comment

The ultimate life insurance

The other day I was sort of sitting around being a college student when a man called me up on the telephone and said, “Hi, I’m Bob Bingsbury, Pete, and, you know, I’d been wondering if you as a college student have given any thought to making sure that the investment you’ve made in your future (after all, college is quite an investment isn’t it, and it means that you yourself are quite a bit more valuable in terms of earning power seeing as how you’ll probably be pulling in half a million bucks over the next century, and that’s half a million bucks that we think you’ll want to protect) anyway making sure that if you die you just won’t lose it all, you know? Golly, (he said golly a lot, and those other jelly-candy second-class expletives like Gee and Gosh that ministers always curse at) that’s why I thought maybe we could get together, how’s either Tuesday at one or Friday at 9:30? Would two o’clock be OK?”

It was a mistake, maybe, but I said, “Well, sir, I’d like to but you know I’ll be out of town for a few months, starting in about five minutes.” He thought that was pretty phony-sounding, so he kept at me, and eventually boxed me down to Friday at two. Then it was “my place or yours?” so I said yours (anything to keep him out of the house) and started marking time until I had to go to the East Lake Office Bldg.

College seniors, I am finding out, are right behind the crosshairs on the sights of these insurance (some people call them leeches) people. At last count I had gotten five free Rand-McNally Road Atlas offers (which don’t tell you that you can only get it from the insurance man personally at the expense of about two hours of valuable college-student leisure time and any feeling of personal well-being that you might have had before you found out about the dangers of not being insured).

The financial picture looks bleak for some of us now, especially on the publications staffs, if we were thinking about getting any money for food and rent from student senate, and this Comment wouldn’t even have been written if Doug Brouwer had had anything to say. But the insurance guy, he looks at you and says, Now there’s potential, fella, yeah, you’re gonna be making 20 thou in ten years, and the mortgage payments on the cold February morning when you get hit by a truck crossing the Beltline at Calvin’s poorly lighted across-the-Beltline parking lot crossing strip are going to leave that poor wife of yours destitute as a pickle, what with all those mouths to feed and shoes to buy every three months at 20 bucks a shot for those growing little feet. You sure are a [censored] if you don’t buy some life insurance quick.

Well I don’t even have a wife, and I said no, so he opened up like a fire-and-brimstone Baptist telling me that I was free to choose, but that I sure as hell (literally) better repent right quick. And I told him to call me in May. I guess what screwed it up for him was that he kept talking about the money. Idealistic college students always have a few rejection symptoms before they get over their qualms about being mercenary, I said to myself. Maybe I should buy some.

I know that the people on this staff who don’t want to sound corny in print will blanch at this, but, well, you know, talking to that life insurance salesman reminded me a whole heck of a lot of being in church. Those of us who have been trained to see the allegorical significance of every jot and tittle of life, well, we tend to be real sharp picking up subtle similarities between situations like that. I can’t tell yet which one was more like the other one—being in church or buying life insurance. How many sermons don’t talk about life insurance, anyway?

And thinking about it, I decided there isn’t much about life that isn’t like life insurance, somehow. I mean, if Robert Frost writes a poem, it’s a form of life insurance, and if Calvin builds a new campus it is, and if Johnnie and Janie Smith eat...
their supper on time, well, I guess that isn’t really any different at root, basically. I mean, if what you’re worried about is financial security, you buy your insurance from Aetna. If what you’re worried about is keeping your life, you might invest in cowardice, and who knows, it’s ironic, maybe, but who could say it couldn’t happen that somebody trying to insure his good name might do it by committing suicide. Some whippersnapper might come out of the woodwork here and say, darn it, that’s foolish, that ain’t life insurance, that’s honor insurance. But don’t be too hasty there. It’s pretty obvious that somebody buys life insurance to protect whatever is important, in whatever way he can.

Me, I bought my life insurance by coming to Calvin College, so I wouldn’t be led astray. A lot of people I know are doing it by getting married so they won’t be without some companionship or whatever else they get out of marriage. Some people are doing it by getting dressed up like turnips and going on Let’s Make a Deal. Everybody’s got a gimmick.

Somewhere, I figure, though, there’s a Most Wise End of a stone age

Some people thought of Will Rogers as a kind of quintessential American. His most famous and now oft-quoted and tired statement is “I never met a man I didn’t like.” What seems to me to be as essentially American as Rogers’ wry and telling humor is unfortunately the American habit of fighting war after war. The most jingoistic of Americans have often declared by word, gesture or deed that “America has never fought a war that it didn’t win.” Or if we cannot charm certain nations into eating out of our hand we will, in the words of that great patriot, General Curtis LeMay, “bomb them back into the Stone Age.” It would seem that fortunately and tragically the Stone Age in Vietnam is about to end. The death gasps of that basically American creation called South Vietnam have been more enduring than any faint breaths of vitality. The defoliated jungle stretches out as a brute metaphor for the putrid breath of an American deity—self-worshipping and rotting from the inside. Whatever vague adumbration of Eden the jungle of South Vietnam might have been has been systematically destroyed.

If one can picture the Devil as ending man’s innocence in Eden and attempting to set man up as a stand-in or puppet in his battle against Jehovah, a simple leap of imagination can picture the American’s role in Vietnam as demonic. As we sit in hell of our own making our puppets fail miserably and inevitably. Vietnam becomes a sacrificial lam signifying nothing, and the memory harkens back to the eerie, prophetic nature of Buddhist monks setting fire to themselves in the streets of Saigon in 1966.

Metaphors tend to be insufficient and associations fail logically. The people of Vietnam are not as spotless as the Christian Messiah. Nothing or no one has stepped forward as their Enlightener or Savior from physical or spiritual death.

A generation of young Americans who refused to fight this insane war stood up in righteous indignation. Paradoxically it seems the best lacked a sustaining conviction and the worst were full of a passionate intensity. Now rough beasts slouch in all directions looking for Bethlehems in which to be born in the guise of gurus or Children of God.

A friend of mine (known only to most as a pseudonym) once suggested that a monument be erected somewhere on Calvin’s campus listing the names of every Vietnam war victim associated with the Christian Reformed Church. The words on it: “These died in vain.” Perhaps the victims of the past six years will never be distinguished entirely from the survivors. Perhaps a monument should be carried in the place in the heart reserved for stone. It should not be forgotten.

TK
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**Cover**

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**Poetry**

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One hears John the Baptist saying "If you have two coats give one to the poor man who has none."

One hears Christ exhorting the rich young man to go, sell all that he has and give to the poor.

One hears Christ telling the disciples to go out and "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no money, no extra tunic."

"... look at the lilies of the field..."

One sees Mohandas K. Gandhi taking off his only outer garment and giving it to the poor Untouchable whose outer garment is torn, walking around in little more than a loincloth. Gandhi didn’t have two coats, yet he gave his one coat away.

Gandhi was probably the most respected man in India, yet he lived in the heart of the ghetto, daily touching the Untouchables. Not only was it very uncomfortable to live in that ghetto, it was sinful, a moral evil to even touch an Untouchable. Can you see Henry Kissinger living in Watts, or the leaders of the Christian Church living in Harlem.

That is about exactly what Gandhi did. Gandhi lived the Christian ethic. Listen to what he had to say:

If I had to serve the people in whose midst my life was cast, and some of whose difficulties I was a witness to from day to day, I must discard all wealth, all possessions... possession seems to me to be a crime; I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things are able to do so.

Gandhi, All Men Are Brothers

Not only did Gandhi say this, he followed it up. He owned his bed, upon which he had built a writing desk of sorts, one set of clothing, his glasses, his pen, and one copy of the Bhagvata-Gita, which was his Bible. That was the sum total.

Gandhi truly loved his fellow men, and actively acted that love out in his daily life. He dedicated his life to service, first to the Untouchables, then to India, and then to the world, insofar as it was humanly possible for him to do so. It was from this conviction that he became nonviolent, the world’s foremost apostle of peace. It was from this conviction that he lived his life.

"But Gandhi was not a Christian." So the typical reply goes, and we can then go our way, secure in the knowledge that he is not of the elect, while we are, so we are not accused by his example. Paul has something to say to us on this score:

It is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ.

Romans 2: 13-16

Gandhi lived according to the law, more thoroughly than most Christians do, he truly loved his neighbour, in act as well as word, and as Paul says, "The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself!’" (Galatians 5:14). Gandhi may well be one of those, who, although they do not hear the law, obey the law and it is "those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." We may not dismiss Gandhi by calling him a Hindu. It seems that the gospel has a little homily that runs: "first cast the beam out of thine own eye..."

But Paul also says "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (Galatians 2:20). It is at this point that we must take a good, hard look at Mahatma Gandhi, not to dismiss him, but to examine him.

Gandhi did not preach Christ crucified, he preached the Hindu gospel, the gospel of peace, love and of the essential goodness of the human race. Gandhi believed that the divine spark of love in every man would win out in the end and bring justice to the world. He believed this because he held the Hindu belief that the place to find God was in the human race, in human beings. The Vedas state that: "Brahman is the inner self in all that exists" and also "... the soul is identical with Brahman... each one of us is himself the whole, indivisible, immutable all-pervading Brahman." Therefore, since all men are identical to God, it merely takes a reaching out to that spark of the divine, and the bringing out of the love that is in each man’s heart to bring justice and love to the world. Love of God is equivalent to love of fellow men.
The Good News that the Christian brings is not that of the goodness of the human race, but that of the final making-good of the human race, through the actions of Christ. The Christian brings the Good News of the coming of the Just one, the Savior, who will bring justice at the final Judgement. It is not by the efforts of men, nor by the goodness of men, but by the power of the Lord that the final Justice, the final making right of all things will come to be. The Christian has the true hope, the only hope that will stand in the final analysis. But that hope does not come unencumbered. It is not enough simply to believe. As James brings home in a rather pointed reminder:

What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to him “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:14-27

We are then brought to the same conclusion that Gandhi is, namely that we are to love our brothers for, as John says in his first letter:

If anyone says “I love God” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: whoever loves God, must also love his brother.

I John 4:20, 21

It is at this point that the example of Gandhi accuses us. Gandhi did have the action to accompany a no-faith. We have no actions, which makes for a dead faith. One wonders which is the better of the two. Which will be declared righteous in the final coming-to-Justice?

One wonders if the force of the Gospel has become so dulled that it takes a prophet outside of the mainstream of so-called Christianity to call us back to the gospel, and to force the message of that gospel back into our consciousness. We have lots of doctrines, lots of propositional truths, lots of little faiths... but are they dead faiths, dead truths?

During Hunger Awareness Week, we should take a good hard look at ourselves, under the accusing light that the example of Mahatma Gandhi places us under, and ask ourselves what it means to be Christians.

Does the Gospel’s idea of service not include such things as service by means of diet? Must we not also serve our fellow men by what we consume? Can we ignore the starving masses, the literally millions of people starving or on the edge of starvation? Are we not faced by the words of Solomon, when he says that “to oppress the poor is to insult his creator?” Can we living our affluent lifestyles, consuming food totally and completely out of proportion to our needs, driving cars that drink needed fertilizer, say with a clear conscience that we do not oppress the poor of the world, simply because we choose to ignore them, hoping that they’ll go away; turning off the T.V. when those grotesque pictures come on the screen?

Something to think about... or maybe that’s a cop-out too... dead...
I have just now put down the phone after talking with Ms. Horgan, Director of the Irish Studies Program at Aquinas College. I had called her to find the answer to a question put by several students of mine: is there any special celebration in Grand Rapids on St. Patrick’s Day? The answer, alas, was no (although several Roman Catholic parishes will be having private celebrations). Ms. Horgan and I are both Boston-born, and we wistfully recalled the great, rousing affairs we had witnessed on March 17th in former years. I said, “If we were home now, we could send the students down to Southie [Boston’s predominantly Irish Catholic section—South Boston] to see the parade.” Because most people who are likely to read this have probably neither seen or taken part in a St. Patrick’s Day celebration, and because March 17 has passed unnoticed in most of Grand Rapids, the one man of Celtic extraction on the Calvin faculty assumes the task of reflecting on St. Patrick’s Day.

The majority of Celtic peoples on what used to be called the British Isles are Roman Catholic and live in Ireland—“John Bull’s Other Island.” There are also four groups of Celtic people on the islands who are largely Protestant. They reside in the far reaches of the islands, having been driven from their original homes by the Anglo-Saxon invaders from Europe—in the far southwest of England, in Wales, in Northern Ireland and in Scotland. My people are the Protestant Celts, who came to the United States from Devon, Wales and Ulster with a generational stop-over in the British Colony of Newfoundland. My parents’ names reflect their background: my father is Moses (that for the religious heritage) Llewellyn (that for the ethnic heritage); my mother was “christened” (not baptized) Mary, but was always called Molly.

Moses Llewellyn and Molly Wells emigrated to the United States in the 1920’s and soon traded their British passports for American citizenship. Their boys (Don and Ron—no ethnic names here, we’re all Americans now) were born and raised in Brookline, Massachusetts, a close-in suburb of Boston. The most striking thing for the American-born Protestant Celt is to begin to understand how important the word “Protestant” is in his people’s attempt to identify themselves culturally. Especially in a city like Boston, which is 80% Roman Catholic, it is perhaps understandable that Protestants found their distinctiveness expressed in largely negative terms. Yes, we were Celtic peoples, but we were not Catholic—and that said with vehemence! One usually got around it by referring to oneself as “British,” a catch-all which gave the Protestant signal. St. Patrick’s Day, however, always caused a problem.

Patrick, the missionary bishop who brought Christianity to Ireland in the fifth century, died (as tradition would have it) on March 17, 461. He was later declared to be Patron Saint of Ireland, and this is the proximate cause for the celebration each year. Yet, one who has witnessed the raucous and sometimes-drunken celebration of March 17th in a city like Boston knows that the current rendering of the event is in the same relation of the life and work of Patrick as the North American Santa Claus-Christmas is to the Incarnation of Christ.

We Protestants never “celebrated” St. Patrick’s Day, as such. That was left to “the street-brawling, drunken Irish” (read “Catholic”). Of course, it was commonly known among Protestants that Patrick was really “ours” not “theirs.” He was, after all, born in Britain, not in Ireland. Too, he did most of his work in the northern part of Ireland, where “our” people came from: his headquarters was in Armagh, he made his famous pilgrimage into the mountains of Mayo and died in Saul—all in Northern Ireland. While the Protestant rendering of St. Patrick fell somewhat short of making him into a member of Masonic and Orange Lodges, we “knew” that orange would be a far more appropriate color for March 17 than green. In sum, we thought the Irish carryings-on a bit overdone, but we did not inform them of the “truth” because that would have started a fight. The fact that the Irish drank themselves silly while singing songs about going back to Galway Bay seemed only fitting—after all, one thought, if people will accept the Pope, they’ll believe, and do, anything!

This different view of a common aspect of their history is at the root of the difficulties between Catholics and Protestants in contemporary Ireland.
THE ONE MAN OF CELTIC EXTRACTION ON THE CALVIN FACULTY ASSUMES THE TASK OF REFLECTING ON ST. PATRICK’S DAY

Their common Celtic origin is overshadowed by the religious connection—in which to be Irish is to be Catholic but to be Protestant is to be British. The violence in Ireland is centuries-old, but the “troubles” since 1969 dramatize the different perceptions that two peoples can have of each other and of their common history. The burden of the “troubles” weighs heavily on those of us in North America who are of Celtic origin, because if we believe that we have personally gotten past sectarian views of the past, at least we can appreciate the bitterness and anguish being felt today in Ireland. Those of us who are followers of Christ find that burden is even greater because the current conflict in Ireland continues to echo slogans of the Reformation—slogans that shame all of us when shouted over barricades amid the sounds of rifle fire, or when whispered by small groups of men and women alongside a lonely Irish road while waiting to commit the next act of sectarian violence against an approaching victim. The burden should be felt by all of us because we are human beings, and because humanity is being violated as long as the bitter struggle there continues. The coming round of another St. Patrick’s Day causes the questions to be raised again. But in recent years the questions are more important—because of the killings. The bells of churches, both Protestant and Catholic, toll nearly every day in Northern Ireland for the ever-mounting number of victims of “the troubles.” But, like John Donne, we should “ask not for whom the bell tolls,” because it is tolling for us.

In the spring of 1969 my wife and I visited Northern Ireland. During a lull in the violence we toured some of the Bogside section of Londonderry (by the way, the Protestant name for the city which the Catholics call Derry), which has been the scene of repeated fighting. Many slogans had been chalked on walls of derelict and battle-scarred buildings. Each side was represented: “No Papery Here” and “For Queen and Country” were answered by “Long Live the IRA” and “Up the Queen.” Although I never saw the following one myself, several other visitors to Belfast and Londonderry report that they have. Scrawled amidst such slogans as those above was a question which brings the most poignant critique of the “religious” war in Ireland; the question was: “Is there life before death?”

The confusing and dispiriting picture of “Christians at war” in Ireland can perhaps be brought into focus by recalling the majestic example of Patrick, who, it will be recalled, was neither Protestant nor Catholic—he was a Christian. Indeed it may not be too much to suggest that Ireland’s problems stem from too much religion and too little Christianity. Patrick was a simple and pious Christian who possessed great zeal and a great organizational ability. Within a generation of his death Ireland was a beacon light of the Church, already strong enough to send out missionaries itself. If Celtic people, whether Protestant or Catholic, whether in Britain, Eire or Northern America, would realize that in Patrick they have a noble saint of Christianity in whom they can all share, we would all be closer to the day when we would not have to bear the burden of Northern Ireland. In venerating Patrick we could discover our common Celtic origin; but of greater importance, what we share together as Christians. I suggest that we all could do well to explore this, because as Eliot says at the end of Four Quartets:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.

If we all were to learn the lesson of St. Patrick’s Day, of returning to where we began but knowing it for the first time, we would encounter the grace of God. In response to that offer of grace we could do no better than the words written by Patrick in his most famous hymn (“St. Patrick’s Breastplate,” usually sung on Trinity Sunday):

I bind unto myself today
The strong name of the Trinity,
By Invocation of the Same,
The Three in One, the One in Three.
Through whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word,
Hail to the God of my Salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.
Imagine the complexity of my assignment—

"Give us a monologue for the Dialogue, and fill it with worthwhile stuff—such as recollections, achievements, goals; and quit when you have said enough—within five double-spaced pages of prose."

Statistics are far from glamorous, but they can be useful in establishing a point. Let me attempt just a sampling.

The number of my years as president is greater than the individual age of 90% of the students at Calvin College. My story, then, covers the years of your life. On the teaching staff of 166 members, no one antedates my appointment to the teaching staff at Calvin, 8 are my contemporaries in the teaching profession, and 158 were appointed during my years as an administrator. Assisting in the selection and retention of that group of exceptionally fine scholars and teachers is an achievement of the College in which I want to claim a share. Of the 22,000 names on the active alumni list (not all alumni are graduates) covering all of Calvin’s history, I presided over the commencement exercises of 10,026. That is a lot of Pomp and Circumstance! The span of my years as president covered two undeclared wars (national), a number of declared and undeclared constituency conflicts, numerous campus crises (student publications, lecture series, and films being prominent among them), prosperous times and poor times, and 8,760-plus days of God’s blessings—all sunny days except, just as is always the case in Michigan, that on many of those days the sun shone only above the clouds.

Do I like my job? Of course I do. Have I ever felt like quitting it? Of course I have, more times than I can number. Would I advocate similar tenure for some successor? No, I would not wish that this be the burden of any person or any college.

The burdens of the office are not numerous, but they are significant. First and foremost is the sense of aloneness which administration imposes on a person. This is true not just of the presidency, but of every executive position. Any administrative decision, and even indecision, is for or against something/somebody. An administrator cannot develop many close friendships when there are confidences to keep and actions to take, even against the advice or interests of former close friends.
Second is the burden of frequent misunderstanding by people of the motives which underlie an administrator's decision. Even his best intentions may be impugned. After initial efforts at explanation, he gives up trying to prove that his own convictions and not board, faculty, student, or constituency pressures determine his stance. The persons who are the hardest to convince of this independence are students.

Third is the frustration in achieving goals set for the college which need to run the gauntlet of long-drawn-out committee study, consideration, and decision. In contrast, I frequently have thought of how interesting it must be to run one's own proprietary enterprise. Impatience can be hard on one's disposition and constitution.

Fourth is the endless amount of work to be done. I do not mean hard work, necessarily, just endless work. Figuratively speaking, never do I finish grading all my papers, posting all my records, and cleaning my desk. Come vacation or recess on the academic calender, there still is a backlog of work to do and there are more deadlines to meet.

Fifth, and perhaps the most important, is the gradual loss of a profession in preparation for which one has spent a significant part of his life. The profession of history was my first love. I made valiant attempts to keep up; I still dabble in the field on an occasional excursion but, in effect, no longer make pretense of being an historian.

Sixth is the burden of the failures which inhere in my personal performance and in deficiencies which arise among our faculty, students, and constituents. As a Christian college which sets great store upon competence and commitment, our ideals are set so high and the aspirations of all of us are so lofty that disappointments are more numerous than we would like to admit, and the subsequent distress deeper than we would like to acknowledge.

A college president gets blamed for more things than those for which he is responsible, but he gets credit for many more things than those to which he has a right. I have received, for example, compliments for the high scholarship of my colleagues of the teaching staff, for the academic excellence of the college, for the brilliant record of some of our students, for the distinguished achievements of our alumni, for the wholesome atmosphere of campus and classroom, and for the beauty of the Knollcrest Campus. Naturally, these compliments make me happy. I accept them graciously, hopefully, for I do not think that imbibing a bit of flattery is wrong, provided you do not believe it!

Two things make me very realistic about my assessment of compliments. It appears to be a rule, well established by my experience, that the moment I succumb to the expansive, satisfied feeling of a compliment, complaints arise to nullify the kudos. And even more importantly, I know full well that no achievement of anyone at Calvin College is an individual matter; it is always gained in cooperation with associates. This is true even in the case of the highly individualized, scholarly endeavors. It would be a good thing for all of us associated with Calvin to realize that the college provides a platform, a stage, or a context for all of our words and actions. We all stand on one another's shoulders. I have leaned heavily upon the expertise of my administrator-associates, upon the wisdom and good will of the faculty, upon the indulgence and friendship of students, upon the expert service of secretaries and custodial personnel, upon the prudence of Board members, and upon the loyalty and generosity of our constituents. Any concerted opposition of one or two-in-combination of these segments of the college would have brought my administration to an abrupt halt within a period of one year.

My twenty-four years as president cover four distinct periods in the history of Calvin. They are:

- 1951–1957 Introspection and Identification
- 1957–1964 Explosion and Expansion
- 1964–1971 Disillusion and Discovery
- 1971–1975 Plateau and Preparation

Calvin College awarded its first baccalaureate degree in 1921. Thus, in 1951, the year I became president, Calvin College was only 30 years old. The exceptionally able teachers who had set the direction and character of our college in those founding years were at the point of retirement. World War II marked the end of the founding period. Thereafter, the college of 450 students suddenly became one of 1400 students, and the teaching staff grew rapidly with the incursion of a new generation of young Turks, of which I was one.

In 1951, when I was introduced to the presidency (the words are selected with care, for I was never inaugurated as president, just introduced—and I came with little advance thought of the office or preparation for it), Calvin College was
beset by many difficulties. Most of them arose from criticism by those who espoused rising, new concepts of Reformedness, each with ideas as to what the task of a Christian college should be. Together we searched for an adequate articulation of our distinctive philosophy of Christian education, and we profited from the criticism by increasing our awareness of what we should be. It was a period of introspection and of arriving at a knowledge of our identity as a Christian college facing a new age. The 1951–57 period coincided with the rise of a new sense of our importance as an agency of a church which was to celebrate its centennial. Assured of a distinguished future, we talked in terms of a long-range plan which eventuated in the decision in 1956 to purchase Knollcrest and to develop an entirely new educational facility there.

The years 1957–1964 were introduced by the event of Sputnik, the first successful launch of an orbital vehicle. This event, October 4, 1957, touched off a knowledge explosion which rocked the educational enterprise in every aspect. It made education the favored concern of American leaders; it produced a vastly increased body of knowledge which created new fields of learning and specialities; it created a demand for new methodologies; it propelled science and technology to new heights of recognition; its shock waves produced a tidal wave of student enrollment.

Calvin experienced the effects of the knowledge explosion, as did every institution. Providentially, the Board’s decision to build a new campus coincided with the peak of the tidal wave of student enrollment, with the increase in public interest in education, with the need to account for and use new knowledge, and with our own decision to study in depth the character of a Christian liberal arts education.

The knowledge explosion generated forces inimical to education’s welfare; it harbored a self-destruct mechanism. Wise men such as C. P. Snow, in his *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, foresaw the breach which was to develop between science/technology and humanities/values. In 1964 a new explosion hit the educational scene.

The protest era, 1964–1971, arose out of sheer disillusionment with the dehumanization of knowledge, loss of national purpose, and the distrust of leadership on a national scale. Its effects were felt by all established institutions. Although Calvin was not crumpled by the counter-culture collision, we do bear its scars. This period, perhaps, was the hardest we in the administration and faculty ever experienced. We learned valuable lessons as a college. Teacher-student relationships were changed permanently for the better. All of us learned to appreciate the greater candor of the students as to their thoughts and concerns, and as to goals for their lives. These were also the years in which the faculty produced the 4-1-4 curriculum, *Christian Liberal Arts Education*, and FOSCO! It seems strange now, but the year in which we established our greatest gains as a distinctively Christian college, 1971–72, we were hit the hardest by constituency reaction.

Campus protests had created a public disaffection with colleges generally. Our constituency, although a bit edgy, remained sympathetic and loyal throughout the era of disillusionment. No glaring incidents of protest and revolt had marred Calvin’s reputation. It appeared as though we would weather the difficult period without great difficulty until, on April 30, 1970, the publication of the *Bananer* created an occasion for angry reaction. I am certain that most of the students involved never realized the magnitude of the disfavor which their act generated. Many of them will be leaders some day in their college and church and, when in some later generation the college faces the problems of that day, I hope that their remembrance of the incident will produce a sense of understanding and loyalty such as was demanded of the friends of Calvin College in 1970–71. I regard these years as the hardest period of my presidency, and that after having been either inured or anaesthetized by about twenty years of fending off difficulties.

The present period, 1971–1975, is one of stability. The enrollment, up to 3575 in 1968, showed a steady erosion, but has now stabilized. It is not a
period free of problems, the most prominent of which is the financial outlook. Especially distressing is the steadily decreasing number of college-age students of the Christian Reformed Church who enroll at either Calvin, Dordt, or Trinity. On the other hand, especially gratifying is the increasing number of excellent students from outside our denomination who are attracted by the Christian character and the academic excellence of our college.

The plateau period is one of preparation for setting new goals and for providing a basis for new achievements in education. We are a good academic college; we must be better. Our record of scholarship must create for us a position of strength from which we can speak with authority on the relationship of Reformed Christian faith to learning. Our dedication to the cause of Christian education must be greater in order to sustain the financial demands which these schools are going to make on our people.

Above all, we as a college must perceive the enormity of the economic, social, and political adjustments which the new times will surely impose on us. We must pose Christian answers and provide a positive direction in which we go as a people must go.

We are going to have to fight hard to establish and maintain our identity as a Christian educational institution which has a contribution to make to our American culture. We must be respectable culture-makers and culture-producers in order to realize our potential as a reconciling agent in this new world of ours.

I leave this thought with you, borrowed from St. Paul, whose world produced problems in magnitude equal to our own: "A great door and effectual is open to us and there are many difficulties."
The original contents of pages 14–18 of this issue have been removed. They were to be a sample of life-drawing—nudes—done by five Calvin art majors, but a series of meetings and decisions over the space of four days last week changed that. The Dialogue staff has also withdrawn the original front cover design, though not forbidden to publish it, because it might have been liable to the same charge which resulted in the censorship of pages 14–18: a potential to give substantial, needless offense to members of the readership.

On Tuesday, the 8th, the Dialogue mentor, in consultation with other faculty associate editors, stopped the printing of the April issue because of the artwork and called for a meeting of the editorial board to reverse the decision to publish the drawings. The close vote of the editorial board was to uphold the earlier decision, and the mentor announced his obligation to appeal to the Communications Board, which is empowered by its constitution to make final editorial judgments on the publication of
“satire, parody, caricature, or the like,” though all other statements of publications policy to be found, formal and informal, inveigh against prior censorship. The editorial board then mandated the mentor to first inquire whether the drawings constitute “satire, parody, caricature, or the like.”

At a joint meeting of the Dialogue staff and Communications Board two days later, the Communications Board voted to hear the mentor’s appeal. They also voted to sustain it, prohibiting publication of the material.

The following afternoon, two members of the Dialogue staff met with the President of the College to propose that he overrule the decision of the Communications Board because of the undesirable precedent for prior restraint which it represented, though none of the nudes would subsequently be printed. He refused. The Dialogue editors were surprised that he was not, as they had commonly supposed, opposed to prior censorship.

The next Monday the staff met to revise the April issue to satisfy the demands of the censors.

What floats to the surface of the considerable rumor-effluent which has accumulated over the past two weeks is rather simple in outline, stripped of the minor details, the peripheral issues, the strained relations, which made the situation so mind-boggling: the “Calvin community” is probably not ready for the exhibition of life-drawing, though it should be; there is a fundamental inconsistency in the “responsible freedom” with which College publications are said to operate.

That “responsible freedom” is the freedom which a dog on a 20-foot chain has within a 20-foot radius. It is the same freedom students had under compulsory chapel—the freedom to go, but not to go. It is a spurious freedom and might better be called exactly what it is: “responsibility,” and only responsibility.

As FOSCO is instituted next year and a new president is installed, College publications policy had better be rethought and honestly explicated.

JL
The man in the gabardine suit sat down quietly as others hurried by. It was late afternoon and people were rushing a little to get home. The park will be nearly empty soon, he thought to himself. On the other bench sat a woman and her little boy. They held tightly to each other. They were both tightfaced and silent. The man decided at once to approach them. As he stood up he heard a noise. It was the sound of a stream-lined city bus. As it passed, the man noticed there were no people in it, except for the driver, sitting sturdily, looking official.

"Can I be of some help," he offered pleasantly.

"Mm. Get lost, friend," she said.

"Say," he said, continuing to stand there, ignoring her remark, "I'll bet your son there goes to school around here. He looks like a fine boy."

She stared at him hard, and with a warning in her eyes remarked almost calmly, "Hey, if you don't get lost right now I'm calling the cops."

"Now don't get excited," he said, "You don't know what you're saying." He knew telling her that was a mistake as soon as he had said it. She stood up, ready to scream, obviously looking for cops. He moved away quickly, back to his seat on the bench.

It was dusk and a hundred ugly grey pigeons flew overhead, huddling together in flocks, darting back and forth. When the man looked over to the young woman and her child he noticed she was watching the pigeons. "Just look at that statue of General Grant because of all those damn pigeons," he ventured as casually as possible, "They're such dirty birds, aren't they? Don't you just hate them?"

No answer.

The park was empty now, and the balance of light had tipped to darkness. Another empty bus went by and still another in the space of fifteen minutes. Neither he nor she said a word. But the man was restless. He began to consider. It always happens this way. I always say the wrong things. Of course she knows what she's saying. How could I have said such a thing? The man tugged despairingly at the cuff of his pants and rubbed imaginary spots from his shoes. Oh, I always go about it wrong, he thought. What a boob I am. Of course she has a fine son and certainly he goes to school around here. She probably even loves pigeons. What a boob I am. What I should of done, I should of introduced myself. In fact, he brightened, that's what I'll do. Introduce myself. After all, we're both human beings. Obsessed with this notion, he jumped up quickly and hurried over. He barely got his, "Hello, I'm Howard Sourdill," out of his mouth in time to dodge the slicing purse aimed at his head. "Creep!" she said, with an air of contempt, teeth bared and flashing.

"What's your name?" he asked, continuing to back away. He ducked as she took another slice. "OK, OK," he said, "Just trying to be friendly."

"You know where to go, buddy," was her reply.

He sat down again, disheartened. Now that was a bright idea, he reprimanded himself. That's right, tell a complete stranger your name. Probably scared the wits right out of her. What a creep I am, he thought, with more emphasis this time, I really am a creep.

The woman sat as still as ever. She never made a move.

The man sighed unpleasantly and scoffed at the situation. He began to consider, though, how
he figured in the relationship. After all, he thought, I’m just a nice guy. I’m not a rapist. I’m not a murderer. I offered her help. These women are all alike, he thought.

“You women are all alike,” he said half-aloud, “Every last one of you.” He raised his voice deliberately. “Try to get friendly on an evening stroll and you think a guy’s a rapist or something!”

The little boy began to cry, to his dismay. The woman took the boy closer to her and turned momentarily to stare at the ogre that had disturbed her world. “You stink,” she opened for the first time.

“OK, OK,” he said, brightening at her response. After all, it was a response. “Sure, I admit it, I have some very filthy habits. It’s true. Very true, in fact. You’re correct.”

“You’re damn right I’m correct. You stink,” she said, and turned away.

He was shocked. He had certainly expected a more positive response than that. He began to think. Wait a minute. You can sure get turned around with these women. Hadn’t he just said...? Oh, he thought, my mother was certainly right. You seem to have ideas of your own until you have a woman involved. Then she does the thinking for you. How many guys don’t I know who were manipulated like this? Pretty soon you get the feeling you haven’t got a brain in your head that’s your own and you don’t know how you got along in the world without them. It made him so furious. “Who do you think you are, saying I stink?” he screamed, “You stink!”

She was silent.

The sky looked almost blue against the harsh black trees. The
trees, bare, awaiting the winter, surrounded the benches ominously, forcefully. From their sturdy, stately trunks they seemed to fairly burst into tiny detail, a flowing fullness. Here and there they stood amidst the stubby drinking fountains and the occasional light poles. For the first time, both man and woman noticed it was very dark. The woman held her now sleeping son a little closer.

“My name,” she said, “Is none of your business.”

“And who said I wanted to really know your stinking name,” he shot back. “I couldn’t care less. You stink!” he repeated. They both shivered with the blast of a sudden gust of cold wind at their backs. The boy sniffed and snuggled closer to the woman.

The man in the gabardine suit began to see the futility of his waiting around any longer. This is crazy, he thought. I’m not doing any good here. What am I knocking my head against the wall for? That bitch! Why, I don’t even know her name.

“You bitch!” he said with malice, and began to walk away, briskly and indignantly. Just as he was almost out of sight he heard her scream as if some violence had surely been done to her. As he scampered back she yelled loudly, “My name is Elaine Serial and where I live is none of your business!” Although the man felt that this was a definitely positive sign, she stiffened as he approached her bench. She growled warningly.

“Oh, watch it,” she cautioned, raising her purse. He backed off.

“Well I am,” she said, again sincerely.

“Sure,” she said, looking down on her son.

“I mean, what do you live for, anyway, if you aren’t looking, huh, searching?”

She didn’t answer. The night was deep and both were tired. The little boy was now sound asleep on her lap. Finally, she said, with a glance to the sky, “You know, I hate pigeons, too. Every last one of ’em,” but she didn’t look at him when she spoke.

The man didn’t have a reply, but she waited for one anyway. Then she gave in.

“OK,” she said, “You can take me home now.” They both got up, slowly. Carefully, carefully Howard Sourdill moved closer to Elaine Serial and pried the sleeping boy from her arms. As they turned to go an empty bus stopped on the street before them. “Wanna ride?” the bus driver called down as they approached the door.

“Yeah,” Howard said, “We wanna ride.”

Crushing screeching brown leaves beneath the bus wheels, the four of them rode off into the night, together.
lint

1. we are all insane  drooling
   old dottards  scrivening
   notes to ourselves
   my pockets are full of old
   pieces of paper & lint  i have
   forgotten what they mean

2. animal: from
   animus, spirit; and
   malus, bad;
   = cheap whisky

3. i have booked passage
   in steerage for the duration
   a lever  god out of a machine
   a defense mechanism  a sandbag
   to the sets crew

4. book review
   The Little Flowers of St. Amputee
   is a book full of good pictures
   of hands & arms  feet & legs
   a book of ears & noses
   a devotional for once
   that does not move the soul
   but does the body good

5. does anyone here play euchre
   a few hands of whist
   the only game in town
   & nobody knows the rules

6. some day i will ride
   white horses  some day
   you will remember
   what i have told you
   a secret i could not keep

7. the music is water
   to listen to it is
   to be baptized in Jordan
   you come out clean  & half divine

8. some day
   the atoms will collide
   & stick  the words
   will come together
   the cells will congeal
   the bleeding will stop
   everything that is broken
   will be made whole
   some day
   i will ride white horses

rd swets
Dialogue has asked me to share some of the information accumulated in writing a centennial history of Calvin College, which will appear next fall. Since excerpts or fragments from it may prove obscure, and since whatever interest the book may have will come from reading it as a whole, I shall share some memories of the Calvin writers students have often asked me about. All four of these writers attended Calvin while I was a student there from 1927-1931, though never all at the same time. A kind of myth to which some of them contributed has developed. Here they are as I remember them, part of a student body of 315: Peter DeVries, all four years from 1927-1931; David De Jong, for two years; Meindert De Jong and Frederick Manfred for one, although in the case of Manfred conversation and correspondence have often occurred since friendship has been sustained.

Calvin College at the ebb of the twenties was but a tenth of its present size. There were but three buildings on the campus; no coffee shop, and a tiny gymnasium. Chapel was held every day, and there were regularly held classes at 7:10 in the morning to which some students came by streetcar for a nickel from the south and west sides of Grand Rapids. There was then so much history to learn that every student had to take two courses in it, so much English that every student had to take four, and so much Bible that every student had to take five courses in the subject. Clubs abounded, oratory and debate were major school activities, basketball scores of 31-28 were common, the A Capella choir was not yet organized, although the men’s quartets were popular. There were two Broenes on the faculty but no Broene Center. If you had a problem, you had a problem.

I said rather hyperbolically that I knew the De Jong brothers. Dave was rather unknowable, Meindert inscrutable. They moved in silent splendor through the halls of Calvin, impenetrably aloof. They were distant and unobtrusive. Anyone, however, interested in writing was soon aware of the imagistic and often enigmatic poems of David, which, together with occasional short stories, appeared regularly in the Chimes and Prism. Dave had a reputation already in prep school, then in its last year as part of Calvin. Formerly the pictures of graduates in the Prism were accompanied with epithets, often revelatory. The epithet beside Dave’s picture in 1925 was:

The iconoclast. He excels in four things: Cynicism, haughtiness, wit and poetry.

In the same Prism, he and a friend, Johannes Stuart, a self-appointed genius with abundant and flaming red hair and gaudy, clashing clothes, wrote as follows:

After years of patient clamor for recognition we have finally obtained the meritorious degree from Professor Vanden Bosch (English), of being dubbed the most obstinate, unruly and pachydermatous class in school.

Johannes did the clamoring, Dave delivered the goods, but what he delivered in the school papers revealed little of his deepest tensions. When he was graduated from Calvin in 1929, the epithet beside his picture was:

My blood is cymbol-clashed and
The anklets of the dancers tinkle there

Harp and psaltery, harp and psaltery make drunk my spirit.

I’ll let you figure that out.
Though I was in several classes with him and accepted his rather disdainful attitude toward ordinary mortals like myself as a mark of his talent, I had no idea at all of the gnawing resentment he bore toward "the self-righteous Christian Reformed Grand Rapids Dutch" or the contempt he harbored toward Professor VandenBosch, who recommended him enthusiastically for a fellowship he later received at Duke University and whom he ultimately repaid with slander in With a Dutch Accent. After he was at Duke I asked him for poems to publish in Chimes, where they later appeared. His first novel, Belly Fulla Straw, and his autobiographical With a Dutch Accent, which missed being a Book-of-the-Month Club choice through the adverse vote of Clifton Fadiman, reveal a deep persecution complex compounded by emotional elephantiasis. Such incredible touchiness as these books reveal strikes me as unconvincing. I never heard anyone at Calvin speak disparagingly of him. All he got publicly was incense, but never enough. His book Old Haven, a novel about Friesland had, however, plenty of incense coming. Professor Howard Mumford Jones of Harvard hailed it as a work of genius. It is a superb book and the local manifestations of Frisian Power can legitimately rejoice in it.

Dave's brother Meindert moved through Calvin on little cat feet. He was at that time amazingly shy and uncommunicative. After graduation, he filled a position as instructor in English at Grundy Junior College in Grundy Center, Iowa, hardly an American Athens. After teaching for one day, he slipped away during the night by bus. He supported himself for years by manual labor until his rarely excellent children's books made him internationally famous.

Peter De Vries was an entirely different person. He was about as inconspicuous as a flamingo. Suave and sophisticated in looks, chic and natty in dress, with a walk full of bounce and a vocabulary fully adequate to all occasions, he burst upon the campus like a meteor. He never did much for class, and I once saw him ordered out of one. He was sharing his wit too loudly. He was an extremely gifted orator whether competing in a state oratorial contest massively attended and cheered by the students or mounting the counter of the De Luxe Cafe and giving a spontaneous oration on Buffalo Bill. He was an amiable and likeable person. For one semester he served as an innovative editor of Chimes, writing brilliant, breezy editorials and introducing the newspaper format. He retired after the first semester, presumably from nervous exhaustion. This may well have been true because beneath the vigorous manner, the troubles that later hospitalized him with tuberculosis may have been beginning. I once visited his apartment on Wealthy Street next to the old Wealthy Theater. In the course of the conversation he engaged in a heated diatribe against a print he had hanging on the wall. He then opened the refrigerator, took out an egg, and hurled it on the middle of the print. We all watched the egg dribble to the floor. Later it struck me as a prophetically symbolic act. After graduation I once spent a delightful evening with him at the home of a mutual friend in Evanston. He was then an editor of Poetry magazine. When his first book Who Wakes the Bugler? was published, he asked me to review it for The Calvin Forum. In addition to a good deal of praise, there were a few suggestions. I have written reviews of some of his books since, but not because I was asked by him. If someone had asked me in our senior year at Calvin, "Is Peter De Vries going to be somebody?" I would have said, "Most certainly." If he had asked me "What?", I would have said, "Mayor of Chicago."

In an article in The Banner some ten years ago, I said that "Peter De Vries is the most prominent writer to come out of our group." Soon afterward I received an angry letter, which, together with other hostile details, said of De Vries, "His career and work have nothing to say to Christians." But he is the most prominent writer to come out of our group, and some of his best short stories, and especially The Blood of the Lamb have a great deal to say to us. Furthermore, his scintillating satires on suburbia are a cleverly executed attack from the inside on the vapidity of its life.

Manfred came to Calvin when I was a senior; at six feet eight his visibility was obvious and his tremendously gregarious nature accentuated it. He came from a corner of northwestern Iowa, which has in former years sent a host of able students to Calvin. The town was Doon, where a friend of his
years later erected a sign “Doon, the home of Frederick Manfred.” It was removed. In his book *The Primitive* he recounts in minutely realistic detail the long journey by tin-lizzie to Grand Rapids. The four bedraggled boys were glad to reach the “rooster-coop,” as he calls the dormitory. The book is rich in accurate topographical detail, many clearly identifiable characters, and some that are composite. Its chief character, Thurs, he claims to have invented. What he does not include is also significant. He does not include, for instance, a mild form of hazing which he and his friend DeBie experienced after having listened to Billy Sunday strike out sinners. When they returned a large group of students were milling about the dormitory; a minor group detached itself and, all calling each other Al, approached DeBie and Feikema. They ordered Feikema to strip to the waist and painted a huge red F on his back, after which they covered the letter with newspaper and made him don his shirt. The group then escorted the boys to the new Seminary building then under construction, made them go up into the pitch dark attic and removed the ladder. As they left, a student tossed up a book of matches. Manfred’s magnetically impressive size invited various forms of attention.

Manfred was drafted into playing basketball. He had not played the game in high school, but in the relatively slow-moving college basketball of his day, his height permitted easy tip-ins, and he proved invaluable to the team. He also endured a great deal of physical punishment: undetected jabbing of elbows, jarring shoves, and painful stomping on his highly available feet. He was also a fine baseball player, a sport not then sponsored at the college, but sporadically engaged in on campus until the shattered glass in school buildings and neighboring houses abruptly ended the sport. I remember pleading with President R. B. Kuiper to at least allow us to play catch on campus, but the furious protestations of janitor Norden made him implacable. We then made up a team and played a few games at Garfield Park in which George Stob, later a professor at the seminary, made one of the finest circus catches I have ever seen.

Manfred was always a real writer; everything else was secondary. He was a genuine self-starter. Manuscripts were constantly accumulating, and they were frequently revised. The early poems and stories he showed me were already marked by impressively accurate detail. Rural Iowa, in which he had such deep roots, was evoked with pictorial vividness: the man-sized grasses, the whirling and singing of birds above them, the rustle of non-human life at their base, the hot summer sun and the bleak, deep snow of winter. His talent for observation and accurate recording was apparent in his poems and stories, which he published in the school papers. He was always bent on improving his craft: sometimes “the old lizard,” as he calls his inspiration, manipulated his work, but that he strove for form as he understood it was evident from the beginning. He had to work his way through college, mopping floors, cleaning windows, sweeping the gymnasium, but he never scanted his writing and reading. Even in the summer after a hard day’s work, long after everyone else had turned off their lights, he read the classics. He had a gift, but he spared no effort to enrich it. In *The Primitive* and elsewhere, he seems to imply a certain amount of persecution. I never met a student or faculty member who did not admire and like him, though not all were in agreement with his esthetic or philosophic convictions.

Manfred over the years has produced a shelf of books, some of mammoth size. He has accomplished a great deal: a multi-level saga of the evolution of an area of our country from the pre-white era to the present, the creation of a great variety of characters drawn from all walks of life, an original and fruitful experimentation in language and technique, at least three novels which deserve a place on a small shelf of first-rate Western fiction. He has done this in the face of poverty, neglect, obscurity, a long bed-ridden siege of tuberculosis, and even hostility. He has never engaged in pointless recrimination or senseless revolt, but has lived steadily by a vision of his craft and the place of man on this earth which one need not share to respect.
Intimidations of Mortality
Malcolm McBryde

Last semester, one of my English classes spent an hour on William Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality.” It is a powerful poem, and, I think, slightly depressing. During that hour, it became evident that another person in the class found it to be agonizingly depressing: she grew more and more impatient with our discussion of form, style, imagery, etc., until when the class ended she was so distraught she could hardly speak. Finally, her eyes brimming with tears, she asked the professor whether Wordsworth’s statement of visionary loss in the poem was final, and if it was true. None of us could tell her; it seemed obvious that Wordsworth was giving up the vibrancy of his vision (though this view has been questioned), but did the power of his statement mean that those of us who had also perceived a “visionary gleam” in nature have to give it up as he did a century ago? In this paper I hope to affirm emphatically that Christians, at least, do not. Both C S Lewis and his friend J R R Tolkien propound a convincing Christian aesthetic that affirms the presence and divine significance of the visionary gleam which Wordsworth bids a poignant farewell in the “Intimations Ode.”

The “Intimations Ode” is an expression of visionary loss. The poet remembers that

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light .... (11 1-4)

However, this vision no longer comes to him: “The things which I have seen I now can see no more (1 9), and “There hath passed away a glory from the earth” (1 18). He puts his loss most succinctly at the end of stanza four: “Whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?” He answers that growing up and growing old have done away with the gleam and notes with chilling cynicism how, as a child grows older, he emulates his elders, “As if his whole vocation /Were endless imitation” (11 107-108). He puts a question to this child:

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life (11 124-129).

The chill of maturity snuffs the visionary gleam and Wordsworth tries his best to replace it at the poem’s end with “the faith that looks through death,/In years that bring a philosophic mind” (11 186-187). But a philosophic mind is no replacement for a “visionary gleam”; the last stanza shows how the glory of the sunset takes on a “sober colouring” to the disillusioned poet, and it is obvious that he has found only a poor substitute for the real thing. He tries to present a stiff upper lip in the last four lines, but his closing vision is hardly inspiring. He has lost the “visionary gleam” in the end.

What, exactly, is this thing or feeling which Wordsworth has lost? He gives us some hints in the “Intimations Ode” itself, but it is better described in his long autobiographical poem, The Prelude, and in “Lines Composed ... above Tintern Abbey.” According to The Prelude, Wordsworth had, in his early years, a “passionate intuition of the divine presence.” He enjoyed a strong sensation of spirit in nature and got the impression, often, that it was speaking to him:

He also addresses a divine soul in nature:

Wisdom and spirit of the universe!
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought
That gives to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion. (I, 401-404)

This sensing of the actual presence of a spirit in nature was the source of some of Wordsworth’s most intense emotions. “Tintern Abbey,” finished about four years before the “Intimations Ode,” reveals even more strongly Wordsworth’s awareness of divinity in nature:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns ... (11 96-100)

A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought. (11 103-104)

The contrast between the “light of setting suns” in “Tintern Abbey” and the sober colouring sunsets exhibit in the “Intimations Ode” reflects exactly
A senior English major picks up from a different angle the discussion of fantasy literature which lapsed last May.

what the loss in the ode is: the loss of “joy,” “the sense sublime” and the communion with nature’s spirit, that which is “far more deeply interfused.”

Wordsworth is suffering in the “Intimations Ode,” from what I call the “romantic dilemma.” A characteristic feature of the 19th century Romantic movement in England, of which Wordsworth was the patriarch, was its affirmation of a soulfulness in nature correspondent to soulfulness in man. Nature seemed, as a result, to speak to man’s deepest feelings, to show man that he and his environment were well attuned to one another. Perception of that soulfulness brought deep rapture:

\[
\text{I was only then} \\
\text{Contented, when with bliss ineffable} \\
\text{Felt the sentiment of Being spread} \\
\text{O’er all that moves and all that seemeth still. (The Prelude, II, 399-402)}
\]

The romantic affirmed that there was actually a warm welcome in a world that, even at his time, was becoming more deterministic, lawfully ordered, inescrutable and cold. Any honest romantic, though, had to ask himself a potentially shattering question at some time or other: was the warmth and soulfulness of nature only a result of a desperate transformation of the actual into what he wanted it to be? Or was there, in fact, a soulfulness behind nature’s face that was totally other than himself and with which he could hold legitimate and fruitful conversation? Wordsworth poses the dilemma quite well himself in The Prelude: he wants to know whether when he sensed the “far more deeply interfused,” he was

Coercing all things into sympathy,  
To unorganic natures were transferred my  
Own enjoyments; or the power of truth  
Coming in revelation, did converse  
With things that really are. (II, 390-394)

Although he is casual enough about it here (1395), this dilemma becomes the pain at the foot of the “Immortality Ode.” Wordsworth finally resolves it by ascribing the visionary gleam to his own creative activity, denying it as an independent phenomenon. It is this profound denial, I think, that had the girl in my English class in tears, for it finally denies the ontological foundation of a deep joy humans often feel in the face of great and majestic beauty, and it implies that such joy is not for grown-ups.

As I have already said, I do not think that Wordsworth’s repudiation of that deep joy is valid; I think that it actually can exist and is a sensation of something in the external world that is actually “far more deeply interfused.” C S Lewis calls that deep joy by a German word, Sehnsucht, which

Luchtspiegeling

Midden in deze woestenij  
van zon, stenen en droog gewas  
zie ik opeens mijn eigen land  
—onaagetast door deze brand:  
bleek water, mist over een wei,  
zie ik hoe koel en zacht dat was.

Ijls als de dunne, dode maan,  
die overdag is blijven staan,  
maar meer dan een herinnering,  
begeerlijker dan enig ding  
zie ik het verre water blinken,  
trachten mijn ogen het te drinken.

Mirage

Suddenly in this wilderness  
of sun and stones, dry cactuses,  
I see the land from which I came,  
untouched by this consuming flame:  
pale water, mist above the grass,  
I see how cool and soft it was.

Transparent as the thin, dead moon,  
left standing in the sky at noon,  
ot not just a mere remembering,  
more wantable than anything,  
I see the distant water rise,  
and try to drink it with my eyes.

Translation from Vasalis by Henrietta TenHarmsel
has been defined as an exalted nostalgia, a “momentary sense of grandeur” or a “piercing sweetness,”17 “an intense longing,” that is somehow a delight. It is a hunger “better than any other fullness,” a “poverty better than all wealth . . . bitter sweetness. To have it is, by definition, a want; to want it, we find, is to have it.”18 According to the authorities, it is characterised by a “sense of displacement, of disorientation and removal from that which is desired. (C. 15). I think that there is more to Sehnsucht than mere displacement, however; it is essentially an awareness of the holy and divine that is fleeting and far away because of the large gap between man and God. Men habitually try to appropriate the objects of their best feelings to themselves, probably out of a perverse intent to preserve what they have deemed desirable.9 The feeling of disorientation in Sehnsucht is a result of man, the finite, thus trying to enfold the incomprehensible majesty of God, the infinite. Fortunately for us, holiness will not be enfolded and preserved; yet as men made in God’s image, we immediately recognize his awesome majesty when we are sensitive enough to catch a brief flash of it. Wordsworth’s awareness of the vanished visionary gleam is an awareness of the holy; it is Sehnsucht.

The famous Christian apologist and scholar C S Lewis was well aware of Wordsworth’s longing for a vanished gleam; by his own account the two long poems to which he returned most often during his life were the Aeneid and Wordsworth’s The Prelude.10 and it is his own pursuit of the visionary gleam that he chronicles in his autobiography (C. 133). Its title, Surprised by Joy, also reflects Lewis’ affinity for Wordsworth, for the words are borrowed directly from one of the elder poet’s sonnets, which begins “Surprised by joy, impatient as the wind. . . .” Lewis never gave in, though, to the despair which Wordsworth expresses in the “Immortality Ode”: he once observed that he could not “complain, like Wordsworth, that the visionary gleam has passed away.”11 Lewis did not complain for a couple of reasons that the visionary gleam had departed. First, he was not swayed, as Wordsworth apparently was, by the advance of the scientistic world-view, which, as Lewis says, gradually empties this rich and genial universe: first of its gods, then of its colours, smells, sounds, tastes, finally of solidarity itself, as solidarity was originally imagined (C. 118).

Second, and this is really the reason he could defy scientism so confidently, Lewis was sure that there was an immanent and discernible soulfulness in

**FOOTNOTES**


7Corbin Scott Carnel, Bright Shadow of Reality: C. S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 19. All further references to this work will be parenthetical and designated by the letter ‘C,’ i.e. (C. 00).

8Schnieder, 7-8

9J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” Essays Presented to Charles Williams, ed. C.S. Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 74. Tolkien notes here that by saying that we ‘know’ something, we appropriate it, thereby destroying its essential wonder.

10Kuhn, p. 214.

11Lewis, Surprised By Joy, p. 238.

12Kuhn, p. 214.


14Kuhn, p. 207.


16Kuhn, p. 206.

17Tolkien, p. 62.

18Tolkien, p. 81.

19Tolkien, p. 82.

20Tolkien, p. 74.

natural things. An early poem, “Song,” both expresses his perception of this soulfulness and hints at whom he was later to affirm as its originator:

Atoms dead could never thus
Stir the human heart of us
Unless the beauty that we see
The veil of endless beauty be
Filled full of spirits that have trod
Far hence along this heavenly sod,
And seen the bright footprints of God. (C. 52)

Sehnsucht is the natural exuberance of men who, sometimes in spite of themselves, recognize the “bright footprints of God” through their world. Lewis, along with JRR Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield and other Oxford Christians with which he was friends, described the result of God’s walks through the earth as “Logres.”

Logres is perceived in Britain when men respond to that which comes from “without,” inspiring awe, mystery, an awareness of something holy. Logres represents the impingement of the supernatural, not in any simple two-storied world, but rather in a world where two kinds of reality “co-inhere”... the Divine majesty is not off in the cloudless heavens. He is here, too, and... he makes himself felt among men. (C. 100)

Lewis realized that Logres or Sehnsucht are not to be sought as legitimate ends in themselves, but he did recognize Sehnsucht as a cosmic signpost that points persuasively toward God (C.162).

Lewis realized the elusive joy in the holy in the synthesis of his Christianity with romantic myth creation—in his space-time trilogy and his Narnia series.1 2 The real importance of writing the romantic myth, he feels, is to construct a world that gives the reader a sense of otherness and strangeness while making him desire it intensely; he has a feeling of Sehnsucht about it, in other words.13 Lewis’ writings give a “startling sense of the actual and the spiritual... harmonised”14 because they are the door to faërie, the concrete world of the holy, which, according to Lewis, is “perhaps the most potent awakener of longing” (C.91). In Lewis’ words,

It is as if faërie is the fifth column of the Supernatural (or the arch-natural, as Charles Williams called it) which works against neat, rationalising and dulling conventions—to keep wonder alive in us. (C. 92)

To Lewis, the construction of the world of faërie and the consequent arousing of Sehnsucht, is totally justified, for it re-awakens us to the real holiness which, in the present state of our world and our lives, we seem to ignore.15 He believed that “a real ontological cleavage exists between the human order and the divine order,” and that man must be “unbent, reoriented psychologically and recreated spiritually before he can freely participate in the divine order of being.”16 To achieve that reorientation, Lewis’ stories are aimed at awakening the desire for holiness. Sehnsucht, he says, “would logically appear among the sanest and most fruitful experiences we have,” for the object of longing “really exists and really draws us to itself” (C.187).

JRR Tolkien, like Lewis, is a myth-maker, the most famous of his myths being the Middle Earth trilogy, The Lord of the Rings. His myths too are a door to faërie, that land of desirability, “that awakened desire satisfying it, while often whetting it unbearably,”17 which is, in its best manifestation, the locus of the holy. Sehnsucht comes, in “a good fairy-story (myth) of the higher and more complete kind,” in a sudden turn of events for the better, which Tolkien calls the “eucatastrophe” (or “un-catastrophe”). This turn gives the reader a “catch of the breath, a beat and a lifting of the heart near to tears... it denies universal final defeat [which is represented in catastrophe] and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.”18 This feeling is, to all appearances, identical to the fleeting feeling of Sehnsucht we have already noticed in Wordsworth and Lewis. Furthermore, Tolkien says, the really unique quality of
Sehnsucht in a successful fairy story comes precisely because the eucatastrophe is pre-eminently true, because it is an analogy to the great eucatastrophe of the world, the birth of Christ, and the ongoing redemptive work of God since. "The Evangelium," he says, "has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the happy ending," and, if fairystories are true in this sense, we are not only consoled by them, but satisfied. Through them we recover, from the increasingly "sober colouring" of our world, a clear view of things as we were meant by God to see them.

What relation, if any, does Wordsworth's dilemma, as expressed in the "Immortality Ode," have to fairy stories, myths and the holy? On an elementary level, there is a compatibility between the mythical fiction of these two "Christian romantics" and the visionary world of Wordsworth. Lewis' writings, as we have seen, recognize the immanence of a spiritual life in nature that is connected with God. The world of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is "panvitalistic" also, a place in which "the ladder of living things—from rock to tree to beast to intelligent, is at every level capable of expressing a beneficient or malific will." This parallel, however, is rather fortuitous; the real significance of Tolkien and Lewis in relationship to Wordsworth's romantic dilemma is that they reveal how closely Wordsworth came to the world of holiness without recognising it. He sensed truly that there was something "far more deeply inter­fused," but he did not recognize the face of God in it, never realizing fully that his longing was the register of the vibrancy of God's eucatastrophic evan­gelium all around him. He ascribed whatever was desirable, finally to himself and, because he himself did not contain true holiness, abandoned the visionary gleam altogether. The Christian need never, in fact, he may never, do so; he must rather testify to the exalting satisfaction in the great Eucatastrophe and be able to recognize it and embrace it wherever it appears in art, literature, music, man or nature.

Not that the "Intimations Ode" is worthless. It has been acclaimed as the greatest poem in the English language for the power of expression and the acuity of the dilemma it presents. It is, though, a frightening statement of the emptying of our universe that has progressed even farther since Wordsworth's day. The feeling of Sehnsucht which Wordsworth sadly rejected and which Tolkien and Lewis embrace is perhaps our most powerful reminder of the majesty and pervasiveness of God's holiness we know, and virtually all men, I think, are of it. It is the sense of "splashes of Godlight in the dark wood of our life." (C.164). Our affirmation, finally, is not of catastrophe or of the dulled sensibility attendant to it, for the eucatastrophe is continuous around us, ever-vibrant and light-infusing. Our only tears should be tears of joy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Willie Zwart, cigar and crumpled black raincoat in hand, left for town much earlier than usual. After raining all morning, an ominously dark sky threatened another shower and Willie hurried his pace, but curiosity pumped his short stove-pipe legs. The account of the Mayor's death had troubled him all that night, and Willie wanted to test Blinkie's story in private.

The alley, Willie's usual route to Blinkie Traas's drug store, told its own little tales. From watching their garbage, Willie discovered strange little quirks among his neighbors. Once he claimed that the local banker was having big money problems, and Willie took his cash out two weeks before the government charged the bank with "bookkeeping irregularities." After that he bragged to his cronies that he knew more about North Prairie from its trash than from the Fox River Journal.

He could tell other things about village life from the alley—when "Boots" Vink did a sloppy job on his bookkeeping irregularities. After rainning big money problems, and Willie took his cash out two weeks before the government charged the bank with "bookkeeping irregularities." After that he bragged to his cronies that he knew more about North Prairie from its trash than from the Fox River Journal.

The rain stopped and Willie was about to head for home when he suddenly remembered—Blinkie was De Jong's funeral assistant. Of course, he'd be cleaning up after the funeral. Willie turned around and walked quickly to the funeral home. He went up the drive, pushed open the side door quietly, and called in a loud whisper, "Hey, Blinkie. You there?"

"Yeah, that you Willie?"

They met and whispered on the stairway, where Willie agreed to sit out the remainder of Blinkie's chores. Soon Blinkie was finished, and after locking the doors, they left together, heading toward the drug store. Approaching the store, they looked backward just as DeJong's black hearse was pulling out of the church driveway. A long gleaming line of late model cars followed the black Buick as it rolled slowly down Prairie Avenue.

While Blinkie unlocked the front door he reported, "Never seen so many people at the funeral home."

"Yeah," Willie said, "Town's empty. People seem to think Tromp was Okay. Sure was strange though. Freak accident."

"Happens all the time in the papers," Blinkie said.

They moved quickly to get inside before the funeral procession caught up with them on the street. At the doorway, Willie grinned wryly when he noticed Harm Veldt, the Police Chief, directing traffic at the intersection of Prairie Avenue and Route Ten. Harm had never served the Mayor so well. Everybody in North Prairie knew that Harm and the town board were at each other's throats. People guessed Harm would quit soon.

Willie remembered the night of Tromp's accident. Harm stayed at his desk in the Village Hall when Blinkie took the ambulance to the old Swets Farm. Harm wouldn't go. Said he had to watch things in town—he didn't have to run and jump every time the Mayor got some bug up his rear.

To Harm, reform politics was a weary burden. The new Mayor and town board were after him constantly. The whole thing, real estate development, new streets, strange people from the city, made more work. But that's what the new board wanted. Claimed they could get more houses, more business, and more tax dollars for improvements.

The old board, mainly World War I Vets, was not anxious to see new faces crowd North Prairie's streets. But new faces came anyway: Ed Rositer, Pete Domino, and Jack Walker. Soon there were enough to elect a new board. When Tromp took over, the old timers warned him to go slow on the new stuff, or before they knew it they'd have niggers and what not in town. Tromp laughed and shrugged it off, "Ha! Over my dead body. The town needs growth. You'll see."

Then it started: troublesome new ordinances, streets all torn up, new sewers, a new school. Even new churches were going up and one was Catholic. Harm often grumbled that he couldn't patrol all those new places. When the builders complained, Harm told the Mayor that he had work enough without checking piles of lumber dumped off in the middle of some old farm yard.

Harm argued with the Mayor until the day of his death. Willie was sipping coffee in the drug store when Blinkie came in that afternoon. He said, "Tromp's mad again. It's like a dog gone cat fight in there lately. Harm said he wouldn't do some job or other. Old Tromp just stormed out and said he'd do it himself."

Willie didn't care much for town politics, but he missed the old town board. They always had time for pinnacle after meeting, but reform politics changed everything. These new guys were always chasing around to investigate this or that. And that new one from Chicago, Jack Walker, was like some crazy centipede. They made him Zoning Chairman, and he kept everyone busy inspecting sites for the new school, the shopping plaza, and a whole slough of housing developments.

More people from Chicago were moving in every month, and North Prairie was grabbing a bundle of cash.
Farms, one after another, were turned into housing subdivisions. The farmers retired. Willie wondered if the next mayor would push the real estate business like Tromp.

Half hidden by a cardboard Coca-Cola advertisement, he watched the hearse, flower car, and Tromp family sedan pass slowly down Prairie Avenue. "Hey! There's Jack Walker. He's in the funeral procession ahead of Tromp's in-laws."

"Those two were close friends," Blinkie said.

Walker drove with bandages covering most of his arms and one hand. He sure had gumption, Willie was thinking. With his real estate office and used car lot, he still took time for the town board. Walker really moved. People agreed that he was the real spark on the board. He got things done. He would be a natural for Tromp's job. But, although several names were being discussed, no one mentioned Walker. Willie wondered why.

Glancing again at Walker's bandages, Willie mumbled to Blinkie, "Now that was really stupid. How could those guys get messed up with gasoline like that? Walker runs a car lot. Should have more brains."

"Wasn't his cigarette," Blinkie answered.

Willie got the details of Tromp's accident from Blinkie the day after. "I picked up Tromp at the corner of the old Swets Farm," Blinkie reported. "Walker was with him. They were checking a broken drain culvert. Van Oosten's construction crew needed a new one to bring equipment into the subdivision."

As Willie understood it, the trouble started when Tromp's car ran out of gas. Walker siphoned some gas from a truck while the Mayor, standing nearby, dropped a cigarette ash into the funnel. The whole thing blew up in his face. Walker was on his knees holding the funnel with one hand. He was lucky, but Tromp was a mess. He died going to the hospital. Doc said it was just as well that way—Tromp would have been a vegetable.

After the funeral cars were gone, Willie took a seat at his usual table and pulled a pinochle deck from his shirt pocket. He motioned for Blinkie to take his place, but he didn't come. Instead he poured coffee and grumbled about the weather. The barber, dressed in a Sunday suit, strolled in, nodded, and remained standing. He'd been to the funeral, and it looked like he wasn't interested in a card game. Looking strangely at Blinkie, he said, "Good sermon," and then slowly, "Aah, what a day." Then, reluctantly, he sat down and Blinkie joined them.

Soon, townsfolk, walking home, dropped in for Lucky Strike cigarettes, Vicks cough drops, and other pocket items. They didn't talk much, but nodded at the familiar trio around their card table. Blinkie's mother helped customers. Nearly deaf and somewhat palsied, she spoke to them in a quavering shrill voice that seemed almost irreverent under the circumstances.

It was nearly four o'clock. School kids began to push through the side door and they huddled around the candy counter. Blinkie got up to give his mother a hand.

Willie sensed that the kids of North Prairie were surprised, as they grew older, to learn that he worked. Racing to Traas's for after-school candy, they always saw Willie, Blinkie, and the barber seated on black wire ice cream parlor chairs dealing cards or sipping coffee from heavy gray mugs. Blinkie belonged there and the barber had a shop in the basement, but Willie was just there.

As the night watchman for the Rhine Gold Brewery in nearby Posen, Willie worked the eleven to seven shift. With dozing time on the job, he needed only three or four additional hours of sleep, and he was usually awake by noon. A few local kids seemed to take a liking to Willie. Sometimes, they took their noon lunch bags to Willie's place and sat around talking on his back porch. Occasionally they told Willie about one of the pranks they'd pulled on Harm or some other local grouch. One of them, Ike DeGroot, came through the front door and nodded to Willie. He moved awkwardly toward Willie's table and asked half seriously, "Kin I play?" Willie gave him a wry smile, but no answer.

The barber went to his shop. Blinkie kept working behind the
counter, and Willie was alone. After most of the kids left, Blinkie stood by his chair and said, “It’s late. Guess we’ll have to save this game.”

“Yeah,” Willie answered, “Almost five o’clock.”

Seeing the DeGroot kid across the store, Willie called, “Hey! Ike! Bring the paper.”

It was the weekly Fox River Journal with a story about the Mayor’s death and funeral arrangements. Tromp had died late on Monday night after the board meeting. Willie, who worked at that hour, read the Journal account eagerly. It told nothing new, but Willie noticed the preacher’s eulogy topic, “Servant of the People.”

Surrounded by advertisements on the back page, Willie read an item entitled, “Vandalism.” He was surprised to read of another fire on the night of Tromp’s accident. A vacant house, recently bought by a Charlie Green, had burned to the ground. In any other week such an event would have been front page news. Across the table Blinkie responded to Willie’s, “Hey, What about this Charlie Green fire?”

“Kid’s from Phoenix,” Blinkie guessed. “Couldn’t stop it.”

“How come?”

“No fire plugs out there. Just a shack of a place anyway.”

Looking toward the newspaper rack, Willie shouted across the now empty drug store, “Ike. You must know something about this.” But he didn’t wait for an answer. Twisting up from his seat, he put the Journal back on its pile, and announced that he was going to the bowling alley lunch counter for a hot beef.

Ike followed close behind. He was due to set pins for league bowling at six o’clock.

Walking across the street toward the bowling alley, Willie noticed Ike’s white shirt and said, “You’re gonna set pins in that?”

“No. I got clothes in the locker room,” Ike answered.

“You playing hookie again? I suppose you told your teacher you were going to the funeral.”

“Yeah. And I went too.”

“How was it?” Willie asked as they slid onto the revolving lunch counter stools.

The girl came for their orders and Ike didn’t answer Willie’s question. He grabbed the menu, and before Willie could order, Ike said, “Two hot beefs—on my bill.”

The girl needless Willie for not going to the funeral, “Shoulda been there, Willie. Everybody was—even Ike.” She raced from one news tidbit to another. Willie and Ike sat quietly through this routine while a blob of corn starch gravy oozed through Willie’s fork onto his sweater. It left a shiny streak where it moved down toward his belt. Noticing the spill, the girl pointed, and gave Willie a damp wiping cloth from the counter.

Plates scratched clean, Willie and Ike moved to the soft spectator’s seats as the regular bowlers arrived.

“How was the funeral?” Willie asked again.

“Well, the preacher made quite a stir.”

“Oh? How’s that?”

“Said the Mayor was an example. Died for the people.”

“How about Harm?” Willie asked, “He in there?”

“Oh sure. I seen him. Left early to direct traffic.”

Must have been tough on old Harm. Willie thought. After all, the Mayor got killed doing the cop’s work.

Ike was saying that he wanted to bowl one game before the league got started, when Willie jabbed him in the ribs, and with a broad grin ventured, “You say—you and your gang don’t know anything about that Charlie Green fire? Wouldn’t try to con me now, would you?”

Getting up to bowl, Ike looked a little puzzled, but said, “Well, I don’t know more than anyone else.”

“So, What’s that?”

“You—you mean you don’t know?”

“Know what?”

“Well—that Tromp got killed when they burned out that nigger family in Chapman’s subdivision.”

Willie was jolted. He gasped at Ike’s back. “I’ll be damned,” he mumbled softly. The events of the past few days began to make sense. He was amused, for an instant, to think that he and the preacher were probably the only ones in town not trusted with the truth.

Willie lingered in the bowling alley for over an hour. He couldn’t go back to Traas’s. The sting of Blinkie’s lies was too fresh. “The whole blame town,” Willie mouthed to himself. The more he remembered of the past few days the more he hated Blinkie and Harm. Finally, feeling hurt and angry, Willie stomped out onto Prairie Avenue. He took a long walk home—past the town hall, the bank, and the old Post Office, redone for Walker’s real estate office.

Home too early to leave for work, Willie tried to read a paperback detective story, but his mind wandered. Finally at ten o’clock he searched his pantry for an apple, a bag of potato chips and a few cookies, dumped them on his car seat, and stood looking down the alley. It was still cloudy. The night was dark and muggy.

Then, with resolution, he gathered a pocket full of hard cinders, walked to the far end of the alley, and systematically wacked out a window in every garage as he returned to his car. When he pulled his Ford out onto Prairie Avenue, he saw several yard lights pop on, and he cursed every last one of them. That seemed to brighten his mood, and he whistled, “You are my Sunshine,” as he drove south toward Posen.

Next day Willie overslept. He woke up at two o’clock and fumbled around his kitchen for coffee and a sweetroll. Then, stretched out on his couch, he tried to think of a few embarrassing questions for Blinkie or Harm. He couldn’t decide just how to lead them into a trap, but figured the chance would come one way or another.

As he left his apartment, he surveyed the broken windows with secret satisfaction. He’d really done a job on them, better than he’d imagined. The broken glass was scattered everywhere, and he chuckled softly when he noticed the banker’s wife tinkering with a new piece of glass and a putty knife behind her garage.

When Willie reached reached Traas’s Drug Store, he came in through the side door and saw Harm and Blinkie at the card table. Harm was in a jolly mood.

“You’ll never guess what,” Harm roared, “I caught the window breaker red handed.”

Willie tensed. He had seen Harm at his desk in the town hall while going to work the night before. Harm certainly had not seen him break the windows. Testing his ground Willie retorted, “Whadya mean? My windows ain’t broke.”

“Course not,” Harm answered, “The kid likes you.”

“Kid? What kid? What’s up?”

“Don’t act so dumb.” Harm rumbled, “You knew it all the time. That De Graaf kid’s been breaking windows for a year. Last night he went too far—broke every window in the alley.”

“What makes you so sure?”

“We got the goods on him. Caught him red handed. His old lady signed papers. I took him to the reform school this morning.”