffee or soft drinks. But I looked around, and most of them had beer at the tables, some pitchers of beer or bottles. Some were having coffee or soft drinks; and I thought to myself that this was a more honest way of doing things than in my generation in college; of course, my generation coincided with prohibition when everything was furtive and secretive, and hidden and illegal; I think this is better than our way. Now I don't know if this fits into morality. I'm not too disturbed about the morals of young people today. I think probably they're better than those of their fathers.

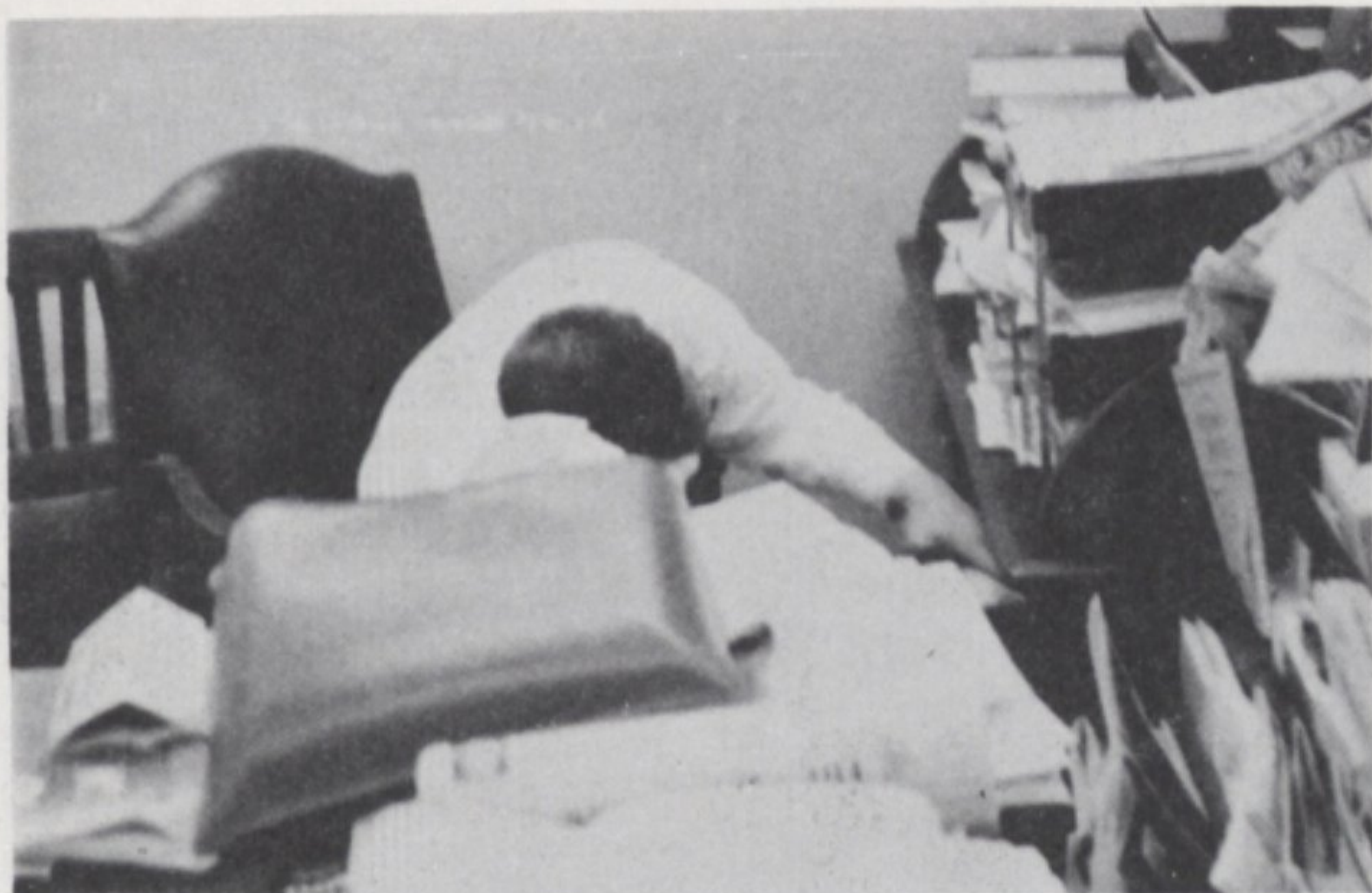


*Interviewer:* Do you think it's possible to shock America now?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, not in the sense, perhaps, that they were shocked in the twenties. As I said, or think I said, that this was a Victorian standard, against which the twenties were rebelling. So that today you've got a much more sophisticated America, and you've got a much more mature America, I think. Certainly a younger maturity. I can remember when I went to work on a newspaper. We didn't even use the word "cancer" then. We certainly didn't use the word "syphilis." We couldn't discuss the problem of such a real big thing then, in those days, venereal disease in a city and how a great many innocent people were infected with it, and so forth. We—great taboo in those days—couldn't use the word "leg," couldn't speak of "leg." It was just a lot of Victorian taboo, some of it very foolish. Now today maybe we go too far; maybe we're a little too free; but at least it isn't furtive, and it isn't clandestine. It at least has the virtue of being above board and honest, honestly admitted, or honestly discussed. I think you shock America today with some of the things that come along. But I think it's a more investigative, more—America more willing to discuss itself. This is one of the things the twenties did. Gee, we began to look at each other.

*Interviewer:* Do you feel that federal pressure behind integration will further minimize state sovereignty?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, do you know, you've just asked a question which I'm sort of glad you asked. Do you know there isn't any such thing as state sovereignty, and hasn't been since seventeen eighty-nine? We have all been listening to Southern politicians talk about the great sovereign state of North Carolina or Georgia or Mississippi or something. Now this is bunk. Have we got time for me to read you something out of the Constitution? I'd like to get it out of a drawer here.



What I have is a World Almanac with the Constitution of the United States in it. And I want to read something from Article Six of the Constitution of the United States. This is not an amendment. This has been in there from the beginning, and says this under Section Two of Article Six:

This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary, notwithstanding.

Then, Section Three:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support the Constitution.

Now, how can you say that a state is sovereign if it is bound by the Constitution and if it is bound by the courts of the United States, and if the state courts are bound by a decision of the federal courts, and if the representatives and senators and governors, and all executive and judicial officers of the United States and of the several states are bound by oath to support the Constitution—how can you say there are sovereign states? This is bunk.

We had a confederation, you know, after 1776; and we had sovereign states in it, thirteen of them, and they warred against each other. They set up tariffs, and they worked themselves in to a point where a couple of them were threatening to go back to join England again as colonies. It was a little Balkan set up, and it failed. So they had to get busy and set up a central government, and a constitution. And when that was adopted in 1789, then the old sovereign state idea died. Now the Confederate States recognized this when they set up their constitution. They recognized there was no sovereign state in the United States Constitution—that they were quitting—because they went to great pains to say that under their constitution, that is the Confederate States, there were sovereign states. Now if you will go to your history teacher, American history teacher, or if you will check any reputable historian he will tell you that insistence on state sovereignty really made it impossible for the Confederate States to win the Civil War. The most grievous hurt they had was the States Rights or State Sovereignty



complex. North Carolina was a great example of this. Vance and all the others leading a great movement there were declared traitors by Jefferson Davis and others and the same things happened in Georgia. Governor Brown. The States Right's theory of the Confederacy or the fact of it, really made the Confederacy impotent. But there is no such thing as a sovereign state in the United States. This is just bunk. We've listened to too many political speeches.

*Interviewer:* Would you say the potential conflict between the White and Black in part accounts for the wealth of material that the Southern writers have had to deal with?

*Mr. McGill:* In part, but I don't know that the great flowing of Southern literature came out of a conflict between the Negro and White. This is something that has developed rather late and it distresses me. I think the Southerner, the White Southerner, knowing the real Southern Negro, owes it to himself and his region not to let the rascals and the violent people take over. I think that the Southerner has developed the literature he has because he has a great sense of history. Probably because he had a sense of living in a region that knew defeat, occupation by an army; he grew up as youngsters of no other region did, save some of those in New England, hearing his grandfather talk about historical events. You gentlemen missed it. But I as a youngster used to know Civil War veterans. Both armies. I would listen by the hour to their talk. My grandmother talked about seeing the soldiers come. All this is a part of the Southern heritage. Quite different before the Civil War. We had no literature before the Civil War. We didn't have much until really about 1912-15 it began. We had none during the Reconstruction period or after, but somehow it began to come. I don't know. We could have a great debate on it, but I think it's basically that Southerners live closely with history and sociological change, sociological pressures, such as no other region has had.

*Interviewer:* What would you say is the best contemporary fictional treatment of the South?

*Mr. McGill:* I don't think you could say that any of it could be taken as picturing the contemporary South because this would require great generalities and there are many "Souths." North Carolina isn't very much like Georgia. Your history's different; your economy has been different; your political history has been much more sound and honorable than ours. You early went after good roads and you early went after education, way ahead of any other Southern state. Ken-

tucky's history is not like Mississippi's, or South Carolina's is unlike Tennessee. I don't think your question will stand up because it implies that there is a generality of Southern expression.

Faulkner, in my opinion our greatest, I suppose this is an opinion pretty generally shared, reflected a small region of Mississippi. Now many of his characterizations had general application, but not too much. He was writing about the area of Mississippi. Take Erskine Caldwell who, I think, in one or two of his early books is really pretty good. I think *Tobacco Road* is a good book. It was written about real people. Erskine Caldwell's father was a Presbyterian minister, a very fine man who devoted much of his life to the people of "Tobacco Road." This was the real name of the region. Not a region, an area. And Caldwell, this was his best book, I think, because he lived it; he saw it with his father; he had a feeling for these people. These were real people and he didn't exaggerate them in the book. But they were just a small back eddy of people. You couldn't apply *Tobacco Road* to all of Georgia, although some people did. I don't know that your writers in North Carolina reflect the whole South.

*Interviewer:* To what extent do you think the image of the South in the eyes of the rest of the country, has been created by the writings of Caldwell, Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor and these people?

*Mr. McGill:* Well, I suppose that they have, in the minds of the average person created an image of the South; but I don't think, in the eyes of the thoughtful person. No person, no thoughtful person, could look at one of the tortured plays of Tennessee Williams and really think this represented the South. His characters and their very grievous psycho-analytical problems or natures could be of any region. He's seen fit to place them in the South, but I think Tennessee Williams reflects his own tortured childhood. His mother has just written a book, or rather a book written by





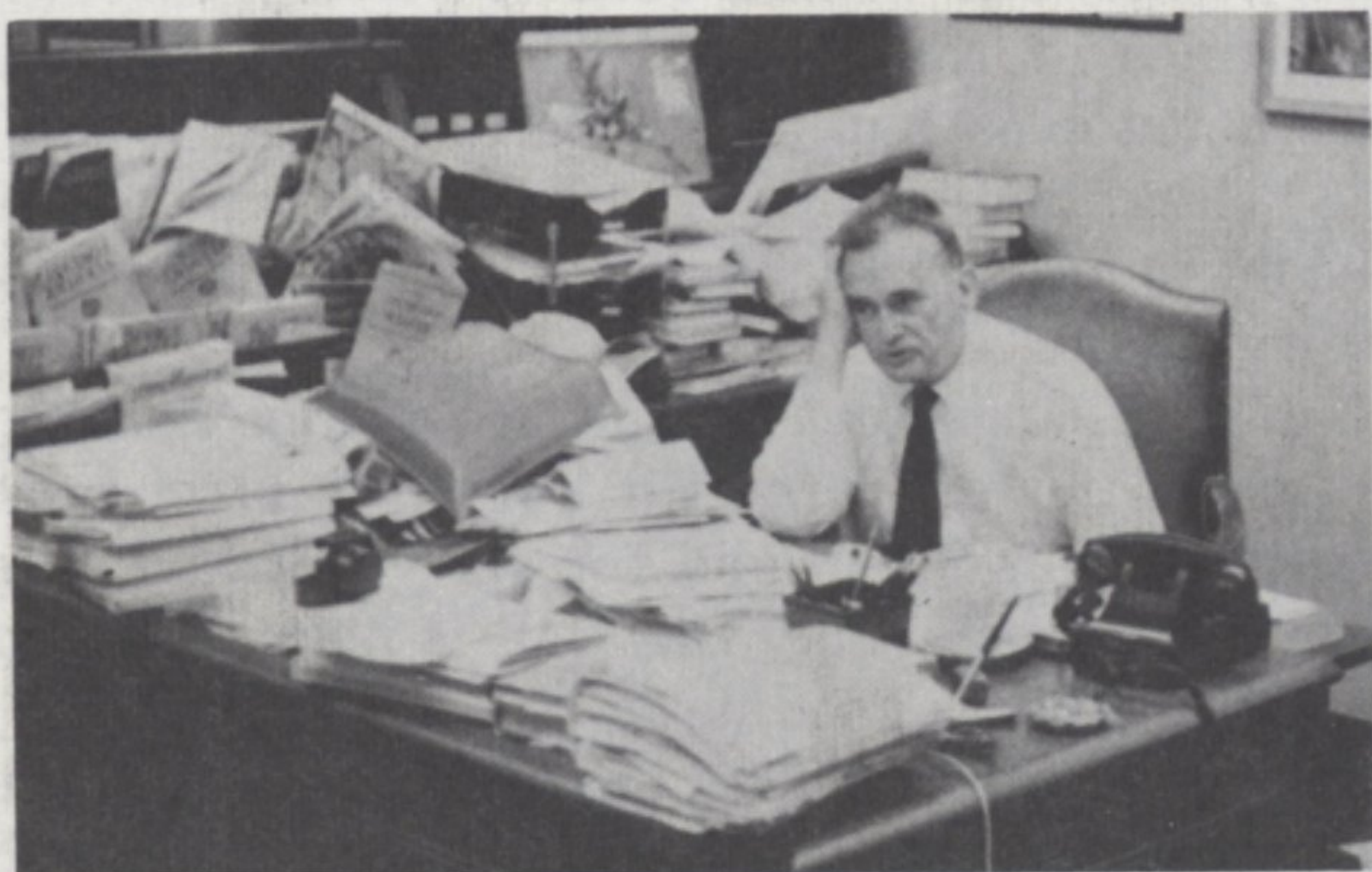
her has just been published. It pretty well explains Tennessee Williams, I think. Some people are pretty well inclined to rubber stamp, to read Faulkner and stamp the whole South by that or Tennessee Williams. Just as some people look at Bull Connor or Barnett and stamp the South with Connor or Barnett or Orville Faubus in Little Rock; but I don't think that this is generally true.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that the bias of the Negro writer has prevented him from a fair and honest treatment of the problems between the two races?

**Mr. McGill:** I think the bias of the Negro press has certainly been harmful. I think this has been irresponsible. Certainly some of the white press has been equally irresponsible. But I think the Negro press has been too much so, almost unanimously so. I'm talking about the newspapers, not all of their magazines. There have been some biased Negro writers, but I don't think that this is an indictment that could be drawn against them generally.

**Interviewer:** Well, for example James Baldwin or Ralph Ellison.

**Mr. McGill:** Well Baldwin, it might surprise you to know is under severe criticism from a great many Negro critics. They are saying that Baldwin is writing too much out of his neuroses, out of his own experiences, and he doesn't really speak for the Negro. I think Baldwin is a magnificent writer. Some of his conclusions all of us in the South would have to admit, or agree with, but here again, I don't know that you could say that he is biased; or Ralph Ellison. They're writing out of a certain fury or inability any longer to accept the fact of segregation and all that it has meant, especially to the intellectual. Of course, the intellectual tends to forget what it has meant also to the average Negro. To the, what you might say, the mass of Negroes most of whom have come lately from plantations and farms into Southern cities . . . but then that's too long story to get into.



**Interviewer:** Do you think the areas of intense revolt, intense problematic rioting, again as in Alabama, could have been anticipated; and if so, could some strategy have been conceived to avoid mob rioting?

**Mr. McGill:** Well, I think so. Birmingham is a unique sort of city; it's not a Southern city, really, as we think of Southern cities. This is a city that's pretty new. It just got going a little ahead of the turn of the century. It never knew anything of magnolias or crinoline or quadrilles or lace and old mansions or banjo and julep. It was strictly a sweat, steel, slag, smoke town. They discovered iron ore and coal, and limestone all together there. This was to be the new South. Birmingham was the new South's town; it was going to be—*was* the great industrial city. And it's today the only purely industrial city in the whole South. And it attracted to it the people from the sharecropping tenant farms, and it attracted the Negro, too, from the same situation; they brought with them their illiteracy and their fears, their economic instabilities, insecurities, the prejudices. This has been a town that has known violence a long time; during the unionization of the miners, the steel workers, there were many dynamite explosions, many. And many people were killed; and shootings. Well, come on up to the present. Certainly, the people of Birmingham knew this was coming. And up 'til about four or five months before it came they were supporting the wrong people. They were supporting the *status quo*, the Bull Connor attitude of repression and fill up the jails. Now that's no longer an answer. And, yes, I think had the merchants who finally met, had they met a year ago, had they asked for the support of the papers and the clergy, had they started a program of public education, I think they could have done what they're now going to have to do—desegregate some of their eating places, hire some Negroes in their businesses; Yes, this could have been anticipated.





**FIRST PRIZE**

**REBEL PROSE CONTEST**

# THE NEW RIVER

By

**B. TOLSON WILLIS, Jr.**

It had been raining every day for weeks until the river swelled and writhed in its banks like a full-bellied woman in labor. The soldiers on their haunches sat close to their dome yurts, and the steam from the rains rose from their bodies and their black wool shelters so that a stench hung heavy in the air. They would sit still or squat in a circle around the fire but even then their dark eyes rolled up toward the clouds looking for the rain.

Yesterday, they had waited patiently, searching the skies and leaving the circle only to herd the horses back in close or to collect dung for the night fire. But the rain never came and mummings about a renewed attack on the walls hung as heavily as the night fire's smoke.

The dawn crept out of the gray mist and stretched its limbs, casting smeared prints on the solemn walls of the city. The soldiers began to move about in the heavy smoke of the morning fire. A man hobbled out of the ring of smoke-clouded yurts, moving slowly as if an infant on unruly legs.

Everything was beginning to move in the camp. On a rise a little away from the yurts, a mounted figure stood in statued form. The dew still clung to his leather cap but had begun to trickle down his overvest in the new heat. His shaggy steppe pony stood stiff-legged with his head hung down, asleep, and the man's bowed legs clung to the shaggy mount's barrel on either side, his feet almost touching in the undergirth. His head hung heavily on his short chest, but the eyes were sharply awake, studying the wall as though searching for some sign of weakness. Perhaps there was a

crack. The wall stared back; the new sun burnished its high facings.

Among the men below there was a hoarse cry and all eyes darted toward the north. The soldiers grabbed their curved bows and shuffled toward the closest of the herded ponies on the fringe of the encampment. One rider galloped toward the rise while the others mounted and rode toward a line of ox-carts still toy-like in the distance. When the rider reached the rise, he drew up beside his leader. "Mongi Khan, look to the north. The grain carts are coming and the Persians come with them." The speaker's yellow face was young and smooth and as he spoke his dark eyes flashed under the irregular bangs of black hair.

Mongi Khan raised his head slowly, still looking at the wall. "It is good that the grain comes," he said heavily. "The men's bellies have grown taut as bow strings."

The young man's long lids knitted, then he spoke again. "Surely our leader heard me say the Persians come. Our armies rode to victory through the armies of the North. Their heavy chariots could not stop us, but here in the South the Chinese hide behind their walls. The Persians bring their wisdom to destroy the walls. Now we shall know victory again."

Mongi Khan spoke. "You are young and the dreams of victory are still sweet. I have been fighting in this alien land for six years and it is always the same. Only the wall is new. But you are right. This is good news.

"But my heart remains heavy to think that the last message I received could not have been also



good. The rain has been little where my brothers roam the steppes and the ewe's udder has gone dry. My son had no milk; now only his spirit guards the herd and cries in the night. What reward can another victory bring? The last brought a return home and the birth of my son. My son is dead now. Who is left to reap the glory of my victory over the wall?" The two horsemen were silent as they rode toward the yurts.

The day failed softly. A soldier hobbled out to gather fresh dung for the cook fires. Around the fire soldiers squatted and traded stories, their faces flushed with thoughts of plunder. The arkhi was passed many times around the circle until the goatskin hung limp. Their glazed eyes glistened when they spoke of the council between their leaders and the Persians.

In the tent the small fire cast wavering silhouettes on the felt walls. The Persians sat on their soft cushions with their plans rolled out in front of them. The mongol khans squatted by the fire waiting for them to begin.

"We have surveyed the wall and found that they are too thick for our rams and catapults. Besides they are built in a series, possibly as many as eight or ten in all."

"Have you traveled so far from Persia to tell us this?" The young khan exclaimed.

The Persian smiled. "The young in conquest must learn the patience of old rulers," he said. "The walls are strong, but there is a flaw in the city's defence. The ruins have worn themselves out and soon the river will fall. This river flows under the north wall and out under the south. We will turn the river at the north wall. A new river bed must be dug. When the river falls, the new bed will be opened and the river will flow around the walls. When the river no longer flows through the city, the gates must be opened or they die of thirst."

Labor gangs were herded to build the new river bed. The rains no longer came and the workers fell on their hoes in the heavy heat. The stench of the dead followed the broad trench as it snaked around the west wall and slowly moved back towards the south. New gangs were herded in by the Mongol horsemen to replace the men that fell. The Persians worked in shifts driving the diggers day and night. After six months the new river bed was completed. Only a small dike held the river back on the northern end of the new bed.

Mongi Khan sat on the rise above the northern wall and watched the workmen break the dikes. The river swirled and writhed against the new banks and then began to move toward the south once more.

The days grew more intense and the cooler nights seemed to pass too quickly. The horsemen discarded their leather over-jackets. They watched the walls day and night. Each night the defenders crept to the new river and were killed.

Mongi Khan sat watching his horsemen strung out along the new river. They suddenly moved towards the wall. Mongi Khan saw scattered figures running back toward the wall but still holding water skins. Many fell in the first barrage of arrows loosed by the Mongol horsemen.

Mongi Khan rode closer. Lying in the dust were not fallen soldiers but old men and women, their gnarled hands still clutching the punctured skins of their water vessels. Mongi Khan reined in beside the leader of the band. His eyes were dark and narrow. "Hai! Are you soldiers or wolves that drag down only the old?"

"It is part of their plan to get water," the leader replied. "First they sent their soldiers and we destroyed them. Then they sent their children and we rode them into the dust. Now they send their precious ancients. We must stop them all."

"Enough! When the old ones come again, let them drink. Take their water vessels but let them drink."

"They will soak their clothes and try to take water into the city in their mouths!"

"Enough!" Mongi Khan turned and rode away.

The young Khan rode towards the new river. His eyes flashed and he screamed for the leader of the river patrol. "Ox! Stupid Ox! Why are these allowed to drink?"

"Mongi Khan willed it so."

"Mongi Khan is no longer the leader. He has swallowed dust and stones and lies dead in the old river bed. I am the leader. Ride them down! We must break their will before the rains come again."

Mongi Khan's crooked legs lay sprawled out behind him. His neck seemed broken and twisted under his body. The hot wind swirled pools of fine white silt around his crumpled form lying in the old river bed.

The clouds moved slowly, piling up overhead and the fine wisps of silt settled over Mongi Khan. Then came the first drops, pelting the silt and raising tiny puffs of white smoke. The puffs became heavy clouds as the rain increased. Small rivulets began to flow around the white form lying in the river bed. They broadened and began to rock the body, finally lifting it. Slowly the body floated down toward the city. The new waters flowed softly through the iron-grated opening in the wall, leaving the body to gently bump against the iron rods.



# JAMES DAVIS

and

# KATTIE

By

Millard D. Maloney





I had my jacket slung over my shoulder, and I could feel the lining of it growing hot against my back. I was kind of tired, and I reckoned that the girl was too. We'd walked over five miles. When we got to a good sized tree I said, "Let's sit down." We moved to the side of the road, and I spread my jacket for her to sit on. She began to cry. I eased her off my jacket a little bit so I could get to my cigarettes in the pocket. When I got to the pack I seen that there wasn't but one cigarette left. I lit it and handed it to her. She took it, but didn't take a good drag on it. She just sat there, holding the cigarette with one hand and wiping her eyes with the other. As I watched the smoke float upwards I got to thinking about the time we were in that nightclub in Raleigh—we'd gone up there for the weekend to see the "Mid-nighters"—and she was holding a cigarette then, just like she was now, in that loose way she has so that it looks like she's about to drop it. That was when it happened, I guess.

"Miz Turner said it won't hurt much," I said. Even while I was saying it I knew it wasn't the right thing to say; and long after I'd said it, even after we'd gotten up and started walking again, I could hear it: "Miz Turner said it won't hurt much." She didn't say anything. I sat there envying her the cigarette—wishing she'd take a drag on it and hand it to me—and trying to think of something pleasant to say. I carried on a conversation with her in my mind: "You know I love you, don't you, Kattie?"

"Uh-huh," she'd say, "I know it."

"You know if there was any way at all to get out of this I wouldn't let you go through with it, don't you?"

"I know that, James," she'd say, "I know that." Instead I said, out loud, "We ain't got much further to go." She was still crying. I put my arm around her and pulled her close to me. "Hush," I said, and I kissed her on the temple. Her hair was wet, and it smelled of tears and sweat. "Hush now," I said. "Ain't no need of acting up like that." And I felt like I was her father right then.

All of a sudden, in that funny way women have of changing their minds like their minds work on strings, she stopped crying. "Come on James," she said. "We gotta get going." We got up, and after I had dusted my jacket we started down the road again. We were going to a place called Granite Quarry. It's so small it ain't even listed on county maps, let alone North Carolina, or United States maps. The first thing you come to on the road we took is a big magnolia tree. Right along side of it is a white frame house with big columns,

and a little way down, just after a store with a neon Pepsi-Cola sign, is the colored section. When we got to the magnolia tree I said, "You want to rest a while?"

"We almost there, ain't we?" She asked.

"Yeah" I said.

"Then come on."

Katie wasn't but nineteen, but I felt right then like I was her son.

I kind of had a picture in my mind of what the house would look like. It belongs to a woman named Miz Thomas. Miz Turner had told us it was the biggest house in town. I figured there'd be a big living room with lots of furniture, and bare floors. And I figured there'd be one of those signs saying "God Bless Our Home" or something. I was right about everything except the floors. There was a big rug in the living room, and so many small ones that I kept tripping on them. There were lots of little doo-dads around too, on the mantle piece and on the tables. On one table there was one of those monkey things you see everywhere: see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing. I never did like those things.

I was wrong too about Miz Thomas. I'd always imagined that women who did that kind of work would be big and fat and evil-looking. But Miz Thomas wasn't big, she wasn't fat, and she wasn't evil-looking. She was in her late thirties, I'd say, kind of thin, with a pleasant face. In fact, she looked just like the kind of person you'd expect to see pushing somebody's baby down the street on Sunday afternoon. When we told her that Miz Turner had sent us she acted like we was old friends. After we had chit-chatted a while she said, "Well I guess we had best get started."

I stood up and paid her the amount that Miz Turner had told me to, and after she'd counted the money she and Kattie got up.

"You can stay out here if you want to," she said. "Or you can take a walk. Either way is okay."

"Thanks, I think I'll take a walk."

"Alrighty, we'll see you in about half an hour."

"A half-hour?"

"Mmmmm . . . better make it forty-five minutes."

I left. I wanted to say something to Kattie, but what could I say? Good Luck? The damned thing about life is, it seemed to me then, that there ain't never nothing to say when life and death is involved. So I just left.

I walked down the street, trying my best not to think of anything. But it didn't work. I found myself picturing what was going on back there



at Miz Thomas's. Then, walking by a bunch of children playing, I seemed to hear the girl screaming with pain, and Miz Thomas saying, "Hush now, it won't be long."

I went into a store and bought me a bottle of wine . . . but I could still hear the sound of her screaming and it was near 'bout driving me crazy. I felt like snatching the top off the bottle and drinking the wine down right there. I walked out of the store and looked around for a shady tree, and when I found one I sat down under it and opened the bottle. The wine was sweet, and the gurgling sound it made drowned out the screaming some. I even thought of saying a prayer for the girl, but I figured it would be disreligious to pray while I was drinking, so I didn't. Then I got to wondering what the child might have been, a boy or a girl, and who it would have looked like most, the girl or me. And after the third drink of wine I got to wondering if it would have been a real child at all. "God forgive me," I said, and I took a good long swig.

When I got up I was half-drunk, and real unhappy. I went back to Miz Thomas's house and rang the doorbell. There was no answer. I rang again. No answer. What a nice front porch I thought, and I waited. A real nice house too. If it wasn't for them monkeys in there me and Kattie could live here real nice. It would have been a girl I'll bet. Ugly and wrinkled at first, like most babies are at first, then pretty once she came out of the hospital. Still no answer. I rang the bell again, loud and hard. Miz Thomas came to the door. "Hi," she said smiling.

"How is she?" I asked. She looked at me as if I'd asked something outrageous.

"She's fine."

"Can I see her?"

"Sure, come on in. She's in that room right over there."

When I got into the room the girl was lying on the bed fully undressed. She looked tired and exhausted, I thought. But if you'd seen her face right then you'd have sworn she'd just come from a party. I didn't feel happy or surprised or relieved or nothing. I just stood there, leaning against the door and looking at her. She never looked prettier, I swear. Nice dark skin, and long dark hair falling down around her shoulders. I went over and kissed her, and I hated myself for wanting her again.

"How'd it go?" I asked. "Did it hurt much?"

"It wasn't bad."

"That's fine," I said. "That's just fine."

"Where'd you go?" she asked.

"I took a walk."

"I know, but where?"

"Just around. How do you feel, Kattie?"

"I feel fine."

"Can you walk?"

"Sure I can walk."

"Then let's get out of here."

"I can't go right now."

"How come you can't go?"

Miz Thomas said I got to lay down for a half-hour."

"Then will you be alright?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know?"

"It ain't over yet."

"Ain't over yet?"

"No. It takes . . . don't lets talk about it, James," she said. She pulled my head down and my face was in the pillow beside her, and I could hear her hair crackling like thunder in my ears. "Tell me everything, James."

"I saw an old colored man," I said, talking into the pillow and not thinking of what I was saying, just talking, "in a brown raincoat, it was kind of strange because I never seen anybody wear a raincoat in the summer before. I saw a bow-legged boy rolling a hoop down the street with a stick, and just before he got to me the hoop wavered and fell just like a coin when it stops spinning. I saw a cloud in the sky that looked just like a horse, and then I saw roses and people and houses, and when I looked at the cloud again it didn't look like a horse anymore, it looked like a woman with wild hair. I sat down under a tree and there was a huge heart carved on it with an arrow through it and the initials MM and KN. Are you feeling better, Kattie?"

"Tell me some more."

"How come it ain't over yet, Kattie?"

"It takes twenty-four hours, tell me some more, James."

"Twenty-four hours! . . ."

"Yes."

"Jesus!" I said and I raised her up from the pillow.

"You ought not to say that," she said. "You done told me plenty times not to say it."

"Hush," I said.

"Don't tell me to hush. You the deacon of the church, ain't you? You ought to . . ."

"Hush!"

"You ought to know better than that, and a widowed man to boot. You really should know a heap better, James Davis. You with a grown up son almost my age. You're old enough to be my daddy, James. Tell me, you're supposed to know everything ain't you? Then why don't you



answer me? Ain't you got nothing to say? You that's got the message of God and gives it to the people every Sunday morning." She grunted and laughed. "You gave me a message alright! Yes sir, I got your message."

I didn't say anything. I was lying flat on my back now, staring up at the ceiling with the girl young and naked and beautiful lying beside me. When she calmed down I said, "Do we have to stay here all that time?"

"No. We can go in a little while. It happens tomorrow."

"Miz Thomas gonna be there?"

"No. She done all she's got to do."

"You sure?"

"Sure I'm sure. What time is it?"

"Four-thirty."

"I got to lay here about five more minutes." She crossed her legs and sighed. I hated myself all over again for wanting her so much.

\* \* \* \*

There was one bus from Granite Quarry to where we lived that left at six thirty every evening, so we took it. Nothing happened on the way. We sat on the back seat and the girl slept with her head on my shoulder most of the way. When we got close to home I started thinking of people we might meet, and what they'd think and say. The girl must have been thinking the same thing because she said, just before the bus stopped, "I guess I'd better go on home alone." I didn't say anything because I knew it wasn't no time to argue. When we got off the bus I took her by the arm and started towards my place.

"James, I reckon I'd better go on home."

"I'm taking you over to my place."

"You know what folks will say James: 'His wife ain't been dead a month yet, and him runnin' around with that girl . . . and him a deacon of the . . .'"

"Hush," I said. "Each one of us got his own life to live. If you start worrying what people say and think, you'll wind up sittin' in a corner somewhere. Come on."

"James, my daddy'll kill you if he ever finds out."

"I ain't studying 'bout your daddy . . . I ain't only older than him but I'm bigger too."

When we got to my place I pulled the shades and turned the lights on. The girl sat on the bed. I took my jacket off and looked in the cabinet to see how much liquor there was, because I figured she might need it. There was almost a full bottle of Little Brown Jug, and I was happy about that. I poured a drink in a small glass and handed it to her. Then I poured myself one and said, "Here's

to it," but she had already drank hers.

"Miz Thomas said I was to walk around a lot."

"Walk? How come?"

"She says that makes it easier."

I thought for a while, and in spite of what I had told her I really didn't relish the idea of anybody seeing us together. Then I said, "How about dancing then?"

"Yeah," she said.

We must have danced for over an hour, me guiding and her following, close and warm, with all the sins in the world spinning around in my brain.

"Wait a minute," she said. And we stopped dancing.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Just wait a minute." She put her hand to her forehead and sat on the bed. I sat down beside her and moved her hand away and put mine where hers had been. Her forehead was warm, but I couldn't tell whether she had a fever or not. She put her hand to her stomach and made a face. Not a painful face. The kind a woman makes when she sees something she doesn't like.

"I reckon I'd better call Dr. Branch."

"Don't be a fool, James."

"Does it hurt real bad?"

"Nuh-uh."

"After you've rested a little while I think we ought to dance some more."

"I don't feel like it, James."

"It'll make it easier for you. Miz Thomas knows what she's talking about, so you ought to . . ."

"I done told you I don't feel like it, James. Please leave me alone."

She lay down and turned over on her right side facing me, with her hand resting on her stomach. I got up and started looking around for a blanket to throw over her, but I changed my mind. She was sweating. I changed the radio station to some fast music, and I turned it up loud.

"Come on," I said. "Let's dance some." I took her by the hand and began pulling her up from the bed.

"Don't, James."

"Come on."

"No, don't."

"Let's get with it honey. That's little Benny Harris on the sax. Little Benny's your favorite, ain't he?" I snapped my fingers in time with the music with one hand and pulled her up with the other. She sort of half-laughed and half-cried and got up. I held her close and we moved around in a two-step off time.

"Feel better?"

"Uh-huh. A little."



I kissed her cheek and held her closer. After a while I could feel her fingernails biting into my back, and just for a brief instant I could hear the screaming again, like I did back in Granite Quarry. I moved back a little.

When the song was over I turned the radio down. Then I poured two drinks and handed her the bigger one. She drank it down like it was medicine and then she lay back on the bed. She looked good lying there. Looking down at her I thought, "What the hell, that would be more fun than walking or dancing." Then I called myself the dirtiest name I could think of. Out loud I said, "It's about time for you to get some sleep."

It must have been five o'clock on the morning when I woke up. The sun was just rising, and through the shade, the soft light of morning made the room look like rooms in dreams.

I raised myself on one elbow and looked at her. I wanted to kiss her, but I was afraid it would wake her. She woke up anyway, moaning. I could see from the way the sheet fell over her that she had her hand on her stomach again. Only this time it was lower than it had been the night before. She sighed. And she smelled like morning.

"How's it going, Kattie?"

"Not so hot."

"Not so hot?"

"Not so hot."

"Can I get you something?"

"No."

"A glass of milk? An orange?"

"No, James. Nothing."

"Can I do anything at all for you?"

"Yeah. You can do something for me, James. Take me to Raleigh, right now. Chicago, New York, any place. But right now." She doubled up right sudden like, with her knees up close to her chest. She was crying. I wished right then that I could go through what she was going through; that I could do it for her, or either with her. But I didn't say it. A man can't say a thing like that to a woman and sound like anything but a damn fool. So I just lay there with my arm around her, staring up at the ceiling. "Tell me something funny," she said.

"Like what?"

"Like anything. Anything funny."

"Alright. I'll tell you the story about Sam the Man." And I couldn't remember the story word for word, but I did my best.

When I had about half finished the story the girl laughed and started beating on my chest. Only she wasn't laughing, I found out. She was making the kind of sound a child makes some-

times, so that you have to wait a while before you can tell whether it's laughing or crying. So I didn't finish the story. I just lay there and looked at her.

We laid there an hour or two, with her tossing and turning and telling me it wasn't any need to get Dr. Branch because there was nothing he could do noways. Then I got up and fixed breakfast. I figured she'd want to have hers in bed, but she said no. She had gotten up and put some clothes on and sat down at the table. She ate hearty, and I was glad. She didn't have her hand on her stomach anymore. In fact, if you had seen us right then you would have thought there was nothing wrong at all.

After breakfast she took her clothes off and got back into bed. I tried to get her to dance, or even to walk around the room a little, but she wouldn't hear it. In a little while she fell asleep. I started cleaning the place up, but I was afraid it would wake her so I stopped. I sat in that wicker back chair for a while. But I couldn't stand doing nothing so I got up and started cleaning again, real soft like. When the place was clean I washed the dishes and sat back down. The girl groaned and I looked at her, but she was still asleep. I got up and shined my shoes, then I put them back under the bed and sat back down again. I went over to the window and looked through the curtains. There was nothing to see but the house across the street, and I'd already seen it eight million times. It needed painting; has needed it for going on two years now. I felt like going out there and painting it myself. I'd paint the front porch first, just like the front part of your body is the first part you wash, then I'd get the sides and the back. I'd fix the back stairs where those steps are loose, then I'd paint them too. Maybe I'd weed out the garden and plant some collards and stuff. I was thinking of that when the girl woke up.

"James."

"Yes?"

"I thought you was gone. What time is it?"

"Near 'bout three o'clock. You want something to eat?"

"No. I ain't hungry."

"How do you feel?"

"I don't know. I don't feel nothing at all. Nothing." She was quiet for a while and then she said, "I been having the craziest dream. Did you hear me laughing?"

"No."

"I dreamed I was in a boat with a man. A sailboat. But I couldn't tell whether the man was you or somebody else. Anyway, there we were, and the man was rowing the boat and telling me a



joke. I can't remember what it was now, but it was so funny that we both got to laughing and the boat turned over and there we were in the water, just laughing our fool heads off. You didn't hear me, James?"

"No, I didn't Kattie."

"That's when I woke up and felt for you and you weren't there. You ain't going no place are you James?"

"I ain't going no place, honey."

"If you do will you take me with you?"

"Sure I will, honey."

"What time is it, James?"

"A little after three."

"I wish it was after three tomorrow, or next week."

"Do you want an orange?"

"No. You ain't going to leave me are you, James?"

"You know I wouldn't do nothing like that."

"Then what are you standing so far away from me for?"

I went over to the bed and sat down beside her. Then I leaned over and took her in my arms. "James," she said. "James." She was crying, and I could feel her fingernails biting into my back.

Around five o'clock I was sitting in the chair reading the paper. The girl wasn't crying or groaning or anything, she wasn't asleep either. She got up real casual and went to the bathroom. She was gone about twenty minutes I reckon be-

fore she came out, still undressed, and changed the radio from the news to some music. Then she started dancing by herself; not wild or anything, just dancing. I thought that was a good thing because of what Miz Thomas had said, so I just sat there and watched her moving her hips and snapping her fingers and looking so good I could have worshipped her.

"You feel alright?"

"Sure I feel alright," she said. "I feel fine."

"It's about time."

"Yeah."

"You reckon Dr. Branch might . . ."

"Ain't no need of no doctor. It's all over."

"Over? . . ."

"Yeah."

"Damn," I said.

"Don't say that," she said and laughed. She turned the radio up, still laughing, and she got to dancing right wild like, kicking her legs up and singing along with the music. When she got tired she flopped on the bed and looked at me. She smiled. I got up and turned the radio off and sat down beside her. She was breathing fast.

"I'm glad it's over," I said, and leaned over and kissed her. I could see the tiny light reflections dancing in her eyes. I kissed her again, soft.

"James, James don't. James, darling . . . please don't . . ." and I could feel her nails biting into my back . . .

---

## Cat

The white cat

sat there

and watched me.

How patient and calm and eternal he is.

I could be that way if I were

made of glass too.

—Helen Jennings



# WILLIAM FAULKNER— HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURE

By

Mary E. Poindexter

Anyone who has read a bit of Faulkner's writing can understand why he has been a despair or a delight to the critics since his first books were published. Early studies of his work were, according to Hoffman and Vickery, "devoted to expressions of disgust, horror, and distress over what Faulkner was doing or failing to do." Reviewers did not pause in this distress long enough to find out what he was trying to do. One puzzled critic, Beach, wrote, "The relative popularity of this writer is a strange phenomenon, so almost unbearably painful in his subject-matter," almost immediately adding (what it seems impossible not to concede), "But he is one of the greatest literary talents of our day." Kazin, after saying,

It is not strange . . . that his scene should always be murder, rape, prostitution, incest, arson, idiocy (with an occasional interpolation of broad country humor almost as violent as his tragedies); or that the country of his mind should be a Mississippi county larger than life, but not visibly related to it.

admits that he is one of the "American demigods—living big, writing big, exuding a power somehow more than their own, a national power in which they share."

More recent, sympathetic critics have been fascinated by the many aspects of Faulkner's writing, the "myths" he may or may not intend to convey (in fact, the whole underlying *wherefore* of his writing); his many structural experiments; his use of stream-of-consciousness; his vocabulary; his syntax; the psychological meaning of his writing and the psychological accuracy of his character portrayal; his universality; his humour; and, what I find an interesting small part of his genius, his use of nature descriptions.

Two comments, one by Campbell and Foster and one by Faulkner himself, on Faulkner's use of humour seem to me to be applicable to his descriptions, too. ". . . it gives, in the case of frontier humor, a softness, a bearableness, or a more diffused focus to a scene which otherwise might well be starkly tragic, melodramatic, or over-emotional." In the terrible tale of Mink Snopes and his hunt for the body of the man he had murdered, could we stand the brutal realities without such passages as

The night was moonless. He descended through the dry and invisible corn, keeping his bearing on a star until he reached the trees, against the black solidity of which fireflies winked and drifted and from beyond which came the booming and grunting of frogs and the howling of the dog. But once among them, he could not even see the sky anymore, though he realized then what he should have before: that the hound's voice would guide him.

In the second place, as Faulkner himself says of humour, "We have one priceless trait, we Americans. The trait is our humor. What a pity it is that it is not more prevalent in our art . . . One trouble with us American artists is that we take our art and ourselves too seriously." It is the genuineness of the humor and the genuineness of Faulkner's love for the world of the South he describes that help rescue his writing from the deep involvement he might otherwise succumb to. Where he has neither of these in his work, he falls into such convolutions as *Absalom, Absalom!* There we find, as Kazin says,

. . . some fantastic exertion of the will, of that exaggeration which springs from



a need to raise everything in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, to its tenth (or its hundredth) power because there is not sufficient power or ease in his conception of the South, or human existence in general.

The very fort of his novel—the complication of having Quentin and his roommate at Harvard try to reconstruct what happened in the fantastic tale of incest and miscegenation, from bits of hearsay and from all letters and legends—all this proves what George O'Donnell says,

... Mr. Faulkner's difficulties of form derive, in part, from the struggle that he has to make to inform his material. The struggle is manifest, even in the prose itself. Discounting the results of plain carelessness in all of the books, the correlation between the fictions and the quality of the prose in Mr. Faulkner's books is instructive.

In his violent effort to have Quentin explain the South, to answer the questions "What's it like there? What do they do there? Why do they live there? Why do they live at all?" Faulkner gets lost in some of the hopeless involvements of which he is quite capable. Of Miss Rosa, talking to Quentin about Sutpen:

Meanwhile, as though in reverse ratio to the vanishing voice, the invoked ghost of the man whom she could neither forgive nor revenge herself upon began to assume a quality almost of solidity, permanence. Itself circumambient and enclosed by its effluvium of hell, its aura of unregeneration, it mused (mused, thought, seemed to possess sentience, as if though dispossessed of the peace—who was impervious anyhow to fatigue—which she declined to give it, it was still irrevocably outside the cope of her hurt or harm (with that quality peaceful and now harmless and not even very attentive—the ogre-shape which, as Miss Coldfield's voice went on, resolved out of itself before Quentin's eyes the two half-ogre children, the three of them forming a shadowy background for the fourth one.

And all this is evoked in a ghost world. It just does not ring true—these people do not belong to their world. They move in a vacuum. Hemingway says if you do not have place, you don't have anything, and these dream figures have no place in which to live and move. There is cold and discomfort in Quentin's college room. We can believe that; but the mansion of Sutpen's Hundred, built by the sweat of shadowy wild Negroes out of the swamp which did not really exist, began a brick house, and was finally a wooden structure completely destroyed by fire. The unbelievable Judith, who dreamed of a shadowy fiance, Charles Bon,

walked with him in an unsubstantial garden. Henry killed Bon in a hearsay driveway to the dream house. Old Sutpen allowed his son, Henry, to vanish like a puff of smoke—Henry, who was the son to complete the "design" of his life. The reason for the rupture was melodramatic and fantastic: Henry's dearest college friend was, in fact, old Sutpen's son by a former marriage to a woman who was part Negro. So, for two reasons Bon could not marry Judith. By this story of ambition, prejudice, struggle, incest, miscegenation, murder, and bitterness, Quentin was to explain the South. We need something to give us a tie with this strange world which Faulkner peopled; perhaps some description of the place these tortured creatures lived would be the answer. *Absalom, Absalom!* is the sort of writing Kazin must have had in mind when he said that Faulkner tries "... to express the inexpressible, to write the history of the unconscious, to convey some final and terrifying conception of a South that seems always to exist below water..." In contrast to this work, *The Hamlet*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying*, surely three of his best books, never fail to have a sense of place. In *The Sound and the Fury*, the events, though as melodramatic as in *Absalom, Absalom!* are always played out against a world that has substance, and reality, and beauty, and meaning. These people see, and hear, and smell, and love, and hate the world they live in.

But Faulkner does not use his descriptions of nature only as a background for his characters' actions. Warren realized the importance of these descriptions and wrote

The vividness of the natural background is one of the impressive features of Faulkner's work. It is accurately observed, but observation only provides the stuff from which the characteristic effects are gained. It is the atmosphere which counts, the poetry, the infusion of feeling, the symbolic weight.

One of the special uses that Faulkner often makes of lyrical background is to intensify naturalistic tragedy. The Quentin section of *The Sound and the Fury* is an extended example. Reminiscences and mental torture are interspersed with accounts of inconsequential actions of the moment, and with lovely descriptions of the things Quentin saw—the water, in various aspects, foreshadowing his death—and other scenes, besides.

The bridge was of grey stone, lichened, dappled with slow moisture where the fungus crept. Beneath it the water was clear and still in the shadow, whispering and clucking about the stone in fading swirls of spinning sky.



And, again,

I could not see the bottom, but I could see a long way into the motion of the water before the eye gave out, and then I saw a shadow hanging like a fat arrow stemming into the current. Mayflies skimmed in and out of the shadow of the bridge just above the surface . . . The arrow increased without motion, then in a quick swirl the trout lipped a fly beneath the surface with that sort of gigantic delicacy of an elephant picking up a peanut. The fading vertex drifted away down stream and then I saw the arrow again, nose into the current, wavering delicately to the motion of the water above which the Mayflies slanted and poised.

And other things he saw, besides the water . . . the boy who did not go swimming.

The first boy went on. His bare feet made no sound falling softer than leaves in the thin dust. In the orchard the bees sounded like a wind getting up, a sound caught by a spell just under crescendo and sustained. The lane went along the wall, arched over, shattered with bloom, dissolving into trees. Sunlight slanted into it, sparse and eager. Yellow butterflies flickered along the shade like flecks of sun.

These are not just backgrounds—they seem to hold meaning within meanings.

This meaningfulness is often so intense that it becomes a symbol—the smell of honeysuckle and Quentin's feeling for his sister Caddy; the idiot Benjy's flower or jimson weed that he used to decorate his little family graveyard, and which he carried wherever he went. In *Delta Autumn*, there is the extended use of the doe symbol: the conversation of the hunters about the doe and why they are not to be shot, young Edmonds' embittered remarks about the fact that there are always doe and fawns aplenty in this world, the "doe hunting" he was teased about, all lead up to the appearance of the mulatto girl and her baby; and in the end, when the old man asks what sort of deer Edmonds shot, he answers his own question with, "It was a doe." This is the sort of symbolizing, with richness of context, that delights the lovers of Faulkner.

One of the most surprising of Faulkner's uses of lyrical background is the sort found in *The Hamlet*, where it is a shaft of pure beauty shot into a low comedy situation. When the citizens of Frenchmen's Bend were chasing the spotted horses, and Varner was going to attend to Henry Armstid's broken leg with his veterinarian's plumber-like tools

They walked in a close clump, tramping

their shadows into the road's mild dust, blotting the shadows of the burgeoning trees which soared, trunk branch and twig against the pale sky, delicate and finely thinned. They passed the dark store. Then the pear tree came in sight. It rose in mazed and silver immobility like exploding snow; the mockingbird still sang in it.

Some contrasts are dramatic when, as Campbell and Foster said, "he manages with technical expertness this moving juxtaposition of the lyrical . . . and the terrible." In *The Hamlet*, when Mink Snopes, being carried to prison, tried to jump out of the surrey,

. . . his head slipped down into the V of the stanchion . . . and the weight and momentum of his whole body came down on his vised neck . . . But after a while he could breathe again all right, and the faint wind of motion had dried the water from his face and only his shirt was a little damp, not a cool wind yet but just a wind free at last of the unendurable sun, blowing out of the beginning of dusk, the surrey moving now beneath an ordered overarch of sunshot trees, between the clipped and tended lawns where children shrieked and played in bright fresh dresses of afternoon and the men coming home from work turned into the neat painted gates, toward plates of food and cups of coffee in the long beginning of twilight.

Campbell and Foster also wrote that "At times in Faulkner's imagination, . . . the natural background supports the events of the story, not by contrast but by a pathetic-fallacy coloring that gives nature tragic characteristics like those in the story." The doctor, in *As I Lay Dying*, waiting for Addie Bundren to die, sees her youngest son sitting disconsolately in the heavy atmosphere of an approaching storm,

The durn little tyke is sitting on the top step, looking smaller than ever in the sulphur-colored light. That's the trouble with this country: everything, weather, all, hangs on too long. Like our rivers, our land: opaque, slow, violent; shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding image.

Faulkner had a feeling for a cosmic background, to which he relates the current world of appearances. Of Vernon and Jewel trying to recover Cash's tools in the swollen river, in *As I Lay Dying*, he says,

From here they do not appear to violate the surface at all; it is as though it had severed them both at a single blow, the two torsos moving with infinitesimal and ludicrous care upon the surface. It looks peaceful, like machinery does after you have watched it and listened to it for



a long time. As though the clotting which is you had dissolved into the myriad original motion, and seeing and hearing in themselves blind and deaf; fury in itself quiet with stagnation.

And in Addie's words about her life, he moves from the commonplace to something greater,

"I would lie by him in the dark, hearing the dark land talking of God's love and His beauty and His sin; hearing the dark voicelessness in which the words are the deeds, and the other words that are not deeds, that are just the gaps in peoples' lacks, coming down like the cries of the geese out of the wild darkness in the old terrible nights, fumbling at the deeds like orphans to whom are pointed out in a crowd two faces and told, That is your father, your mother."

In such stories as *The Bear* and *Delta Autumn*, Faulkner reaches great heights in his portrayal of nature. In his feeling for nature woods, wilderness, fields, streams, are not just so much wooded or denuded space. The land is a heritage and trust given to men, and their use of it and their attitude toward it are important. Warren wrote, "In Faulkner's mythology man has 'suzerainty over the earth,' he is not of the earth, and it is the human virtues which count—'pity and humility and sufferance and endurance.' " Man has not regarded his trust properly, and he has to atone, somehow, for his profligacy. As Cowley says,

Here are the two sides of Faulkner's feeling for the South: on the one side, an admiring and possessive love; on the other, a compulsive fear lest what he loves should be destroyed by the ignorance of its native serfs and the greed of traders and absentee landlords.

He describes the delta as

This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white men can own plantations and ride to Jim Crow cars to Chicago to live in millionaires' mansions on Lake Shore Drive . . . No wonder the ruined woods I used to know don't cry retribution . . . The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge.

In his mind, in the words of Warren, "The right attitude toward nature is associated with the right attitude toward man, and the mere lust for power over nature is associated with the lust for power over other men . . ." But there is something that man can do to right the wrong done to the land—at least Ike McCaslin thought so when he was twelve and had just shot his first buck and Sam Fathers had marked his face with the blood, "I slew you; my bearing must not shame your quitting life. My conduct forever onward must become your death."

In the final analysis, Faulkner's descriptions of nature are a fine integral part of his books and stories, providing background, furthering the action by contrast or by augmentation, revealing inner meanings and pointing up greater importance in situations than he could show in any other way; and the reason that he is so successful is that his observations stem from a genuine love for the land in which he lives, the South. It is, as Cowley saw it,

a brooding love for the land where he was born and reared . . . 'this land, this South, for which God has done so much, with woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild winters for men and animals.'

Who could tell more graphically how the land was, and how it is now:

At first there had been only the old towns along the River and the old towns along the hills, from each of which the planters with their gangs of slaves and then of hired laborers had wrested from the impenetrable jungle of water-standing cane and cypress, gum and holly and oak and ash, cotton patches which, as the years passed, became fields and then plantations. The paths made by deer and bear became roads and then highways with towns springing up along them and along the rivers . . . the thick, slow, black, unsunned streams almost without current, which once each year ceased to flow at all and then reversed, spreading, drowning the rich land and subsiding again, leaving it still richer.

Most of that was gone . . . Now the land lay open from the cradling hills on on the east to the rampart of levee on the west, standing horseman—tail with cotton for the world's looms—the rich black land, imponderable and vast, fecund up to the very doorsteps of the Negroes who worked it and of the white men who owned it; which exhausted the hunting life of a dog in one year, the working life of a mule in five and of a man in twenty . . . the land across which there came now no scream of panther but instead the long hooting of locomotives: Trains of incredible length and drawn by a single engine, since there was no gradient anywhere and no elevation save those raised by forgotten aboriginal hands as refuges from the yearly water and used by their Indian successors to sepulchre their fathers' bones, and all that remained of that old time were the Indian names on the little towns and usually pertaining to water—Aluschkuna, Tillabota, Homochitto, Yazoo.



# HOUSE OF CARDS

By  
**LARRY  
BLIZARD**

---

**S**ilently he hunched over the card table staring in mute fascination at the thing before him. He hesitated—then, taking the remaining card, he placed it on the very top of the others, and the flimsy structure seemed complete. I'm getting better at this, he mused, yes, much better than I used to be. He sat thoughtfully, hand on his chin.

At that moment, a voice broke into his meditation. "Don," it called from the kitchen; "Don, c'mon, it's ready."

The kitchen of the little apartment was hot and filled with smells of cooking. The man named Don came in, yawned, brushed cigarette ashes from his t-shirt and seated himself at the little table. The woman who came to sit down across from him was little different from so many women who inhabit three room apartments filled with ash trays and empty coffee cups and drawn shades on Sunday mornings.

"How's the soup," she asked, brushing a lock of brown hair from her forehead.

"Hm? Oh, o.k. I mean, fine."

"Don—"

"Hm?"

"D'you have to go out again tonight?"

"Yeah. Some things I gotta clear up."

"Don, you've been gone two nights this week already. How long's it gonna keep up?"

"Look, there's this work I gotta get done—Understand?"

Her face, usually cheerful, clouded. She started to say something, but looked away.

"Jimmie broke his truck today," she said finally, "I told him you'd fix it."

"Christ, what am I, made out of money or something? Can't that kid take care of anything I get'm? Where is he now anyway?"

"He's at the Davises'. Little Johnny invited him over for supper and to watch television."

The Davises. Now who the hell are the Davises, he wondered to himself. Christ, I don't know anybody or anything that goes on around here. I wonder if I even know her, he thought, staring at the woman across the table. She sat in faded corduroy slacks, brown hair in a bun, looking out the steam fogged window. She always had a nice figure, he mused. Her brown hair was long once. Pretty hair, he told himself. "I like long hair," he told her one night when the October moon hung low amidst fog shrouded trees and the two of them were huddled together by a stone ledge, her perfume floating on the frosty air and the warmth of her breath against his neck. He had buried his face in her hair then, in her pretty hair. She had promised she wouldn't cut it. Never, she had said. He thought he knew her then. Now he wasn't sure.

The remainder of the meal passed in comparative silence, save for an occasional comment from her. He pondered his reflection in the soup—touseled hair, pale complexion, slightly pock marked face. He rubbed the stubble on his chin reflectively; dipped his spoon and watched the ripples break the image of him into a thousand disjointed fragments, ate his dessert and lit his cigarette. More ashes on his t-shirt now. Pretty hair. O her pretty hair.

Once more in the living room, he held the little red truck in his fingers, felt the place where it had been broken.

"Whaddhe do, throw it against the wall or something?"

She replied from the kitchen but it was lost amid the clatter of running water and rattling dishes.

He put the truck back on the table. "Honey," he called, "I think I'll go now." No answer; only running water. "Honey—?"



Then she was before him coming out of the steamy kitchen, an apron around her middle, a dish in her hand. She brought her slightly flushed face up close to his. "Don't be too long, huh, honey?"

He hugged her briefly, feeling the warmth of her against him. No perfume now, only smell of soap—running water and rattling dishes in the kitchen.

Outside the apartment now, he felt the cool November wind against his face as he strided along, walking with hands in his pockets, shoulders hunched forward, walking as though in a dream, as if lost in troubled thought, seeing nothing on either side of him. I don't mind working these nights he told himself; sometimes I need to get away; I need to think. Rounding a corner, he felt once more the wind in his face.

He noticed the lights on even before reaching the office. Probably McKeever or one of the others working late. Pushing open the glass outer doors, he walked quickly down the hall to the office where he worked. He saw the door open, the lights on. He walked in, but wasn't prepared to find—no, not McKeever—no, only McKeever's secretary all alone in the office, sitting at her desk.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Adams, I just thought I would come up here and work on some typing."

He studied her a minute—blonde, blue eyed Faye: always a warm feeling at the sight of her in the office clatter of typewriters, the clicking of high heels—blond hair, cashmere sweater the youthful laughter over coffee at 10 in the morning.

"Hello, Faye." After standing in the doorway for a minute, he walked over to his desk and sat down. He fumbled around, rearranging his papers, dusting off a little gilt-framed portrait; he opened a drawer, closed it, absently opened another. She had resumed her typing. The keys tapped, her head bent forward, blonde hair falling down over the front of her shoulders. Looking at her more closely now, he saw for the first time her red rimmed eyes, the wadded up handkerchief on her desk. She's been crying, he thought, puzzled, fighting back a desire to reach out, touch her.

"—Been crying," he blurted out finally.

"What?" she turned to him.

"I said you've been crying," he observed, and wondered to himself "Now why the hell'd I say that?!"

She made a little laugh. "Why—yes, I guess I have," she said, as if it were news to her. He watched her thoughtfully. "Why've you been crying," he asked. Dammit, he cursed himself, it's none of my business; what's gotten into me?

Now she turned completely around to face him,

picked up her crumpled up hanky from beside her typewriter, gave him a look that women will when about to pour out their innermost secrets, and began to tell him about Frank. "Frank's my fiance, you know. We've been engaged for three months. She held up her hand for him to see, the glittering ring shining brightly against the dark background of her cashmere sweater. We're going to be married this Christmas; that is, I *think* we are.

"We were up at Deerfield Lake last weekend—had a great time, a *swell* time. Frank was so wonderful—everything was so wonderful. We were with some of his friends from college you know. All this month, we've been looking at houses. We had a real dreamy one picked out." There was a distant gleam in her eyes now. "We were going to have a new car and everything. But, every now and then, I'm not sure. I don't know. Like today, we had lunch together. He seemed strange, almost like he didn't want to get married. I—I guess that's why I was crying just now, Mr. Adams. It's just the uncertainty of it! But one thing I'm pretty sure of"—her voice lower, the gleam in her eyes again—"I know we love each other!"

She looked at Adams; her eyes misty. "You know what love is, don't you Mr. Adams, I mean you being married and a family and all. You know what it means, don't you?"

He sat there, looking at her, feeling a helpless, empty feeling inside him. He coughed; "I don't know," was all he said.

"I—I guess I'd better go home now, Mr. Adams," she said at last. "I'm terribly sorry to be such a bother but thank you so much for your kindness."

"I'll see you to the door." He coughed again, got up from his desk.

"My car's right outside," she said putting on her coat and wrapping her scarf around her neck.

He walked with her to the door. As she stepped out on the sidewalk, she turned to him and said once more, "You know how it is, don't you, Mr. Adams?"

He didn't answer; merely stood there in the shadows of the doorway watching her drive away. At last, he turned and walked slowly back down the hallway into his office.

Once more at his desk now, he poured over his papers, glancing only briefly at the little portrait on the desk. It was a portrait of Eleanor and himself smiling happily together, he in a suit, she wearing a sweater, her long brown hair falling over her shoulders. At the bottom of the picture was inscribed: Deerfield Lake, August 23, 1956.



## **FIRST PRIZE**

### **REBEL POETRY CONTEST**

## *Into A Pruned Park*

Into a pruned park filled with shouts  
scuffed toes, skinned knees  
and ring around the rosy,  
came a group of evening ladies  
the afternoon rain pounding the roofs  
having roused them before their hour of purpose.  
I pondered one of them that stood alone  
feeding the pigeons, her feet set wide apart;  
smiling a faint smile, a pure smile,  
childlike, no more nymphlike  
in spite of the rouge and powder.  
Having stared until my face turned hot,  
I looked down and there,  
in a puddle between my legs  
I found her yet again transformed—  
Diana feeding a young deer.  
Then a late raindrop, perhaps a tear,  
dashed the puddle bearing it all away.  
Now, after other rains and other afternoons,  
only the image reappears.

By B. Tolson Willis, Jr.

## **Only The Image Reappears**

There is a danger in coming to interpretive terms with poetry, a danger of allowing the interpretation to stand as definitive of the poem's meaning and value. After the book is closed, the tone of the component whole gives dimension to, if only for a moment, the awareness of the time and

place we are slowly sinking back into. With the loss of that wrought-up awareness, there comes the desire, the need to say something about IT. In the search for an approximating reason for our willful suspension of disbelief, we return to the poem with our tools of analysis. Structure, substance,



and sound are submitted to divisions—narrative, dramatic, and lyric; metaphor, simile, hyperbole—in short, the poet's workbench is paraded out as explanation of his achievement. The reader, conditioned to the workbench, is aware during the very experience of the poem of aspects of technical excellence that are not analytically distinct from the experience but serve to enhance it. Criticism, interpretation, and biographical game-playing, in their proper roles as handmaidens, offer an invaluable footnote to the history of art as experience of the deep and richest meaning. All of this is probably commonplace knowledge to those of us who have played Chaucer's Chauntecleer to an amused inner voice's Pertelote; however, for the student blinded by the radiance of definitive evaluation, it should be remembered that the piece of bright puzzle taken from whatever the source outside the poem does not fill in a gap nor cover a defect, but rather illuminates by way of another reader's perceptive reading a possible interpretation. With this in mind, I should like to explore certain aspects of the art of Tolson Willis as it appears in "Into a Pruned Park," published above.

The poet as speaker in "Into a Pruned Park" assumes the role of one between the worlds of Eden and awareness. It is significant that the park is pruned, and that, though the children play with "skinned knees" at "ring around the rosy", the speaker is aware of another presence in the garden; voluptuous and sensuous, this presence is announced by a subtle change in rhythm. The jerky, tangential joy of children with "scuffed toes, skinned knees and ring around the rosy" gives way before "a group of evening ladies/the afternoon rain pounding the roofs/having roused them before their hour of purpose." The last three lines create an essential counterpoint to that which the children in their portion of the park or garden represent. It is not as whore or prostitute that the poet focuses upon this aspect of the garden but as "evening ladies" whose occupation is alluded to most significantly in the seductive rhythms of their presentation. The effectiveness of the evening ladies, as a matter of rhythm, depends upon a parallel visual and vocal acceleration of sensation as the eye and ear pass from the innocent pleasure of the children to that pleasure which "those roused before their hour

of purpose" excite. The speaker has allowed observation and sensation to mingle and flow, permitting the reader to recreate without his (the speaker's) direct statement, the theme of the poem—that being the marginal reef between innocence and awareness of its passing.

From "I pondered one of them that stood alone" unto the close of the poem, the poet attempts to reconcile experience in the form of one singled out before her "hour of purpose." Step by step, he erases the aspects of what she seems to be, what she by seeming is, to touch that in her which has its foundation in observation of the children.

I pondered one of them that stood alone  
feeding the pigeons, her feet set wide apart;  
smiling a faint smile, a pure smile,  
child-like, no more nymphlike  
in spite of the rouge and powder.

The irony of "Having stared until my face turned hot" cannot be too greatly stressed, for it is at this moment that the speaker is most aware that, in his very attempt to elevate the girl (experience) to the realm of meaning, there exists a note that Wallace Stevens struck as "the bases of their being throb." This reference to the natural world, whether written in the girl's recognition of the speaker's stare or coming directly from an intuitive knowledge of the paradox, is an achievement of dramatic tension supporting the swift alteration of focus in

I looked down and there,  
in a puddle between my legs,  
I found her yet again transformed—  
Diana feeding a young deer.

From the girl downward to her image in the water, the reader travels the full distance of the poet's paradox. The speaker's eye moving down his own anatomy takes in the natural world; and with the implied position of his body matching that of the girl, "her feet set wide apart", he sees the majesty of her posture transformed, elevated, cast against the reflected heavens as "Diana feeding a young deer." That the world should intrude in the form of a raindrop or a tear of his own shedding is not to dismiss the perfection of the moment.

After other rains and other afternoons,  
only the image reappears.

**By Sanford Peele**



LARRY  
BLIZARD

# WISTERIA

By

SUE BRIDGERS

A spider, its thin front legs arched against its web and its hind legs dragging lifelessly behind it, moved swiftly up the tiny thread. Patsy, letting her hands dangle beneath the soap suds for a moment, watched the spider. The summer had brought him, she knew, to spin his web outside her window. At least, he's on the outside, she thought. Before long they'll be all over the house. She brought her hands up from the dishpan. They were red from the hot water and her white nails glistened with wet smoothness. She slid the frying pan, white with cold grease, into the water and it disappeared beneath the mound of suds.

"I'll have to let it soak," she said aloud. "Should have poured that grease out while it was hot."

The spider had started back up its web. The body was small and brown, shaped like a diamond. "I'm tired, spider. You should be, too. Why don't you stop and rest a minute." She smiled. The spider would rest. Later, when the web was complete it would lie still and wait for the little night bugs that flew toward the kitchen light and thumped against the screen.

Patsy untied her apron and crammed it inside a drawer.

"Patsy!" The front door slammed and the hall door opened almost immediately. "Patsy, did you sweep the porch? It don't look like it."

THE REBEL



"Coming, Mama. I'm coming." Patsy looked at the spider. "Work, little spider," she said. "There's no rest for me either."

The parlor was cool and almost dark with the venetian blinds pulled tight against the afternoon sun. Mama lay on the sofa, a newspaper under her feet and a cloth across her forehead. "So hot, Patsy, I can't hardly stand it," the woman whimpered. Her hand hung off the sofa and Patsy noticed the whiteness of her arm and the bulging blue line of her veins close beneath the skin. Mama had such tiny arms and hands and feet. The arm moved slowly and the hand clutched the forehead and the damp cloth.

"I know, Mama," the girl said gently. "Why don't you go to your room and I'll cut the fan on and you can maybe sleep a little."

"I can't never sleep, child. Been years since I couldn't really sleep. Other folks got so much to be thankful for. You don't know what it's like to lie awake till morning."

"I know, Mama. Why don't you try, Mama. It wouldn't hurt to try."

"Tired of trying, Patsy." She took the cloth away from her eyes and looked at the girl. Patsy stood near the window and a pattern of light that crept between the blinds and the window fell across her face. "Go sweep that porch now. I'm all right. If I could just rest easy some . . ."

Patsy leaned against the porch railing and put her face close to the wisteria bush that grew along the railing. The blossoms hung heavy on slender stems and as Patsy touched them, the cool, fragile petals seemed to cling to her fingers. "Wisteria," she said softly. "Wisteria." The word had a sweet, lingering sound like a memory. Patsy smiled. "A memory . . . wisteria . . ."

"Think I'll have to have that old wisteria bush cut down," Mama said. "Can't stand those bumble bees all summer and them blossoms mess up the porch so."

"No, Mama!" Patsy wanted to scream. "Not the wisteria, Mama." But she sat silently, staring at the pan of peas in her lap. Finally she looked at Papa, her eyes pleading; then she went back to shelling the peas, her fingers hesitant and trembling.

"Don't you bruise them peas, Patsy."

"I'm sorry, Mama," Patsy drew a quick breath and looked again at her father. "Please, Papa," she said softly.

"Don't see no reason for cutting that wisteria, Maggie," he said slowly. "Patsy sweeps the porch, don't she?"

"Don't see no reason to keep it either, Jim.

Just more trouble. And them bees." Mama disconnected the iron and sat down next to a stack of white shirts on the sofa. "I do declare, I am so tired. Jim, you've got more shirts. No man ought to have that many shirts." She mopped her face with a handkerchief.

"About the wisteria, Maggie," Papa dropped the newspaper on his green leather foot stool and stood up to face the window and the quiet cloudless night. "Patsy likes it—" he paused as if to find strength in the silence. "I like it, too, Maggie. Let's keep the wisteria."

"Well, I never." Mama breather heavily and her bosom rose beneath her cotton smock. "All this racket over an old wisteria bush. Why, out home Mama use to cut her wisteria back every year. Nobody said a word. Wouldn't have even if they'd wanted to. Nobody bothered Mama." She mopped her face again and brushed back straggly hair from around her ears with her hand. "Go get me a glass of water, Patsy. Ice water, if you please. It's a wonder I ain't died of heat before now."

Patsy sat the pan of peas on the floor. "You want some ice water, Papa? I'll bring you some if you want it."

"How about me going back to the kitchen, too, Patsy. I'll crack the ice for you." He looked at his wife. "Let's keep the wisteria, Maggie," he said gently.

"All right!" Mama was upset and she wiped the beads of sweat off her chin and neck. "Keep the wisteria. Make the porch a mess, but mind you, Patsy Hodges, you'll keep it swept!"

"Yes, Mama." Patsy moved quickly, quietly toward the kitchen.

"Jim, don't you sneak no drink in there." Mama was breathing heavily and her voice went up and down with her breathing. "Patsy, you tell me if he takes a snort. No excuse for wasting money on liquor when there's things we need and it makes you smell like . . ."

"Dammit, Maggie, shut up!"

Patsy unbuttoned her blouse and rubbed the damp cloth over her face and neck. The fine sprigs of black hair were damp and curled around her face. The bathroom light glared and she closed her eyes. With her eyes still shut, she dipped the cloth into the basin of clear water and lifted it slowly to her neck. She squeezed the cloth gently and the water trickled down her chest and into the softness of her cotton slip. She felt it against her breasts and then her stomach. The cool trickle against her hot skin made her body tingle. She smiled and opened her eyes.



"Patsy!" It was her mother's voice and the sound, although muffled through the closed door, was importunate and grating.

"Yes, Mama," Patsy answered and buttoned her blouse hurriedly. "I'm coming, Mama."

"Bring me one of those pink pills, Patsy. And a glass of water, honey."

"Yes, Mama." Patsy pulled the stopper from the basin and the water gurgled in long gulps down the drain.

Carrying the pill and glass of water, she went into Mama's bedroom. Mama was in bed and in the darkness Patsy could see the pink form across the white sheet.

"Shall I cut on the light, Mama?" she asked. The fan hummed softly and the body turned toward her in a heavy, tumbling action.

"Heaven forbid, Patsy. The light wouldn't help this headache." Mama raised up and took the water and the pill her daughter handed her. "I'm just going to have to hire somebody to do the ironing, child. I get a headache like this every time I iron a big load."

"I'll do it, Mama," Patsy said as she put the empty glass on the bed table. "I'll iron tomorrow."

"Better start real early then, in the morning, while it's a little cooler and there's a breath of air. Is that fan turned up, Patsy?"

"Yes, Mama. It's as high as it'll go."

"I'm going to have to have a better fan, Patsy. All these things we need, and Jim don't seem to see it." The form turned back over toward the wall.

"Good-night, Mama," Patsy said. "I hope you can sleep."

"Thank you, honey." The bed rocked slightly as Mama settled herself. "I'm tired of trying when it don't do no good."

The rocking ceased and Patsy crept out, her bare feet settling soundlessly onto Mama's fifty dollar rug.

The brick porch was cool beneath her feet and she stood very still, letting the coolness move slowly into her body. The moon was high and white against the darkness.

"Papa," Patsy said softly and she heard the sound of feet turning toward her and the movement of hands along the porch railing.

"Hello, baby," Papa said. He was leaning against the railing above the purple blossoms of the wisteria. The light of his cigarette flickered in the shadow of the bush.

Patsy moved silently to her father's side and put her hand over his. "Such a pretty night,

Papa," she said, looking at the silhouette of the house across the street and then up at the moon.

Her father smiled. "Such a pretty face in the moonlight," he said gently.

"Thank you for saving the wisteria, Papa."

"I always liked wisteria," he said. He freed his hand and caught a bunch of blossoms in it. "Somehow, I always thought it meant something special." He dropped the blossoms, embarrassed by what he had said.

Patsy moved closer to him. Then she leaned over the railing until her face was against the blossoms. "Yes, Papa, something very special. Like a memory." The fragrance of the blossoms rose and the leaves rustled at her touch.

"Are you very unhappy, baby?" Papa asked. His eyes were so dark they seemed purple.

"Oh, no, Papa," she said, as if to comfort him. And then suddenly knowing that he needed more to comfort her, she said, "Mama is always so tired, Papa. I just get tired sometimes, too."

"Poor little Patsy. Only sixteen and already tired." He put his hands on her arms and drew her backwards until her shoulders were against his chest. He felt her shoulder blades against him and the soft, slender firmness of her arms. "Have I failed you so, Patsy, that you are tired and old, too?"

The girl smiled sadly and moved forward to look up at the moon. "No, Papa. You are very good to me." Then, as if the moonlight had brought harsh light and had broken the spell of the night, she said, "Call me early, Papa. There's the ironing still to do."

"Good night, Papa," she said as she moved silently toward the door. The door was open and the light from the hall fell across her face. "Papa," she said, "the wisteria . . . not so much a memory as a dream."

The next morning Patsy did not see the spider moving up and down its web. Finally she raised the window and found it in the corner of the window sill, its legs curled close under its body. She knew that it was dead. She picked it up gently in a napkin and lay it in trash to be burned. She did not want the ants to find it.

"Patsy."

"Yes, Mama."

"Patsy, I sprayed insect killer in that window sill last night, but you'd better do it again. Them spiders get in the house and you'll never see the end of 'em!"

Patsy looked down at the diamond-shaped body on the napkin. "Yes, Mama," she said and went about her work.



## SECOND PRIZE

### REBEL POETRY CONTEST

# *En Marienbad*

Shall we, Oarystis, stepping to the sun's  
marginal reproof, turn even as the water  
turns, jet by jet upon its own elation,  
and don the golden masks of yet another  
lover's transformation? What have we to lose  
who drift again beneath a sea of ormolu  
and bronze that suffers no change but shifts,  
as candles leaning toward their light  
bend smoke and phantoms from the door  
where something enters unannounced and cold.

Your turn, the profile of an age, Egyptian artifice  
where bone and shadow swirl,  
lost in gradual green to gold repudiation  
of the eye; how long since flesh  
was not enough to bind a wanton reality.  
Again, relieved of my awareness,  
you permit the presence  
of some other time, imagination's  
arm, and move away, drawn  
by music I am no companion to.  
Yet beauty of the fictive line remains when you,  
as now, are out of all my touching.

Crippled by your absence time  
turns in to where  
the points of your transparent  
gown, swept like indigenous flames  
up the spiraling marbled stair, are  
supplications, abstraction's meager sacrifice  
of meaning, hurled as crumbling statues  
through the halls occasion carved, the  
veritable Versailles of breathing wholeness.

By Sanford Peele



**SECOND PRIZE**

**REBEL PROSE CONTEST**

# CARNATION FOR SUMMER

By

**Pat R. Willis**

The ambulance had already come and gone. There were still cars parked in front of the house and in the drive-way. A tall, balding man stood on the front porch and talked in hushed tones to another man who looked uneasily toward the door. Frances smoothed the wrinkles from her dress. It was hot. The cotton material stuck to her back, and the armpits were already discolored with sweat. She wiped the top of her lip with the back of her hand before she thought about lipstick, and grimaced when it came away streaked with red.

I suppose my lipstick is smeared, but they won't notice. They will be too upset.

"Hello, Frances." The balding man turned away from the other man. The other man squinted his eyes at her, as if he were trying to place her. His top lip curled up. Frances thought he looked like a rabbit.

"Hello, Uncle Ned." She had always called

Louise's kin by the name that Louise used. Now she felt a little ridiculous. She had not seen him for years. Now there was no need to call him uncle. "I come as soon as I heard . . ." This too was kind of silly. The rabbit man was still wondering. She knew she had never called him uncle. "I passed the ambulance on my way." She wondered why she said that. But things like that mattered. Nothing else ever quite fitted.

"They've taken her away." "Her" meaning Louise. Funny to think of Louise dead. Frances could not quite picture Louise in a coffin with her hands serenely folded across her abdomen. Her hands were too fidgety. They should do something about folding her hands.

"Where is Aunt Eve?" There, too, the use of the familiar kinship seemed odd to her. That was over too, now.

"She is inside. She'll want to see you." Uncle Ned seemed revoltingly grave. Frances remembered him best making pennies disappear or turn-



ing them into dimes. She never remembered him serious. She didn't like him serious.

"How is she?" This was automatic.

"Keeping it back. She hasn't shed a tear." Frances noticed that his eyes were watering. It bothered her to see a man cry. They ought to stand up better.

Eve Johnson sat beside her husband. She held onto his hand and stroked it. Her husband had been crying, but now he sat and just allowed the tears to roll down his cheeks. He did not wipe them away. Eve Johnson looked up. "Charlie, here's Frances."

Frances did not know what to say. Both of them raised their eyes to her. Both of them waited, expecting her to say something. Something comforting, she guessed. But she could not. She would not bring anything out. She groped behind her and found a chair, then scraped it forward closer to them, because she guessed she should try to get a little closer. Her eyes remained fixed on them, fascinated. Eve Johnson started to speak, but she only swallowed and remained silent. Charlie Johnson's Adam's apple bobbed frantically in his throat. His voice shook. "I'm glad you came, Frances. Louise would have wanted you here."

Frances rubbed her eyes. There were no tears. I ought to cry. It's natural. All people cry when somebody dies. "They told me. I . . . I was shocked."

"Why did she do it, Frances? I can't understand it. There must be some mistake. Louise didn't want to kill herself." Eve spoke audibly. There was no shakiness in it.

Why ask me? Didn't Louise explain it? Didn't she go out with the proper drama? Where's the note? Didn't she say, she killed herself for the good of all concerned? Why ask me. "Did she . . . uh . . . leave anything?"

"Nothing. I can't understand it." Eve Johnson stared past Frances. Her eyes focused on nothing. They had the appearance of mirrors in which nothing is reflected. "Can you think of anything?"

She remembered Louise; the wide eyes with all the questions in them. The long thin fingers busily pulling and probing at her cuticles. "What can I do, Fran?" She had resented a little Louise's unloading. Why not? Louise always unloaded.

"My baby . . . the only baby I ever had. Why did she go like that, Frances? It can't be like they say." Charlie's voice was wavering, probably bordering on hysteria. He couldn't control it.

"Charlie . . ." Uncle Ned stepped inside the door. He hesitated and rolled his eyes toward the ceiling. The rabbit man was grinning behind him.

"We got to go to the funeral home. They'll want somebody there."

"I'll go, Charlie." Eve rose to go.

"No." Charlie said. "I'll tend to my baby. I always did. When she was alive I did. Now she's gone, I'll still tend to her." Frances tried to see Louise as his baby but she could not bring the image. For a moment she saw the paradox in it and felt a tinge of amusement, but she made it pass quickly and did not have to hide it. "I'll get the insurance policies." He turned to leave the room.

"Wait, Charlie." Eve Johnson followed him. Frances turned to look around the room. She had been aware of the others in there but she had paid them no heed. It seemed improper to concentrate on anyone else with the Johnsons in there. She moved her eyes to the tremendous bulk of a woman seated in the comfortable chair by the window. Frances did not recognize her. Perhaps a neighbor. The fat woman wept openly, glancing frequently towards the others and dabbing her eyes with a white lace handkerchief, probably kept for special occasions like this. The fat woman looked toward Frances and the small eye slits closed a little and became alarmingly appealing. Surely she doesn't want a shoulder to cry on.

"She went to see you last night, didn't she?" The fat lady asked. Was she being indicted?

"Yes. For a little while." Frances hated to answer her questions. What right? What cause? Who was she? Who are you that she did not go to you, or ever would go to you, to tell you she was pregnant. You would have cried with her. Maybe that's what she needed and you always needed or wanted to need and didn't have it. You would like to talk about it. I would not.

"How did she act?" The fat lady asked and squeezed a tear from her right eye which she immediately dabbed with her lace handkerchief.

"All right." Frances looked at the fat lady. She was again bodily crying, the great rolls of flesh shaking. A minor earthquake, she thought and suppressed a laugh. How horrible if I should laugh.

Frances heard her name called. She got up to answer and found Eve Johnson waiting in her bedroom. The shaft of sunlight from the open blinds fell on her red hair and made it glisten. It almost animated her. She sat on the side of the bed with her hands in her lap, idle. Frances was not quite rid of her surprise at Eve Johnson's calm. She waited for it to break in the privacy of the bedroom. She even prepared herself for it. She was alert to any motion of the first gust to appear. But it did not.



"I wanted to talk to you alone. You saw her last. Talked to her. Why did she do it?"

Frances felt a roar and a rush in her head. Why should she have to say? "It's strange that she didn't leave a note." Frances said. They generally do, she wanted to add. That would be a bit cold. This is like a mystery. I am the one witness. It rests with me. Perhaps I can tell it. Imagine saying it again and again. Telling what she said; what I said.

Frances could see the face of Louise; the tightness and the nervous hands. She could hear her talking. Brad! Brad! Brad! Before then. Everytime. All the time. Gushing, gooing, stalwart, safe. Until then. Then protected. She could hear Louise's words, clean spoken, not threatening, but half-determined and a little crazed. Some great sacrifice for some great love. Frances at the moment loathed Brad. And Louise. Her mouth was dry and she wanted a drink of water.

"We couldn't find a note." Eve Johnson was saying. "Did she mention anything to you?"

"No. If she had, I would have tried to stop her."

"Yes, I guess I know. I hadn't really thought of that."

Then Frances saw it. The impact of it had not touched Eve. She could not experience Louise's death until she understood it. Yet the strain was beginning to reveal itself in the lines of her face even while the stone-like calm was still there. The baffled look made Frances a little sorry. But there was nothing she could do, really. She sat down on the bed beside Eve. "Louise only stayed a minute. We talked awhile; then she left. I was going to call her today or she was going to call me. I can't remember. It seems a long time back."

"I don't know what happened. I can't understand it. We left last night before she did. Went to the movie. Charlie likes Westerns. So we went. Louise said she was going to ride over to your house. We asked her to go with us but she wouldn't. Said she just didn't feel in the mood. Said she was going to see you. When we got back, the house was dark. We figured she was still with you, but she was in bed. Had on her pajamas and the fan was running. So we didn't think anything about it. When we got up, I tried to get her up. She always ate breakfast with her daddy before she went to work. He'd eat early because he doesn't go to work until nine-thirty and she has to be there an hour earlier than he does. But she was dead. Just dead.

"I called the doctor. Then he came and called the police because he found the bottle of sleeping pills. Nothing. We don't even know why she did it. Said they'd have to perform an autopsy, but that isn't

a reason. That's all he said."

"Autopsy? Are they going to perform an autopsy?"

"Yes. Just to tell us she really did die from an overdose of sleeping pills."

"Don't worry, Aunt Louise."

"I can't understand it."

You will understand it soon. You will and be disgraced by telling yourself you are and you will hate Louise because she is your flesh and blood and has done this thing. But you won't tell anybody else and they will remember her to you as the child she was and talk of the yellow dress she wore to a certain birthday party. And you will suspect that I know. But you won't ask, and I won't tell. Aloud, Frances said, "There are some things we can never understand." She did not want to sound philosophical, but in spite of her discomfort she said, "No matter what happens, it will be difficult to understand Louise. None of us can feel what she really felt."

Others were coming to offer their sympathy. The men stood in bunches on the porch and smoked in quiet circles. They offered bits of sayings and contemplated the prospect of death, but they put them aside. Frances watched them through the window. They were framed by the organdy curtains but dimmed a little by the screen in the open window. They were talking about the thirties as the days of the real suicides. The last year of the twenties; yes, and the early thirties. Self-murder was not unusual and you just waited to see who was to go next. Then they wondered why she did it, but she saw them glance uneasily in the window and hush themselves.

The women came in, adept and practiced in the art of sympathy and leaned low over Eve Johnson and were perhaps, Frances thought, a little disappointed that Eve did not accept their willingness to be cried upon. They can not turn to Charlie because he's a man and it is up to men to attend to him. But they could whisper that he certainly was taking it hard but that Eve was holding up good. But when those kind of people break—watch out.

The women had been busy. They had baked cakes and had carried them into the house. They had made steaming dinners and had laid them on the table and then presided over them, listening of the due compliments and waiting for the thank-yous that came. They could be called kind and they would listen with their eyes directed at the floor and agree that it was a terrible thing to have happen and if there was anything they could do, just let them know.

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And the sun



glared on them and beat on them. The heat of the day brought sweat. The men's collars crumbled and dark blotches appeared in the armpits of the women's dresses. The mourners bowed their heads and peeped through their eyebrows at those who were crying and those who were holding up. Their eyes skimmed over the flowers. The voice of Mr. Williamson, the preacher, floated over their heads. He talked of times and seasons; he could not make Louise's soul ready for heaven, and he could not speak of her going to God, so he left the final judgment to one whom he called better qualified. For an instant, Frances wondered if Mr. Williamson were himself convinced. His face was slick with sweat and red with heat. When he bowed his head, the bald spot gleamed in the sun and shone like a mirror. She tried, nevertheless, to grasp what he was saying. But all seemed lacking in meaning, in vitality. Louise was dead. The child inside her dead. There was no longer any crisis. Neither the child nor Louise would have to explain. Frances looked toward Brad. She had seen him once before at the Johnson's the night after Louise's death. She had hated him then. Had hated remembering Louise say his name. Had hated the sound of his name and the image of him, and Louise's fear for him, afraid to tell him; not wanting, she had said, him if he had to marry her. She'd rather be dead. But he was good. Good Brad, Frances thought. Yet he was crying; an easy thing to do now that it was all over.

The Johnsons did not accuse him. They told him about Louise. They did not ask him anything. But they did not take him into the bedroom to talk privately with him and they soon managed to leave him alone. He had stood in the middle of the room, fidgeting with his cigarette, staring first out of the window and then toward the door. Frances had passed him without speaking. Then he moved beside her. "You're Frances, aren't you?"

"Yes," She started to walk pass him.

"You don't like me?" She saw him for the first time straight in the face. He startled her.

"I don't know you. I only know what Louise told me." He was too short, she noticed. His blue eyes were vacant. He had pudgy hands. She was afraid he'd touch her with them.

"I loved Louise."

That makes everything right? "Did you?"

"You think all this is my fault?" He seemed pitifully amazed. She wanted to hit him in the face.

"Yes."

Now, he looked bedraggled in his blue suit and uncomfortable in his tight collar. He twisted his neck and ran his finger along the edges of his collar. He was standing a little apart, and as if he had felt that she was looking at him, he turned his head toward her. They looked steadily toward each other for a moment, but she shifted her position and looked again toward Mr. Williamson.

Then suddenly the grave was covered and the flowers banked on it, and in little bunches, the people turned away to go back to their cars. Eve and Charlie Johnson moved closer to the grave and Brad moved nearer to them. He stood fascinated by the multicolored grave. Frances turned to go, but stopped to watch Brad and Eve and Charlie Johnson. Brad did not speak to the parents. Frances wondered if he could have known. No, he could not have known. He stooped down over the grave and pulled a red carnation from its place in a wreath.

"Stop it! Don't touch it." Brad swung around, Eve Johnson had lunged at him, restrained now by her husband.

"I'm sorry. I . . . I just wanted a flower. I just wanted the flower."

"You killed her, damn you. You killed my baby." Eve Johnson shrieked. Those late in leaving turned around to stare.

"What?" Brad stood there with the red carnation in his hand.

Eve Johnson lay in her husband's arms and wept. She had turned her head away from Brad.

Frances stepped close to Brad. She held his arm at the elbow. "You'd better go, Brad. She's upset. She doesn't know what she's talking about." Still with the carnation in his hand, he turned away from her. "She's just upset, Brad." Frances said.

Eve Johnson shook and rolled her head on Charlie's shoulder. "Why don't you take her home, Uncle Charlie?" Frances asked.

"He did cause it, Frances. We know that." Charlie's words were even, but they were spoken almost absent-mindedly. "You don't know, Frances."

"I know, Uncle Charlie. But he doesn't know. He doesn't know a thing about it. He loved Louise too. He can't help it. Louise wouldn't tell him. So what could he do? What could you do? Or me? Or even Louise?"

"Why is our baby dead?" Charlie Johnson started to move with his wife.

"You know, Uncle Charlie. And that's all there is to it."

Charlie Johnson walked with his wife leaning against him.



# THE REBEL REVIEW



## House of Glass

### **Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction**

*Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—an Introduction.* By J. D. Salinger. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1963. 248 pp. \$4.00.

Little, Brown and Company, according to their very lucrative arrangement with J. D. Salinger, has released two more of his longish short stories in one volume. The two stories, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" and "Seymour—an In-

troduction," were both published, as have been all of his short stories for the past ten years, in the *New Yorker*, in 1955 and 1959 respectively. Mr. Salinger, the T. E. Lawrence of American letters, has not, it might be noted, put in an appearance in the four years since "Seymour."

Until the appearance of "Seymour," the short stories of Salinger fitted into (and also probably influenced) the general pattern of short stories published in the *New Yorker*. The stories have dealt only with two or three characters at a time, concentrating on a moment of crisis in the life of



one of those characters. There has been an obviously frugal plot and the emphasis has been on the emotional estrangement of the characters, either with one another or with the world. The narrative technique has centered upon brisk and often flashy colloquial dialogue, with the descriptive prose used much like stage directions in a play, giving the reader a very visual impression of the action.

The first story, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," fits neatly into this pattern. It is in the same vein as both "Franny" and "Zooney" and some of the earlier stories—revealing telling tidbits about Seymour by showing what happened to other members of the Glass family. This particular story deals with the day of Seymour's wedding. But as might be expected with the elusive Mr. Salinger, Seymour himself does not actually appear in the story. We are only told about him. What we do see is Buddy's harrowing experiences at the wedding when Seymour fails to show up. Most of the story takes place in a New York City taxi where Buddy is trapped with the maid-of-honor, her lieutenant husband, an aunt of the bride, and an old diminutive gentleman who is obviously but thankfully mute. Buddy then takes them to the apartment he shares with Seymour and the enraged friends of the bride calm down slightly beneath a balking air-conditioner.

Technically this story is an advance for Salinger because in it he handles the tricky problem of multiple conversation (that of more than two people at a time) convincingly. But as far as the story is concerned, the reader will probably prefer some of the earlier stories.

It is, however, "Seymour" that is the more interesting of the two. It is begun with a quotation from both Kafka and Kierkegaard and then launches immediately into the single-channeled mind of Buddy Glass. He talks, in the beginning, about himself, the general reader, and after a while, about Seymour. But this talk is more in the form of personal musing, as if Buddy were writing in his diary or giving us a long monologue harangue over the telephone. This is anything but a short story.

But on this occasion I'm anything but a short story writer where by brother is concerned. What I *am*, I think is a thesaurus of undetached prefatory remarks about him. I believe I essentially remain what I've almost always been—a narrator, but one with extremely pressing personal needs. I want to introduce, I want to describe, I want to distribute momentos, amulets, I want to break out

my wallet and pass around snapshots, I want to follow my nose. In this mood, I don't dare go anywhere near the short-story form. It eats up fat little undetached writers like me whole.

Buddy spends most of the 137 pages like this, talking about himself. He seems to be a muttering hypochondriac who is beginning to crack under the strain. The strain being, of course, the contradiction between the examples and teachings of Seymour and the fact of his suicide. And while Buddy often seems to be trying to justify his brother's suicide, it is merely that he is trying to understand it himself.

The entire story is built around this and we are allowed to see Buddy bare himself, to see the real Buddy Glass—for it is only in seeing and understanding him that we (and Buddy too) can ever hope to understand Seymour.

There is, however, something disturbing about the Glass family, and it is not its precociousness, its honesty, nor its morality. While Seymour taught each of the other Glass children to love, they mistakenly love the other people, those unfortunately damned with blind sensibilities, out of a sense of duty. They do not love people for themselves, but because they have been taught to do so by their beloved *guru*, their family saint who committed suicide.

And though granted that their loving for *any* reason is better than not loving at all, it does seem incomplete and not quite as good as it should be.

—BEN BRIDGERS.

## Purely By Accident

*Jack Be Nimble*. By George Cuomo. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1963. 231 pp. \$3.95.

George Cuomo's first novel, *Jack Be Nimble*, presents a cynical commentary on the football-dominated institutions of higher learning in America by examining such an institution through the eyes of the shrewd and ambitious Jack Wyant, a student who recognizes—somewhat in the manner of Salinger's Holden Caulfield—the "phoniness" of it all.

The phenomenal narrator, Jack Wyant, who is working his way through a large midwestern university, takes the reader through three astoundingly hectic days of dodging and devising, love-making and party-going. The packed schedule is the result of Jack's many jobs: he manages



to serve as sports correspondent for the town newspaper, campus representative for Royal King cigarettes, writer of themes and term papers for football players, and as personal tutor and guard for star halfback "Dancer" Danciewicz. Although the action is filled with many minor episodes, all relating to Jack's attempt to satisfy his many jobs, the main thread of the narrative seems to be concerned with his relationship with "Dancer," the conventionally stupid football star.

Hired by the local football boosters, Jack finds it his duty to see that "Dancer" passes his courses, reports to practice, adheres to training regulations, and stays as happy as possible. This becomes a difficult assignment because "Dancer" refuses to behave as a typical football player should behave. Having been deluded by the college recruiter into believing that he has enough intelligence to benefit from attending college, he is sincerely interested in his schoolwork and insists on doing it himself. To make matters worse, he falls in love with a girl who supports him in his ambition to "get an education." The crowning difficulty lies in the fact that "Dancer" hates football and everything that goes with being a Saturday afternoon hero. Solving these difficulties, and thus keeping "Dancer" on the team, constantly taxes Jack's seemingly unlimited supply of ingenuity and energy. The three days described in the novel bring this unhappy situation to its climax.

Throughout this rather elaborate plot, the author manages to sustain a scathing commentary on football-centered institutions of higher learning. Jack, in true picaresque fashion, serves as the voice through which the author expresses his personal animosities toward schools that devote more time and money to building winning football teams than to enriching the academic program. Occasionally, when the disparaging of the athletic program boils over, the cynical tone spreads out to become a sneer at college life in general: fraternities, English instructors, courses, general intelligence level of freshmen, and student morality. Activities in colleges most assuredly offer a rich ground for criticism; however, one tires of reading sustained cynicism.

The desire to ridicule seems to underlie and guide every aspect of the novel. The characters are unreal because they are too often used as mere focal points for the satirical purpose. For example, Benny Johnson, the leader of the local businessmen's fan club, is the embodiment of Babbitry. Pug, the football coach, has all the character-

istics that one expects to find in the football coach at such an institution. Neither character has a single feature which would mark him as an interesting person in his own right. Jack, the narrator, is completely unbelievable. "Dancer" is the only character that shows a spark of originality, and that, I think, is purely by accident.

*Jack Be Nimble* has little merit as a novel; but it is cleverly written in places, and it does provide a compact statement of all the conventional gripes at what goes on all too often in many American colleges and universities.

—GENE HUGUELET.

## Racing Nowhere

*The Edge of the Alphabet.* By Janet Frame. New York: George Braziller. 1962. 303 pp. \$4.95.

*The Edge of the Alphabet*, written by Janet Frame, makes use of the seldom used stream of consciousness which is generally accredited to James Joyce and used by others such as Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf. At first it may be difficult to grasp; but when the reader realizes what the author is doing, it provides a better description of the characters than can usually be accomplished by any other means. In stream of consciousness, we are told exactly what the character is thinking, not just what he is doing. The book begins by indentifying the narrator, Thora Pattern, who usually stays in the background except for an occasional comment. Thora Pattern lives at the edge of the alphabet and "made a journey through the lives of three people—Toby, Zoe, Pat."

Toby is the epitome of utter and dismal failure. Plagued by epilepsy, he dropped out of school at an early age to avoid embarrassment. He was constantly sheltered by his mother, who tells him that he will be a great man some day; "remember, Napoleon was an epileptic." She also managed to find time to tell him of all the sacrifices she has made so that he might be happy. Toby's dependence on his mother haunts him long after her death and often takes the form of resentment.

Zoe is a middle-aged schoolteacher, retired, academic but not educated; there is a difference. When she gets well into her thirties, it dawns on her that she has lost her proverbial "school-girl figure" and has yet to find a husband. Under the pretense of doing "private research" in London,



she hopes to find a mate. She has bought an encyclopedia of sex but still failing to attract men, she takes her chastity with her to a suicidal grave.

Pat never amounted to much either. Originally, he was a bus driver but later he took a job as a stationery manager in a large city store. "Just how much blank paper do you need, sir, to match your blank life?" He likes to compensate for his short-comings by talking about the important people he supposedly knows—various businessmen, artists, doctors, etc. His brother, he claims, is a district attorney in the United States.

Sometime during Toby's stay at school, he wrote a paper on the Lost Tribe; his teacher thought it was excellent and read it to the class. Since that was probably the only thing he ever accomplished, he decides to write a book on the Lost Tribe; rather than finding himself, he feels that he must travel far beyond himself. In order to write this book, he feels that he must travel to London. "Writing for Toby was an arduous task, as if a limbless man were setting out to dance." He boards a ship which will take him to London; and on the trip he meets Pat, who shares a room with him and Zoe. Through their eyes, the reader is told what people look like; the pretentious describe the pretentious.

"The edge of the alphabet where words crumble and all forms of communication between the living are useless. One day we who live at the edge of the alphabet will find our speech.

"Meanwhile our lives are solitary, we are captives of the captive dead. We are like those yellow birds which are kept apart from their kind—you see their cages hanging in windows, in the sun—because otherwise they would never learn the language of their captors."

"But like the yellow birds have we not our pleasures? We look long in mirrors. We have tiny ladders to climb up and down, little wheels to set our feet and our heart racing nowhere; toys to play with.

"Should we not be happy?"

—JIM FORSYTH.

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## Eternal Perversion

*Eternal Fire*. By Caulder Willingham. New York: Vanguard, Inc. 1963. 630 pp. \$6.95.

Caulder Willingham could not have chosen a more appropriate title for his powerful new novel

than *Eternal Fire* unless perhaps it might be **Eternal Perversion**. The story is a maze of perverted characters caught up in a fascinating theme of evil, destruction, and immorality.

The plot is strong, revolving around a courtroom trial in which Harry Diadem attempts to defame Laurie Mae, his distant cousin. All this is brought about by the Judge, who is the uncle of Laurie Mae's fiance, Randy. Randy knows nothing about his own financial situation, and the Judge is slowly embezzling him. But if Randy marries Laurie Mae, the Judge's crime will be exposed and he will have to turn the financial affairs over to Randy.

The handsome but perverted Harry searches for a permanent peace with himself. He is willing to sell his mother's name for the fortune that the Judge offers him to defame Laurie Mae in court. In the trial, however, the judge attempts to double-cross Harry with the disclosure that Harry is part Negro. The Judge weaves a web of destruction around himself.

Laurie Mae's story is one of the soul searcher. She tries to conform to Randy's world of Southern aristocracy, tea parties, and snobbery, but she too tends toward perversion. She dreams of suicide, while on the surface she appears calm, intelligent and poised. Whitt, another blackmail accomplice of the Judge, thinks he is being followed by a "pig dog" which we see later as a symbol of his conscience.

Ironically the only innocent person in the story is Hawley Battle, the physically twisted, mentally retarded boy who watches over Laurie Mae every waking moment and believes her to be his dead mother come back to him from heaven.

The story attempts a realistic study in the perversion and degeneration of the deep South. The outcome of the trial and the incidents which follow lead to violence and murder. In the end only Laurie Mae and Randy are left to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives. There is no glamour in this story. It is realistic with a vengeance. Willingham's greatest force lies in his ability to reveal the personalities of his characters through their own thoughts.

Apparently the author sees the South only in the context of perversion. He certainly seems to have come in contact with enough of it!

—BRENDA CANIPE.



## Contributors Notes

B. Tolson Willis, a senior Social Studies major originally from Elizabeth City but now making his home Greenville, won first prize in both categories of this year's REBEL Writing Contest. His poetry has appeared in the magazine before.

Sanford Peele, graduate student in Education from Wilson, won second prize in the poetry category. He is currently represented in *New College Writing* #3.

Pat R. Willis, a member of the English faculty, won second prize in the prose category. As a graduate student at East Carolina she contributed a short story to the Winter 1961 issue of the REBEL.

Millard Maloney is a senior from Norfolk, Virginia. His short story was written for Ovid Pierce's Creative Writing class.

Larry Blizzard, now with a Master of Arts degree, ends his long time association with the REBEL with his second story to appear in the magazine.

Jim Forsyth, sophomore from Greensboro, makes his first entry in the magazine.

Brenda Canipe, sophomore from Rockingham and a frequent contributor of poetry, appears this time as a reviewer.

Sue Ellen Bridgers, the Book Review Editor, allows us to print another of her short stories.

Gene Hugulet is a graduate in the English Department.

Mary Poindexter and Ben Bridgers are members of the English faculty.

The judges for the Fourth Annual REBEL Writing Contest were Mary Poindexter, Louise Adams, and Edgar Loessin, all of the East Carolina College English Department.

## Editor's Note:

It has been my pleasure and good fortune in the last three years to work closely on the REBEL with a number of people. I feel that they deserve mention other than having their names printed on the staff page.

Mr. Ovid Pierce has been the advisor of the REBEL since its foundation, and to him it chiefly owes a large measure of the success it has enjoyed. But not only has he been literary advisor to the magazine; he has befriended every member of the staff and shared with them the wisdom and knowledge of which he has such an abundance.

Dr. James Poindexter and Dr. Horton W. Emerson, who is no longer at East Carolina, have acted in the capacity of my unofficial advisors. Their counsel has been invaluable.

Some members of the staff have drifted in and out, but Jack Willis, Sue Bridgers (formerly Sue Hunsucker), Larry Blizzard and Milton Crocker have been with the REBEL as long as I have. They have been its mainstay. Next year some of them will remain and to them will be entrusted the reputation and quality of the REBEL.

One newcomer this year, Frieda White, although primarily a member of the student newspaper staff, has done more to relieve the burdens of editing and rewriting than could rightfully be expected of anyone.

To these people, and to the others who have advised, assisted, or simply listened at the right time, I would like to dedicate my efforts with the REBEL in the last years.

JUNIUS D. GRIMES III

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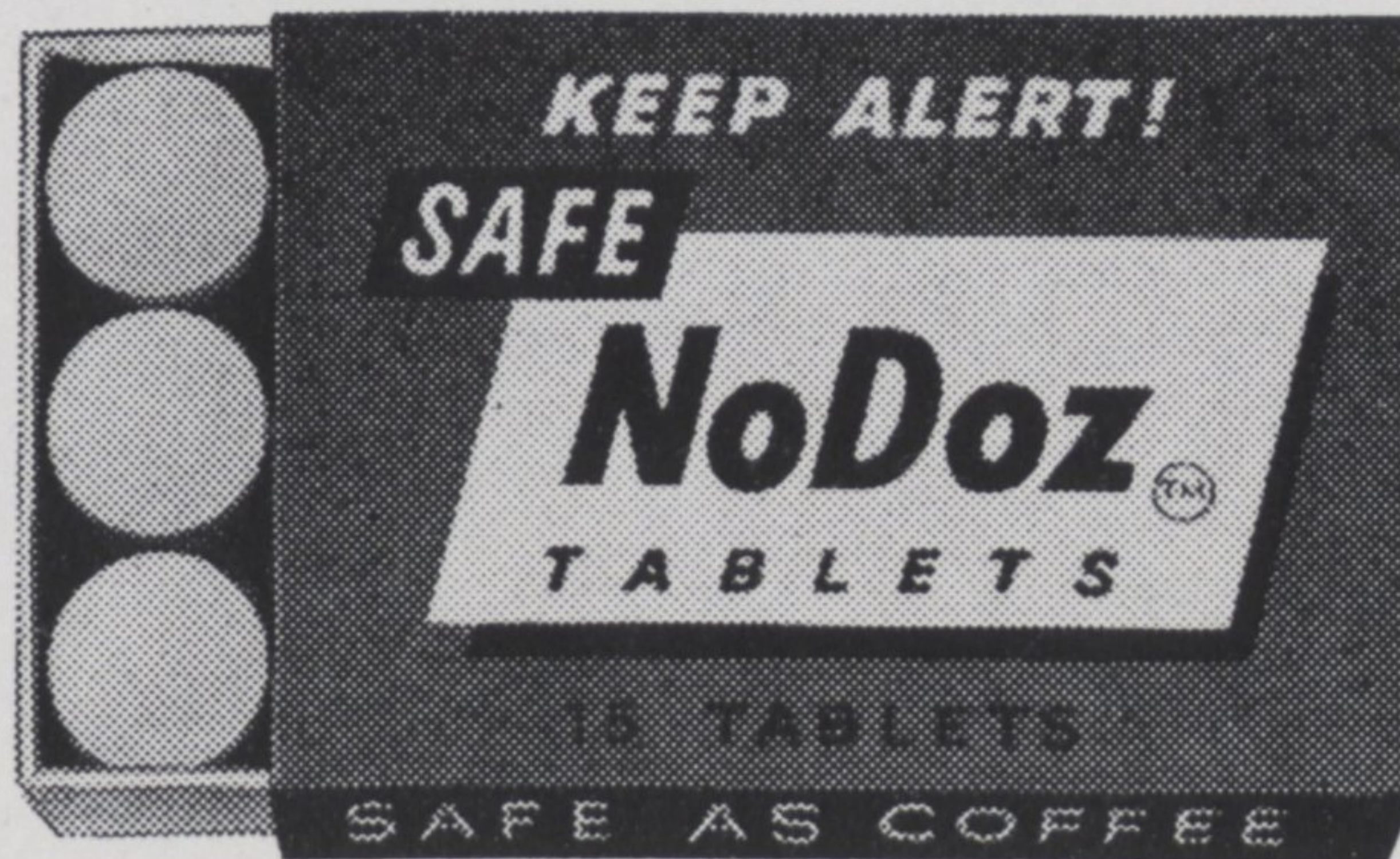
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