

The *Liberator*. In 1919 he traveled to Europe and lived in London for more than a year. There he published *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920), his second collection of poems. McKay returned to the U. S. in 1921 and worked with Max Eastman as associate editor of *The Liberator*. His first American volume of poetry, *Harlem Shadows*, was published in 1922, and in that same year he visited the Soviet Union for six months. After visits to Berlin and Paris, McKay remained in Europe for about ten years, often in contact with the prominent American expatriate writers of the 1920's. His first novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928), was a best seller and won the *Harmon Gold Award for Literature*. He wrote two additional novels, *Banjo and Banana Bottom*, and published a collection of short stories, *Gingertown*. A mixture of autobiography and travel, *A Long Way from Home* was published in 1937, and *Selected Poems of Claude McKay* (1953) was published posthumously with an Introduction by John Dewey and a biographical note by Max Eastman. The seven poems that follow are reprinted from this last volume.

Baptism

Into the furnace let me go alone;
 Stay you without in terror of the heat.
 I will go naked in—for thus 'tis sweet—
 Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.
 I will not quiver in the frailest bone,
 You will not note a flicker of defeat;
 My heart shall tremble not its fate to meet,
 My mouth give utterance to any moan.
 The yawning oven spits forth fiery spears;
 Red asphish tongues shout wordlessly my name.
 Desire destroys, consumes my mortal fears,
 Transforming me into a shape of flame.
 I will come out, back to your world of tears,
 A stronger soul within a finer frame.

If We Must Die

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
 Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
 While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,

Claude McKay

Making their mock at our accursed lot.
 If we must die, O let us nobly die,
 So that our precious blood may not be shed
 In vain; then even the monsters we defy
 Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
 O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
 Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
 And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
 What though before us lies the open grave?
 Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
 Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

Outcast

For the dim regions whence my fathers came
 My spirit, bonded by the body, longs.
 Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
 My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
 I would go back to darkness and to peace,
 But the great western world holds me in fee,
 And I may never hope for full release
 While to its alien gods I bend my knee.
 Something in me is lost, forever lost,
 Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
 And I must walk the way of life a ghost
 Among the sons of earth, a thing apart.

For I was born, far from my native clime,
 Under the white man's menace, out of time.

The Negro's Tragedy

It is the Negro's tragedy I feel
 Which binds me like a heavy iron chain,
 It is the Negro's wounds I want to heal
 Because I know the keenness of his pain.
 Only a thorn-crowned Negro and no white
 Can penetrate into the Negro's ken,
 Or feel the thickness of the shroud of night
 Which hides and buries him from other men.
 So what I write is urged out of my blood.

I stretched full-length upon the grass and there
I said your name but silence answered me.

Southern Mansion

Poplars are standing there still as death
and ghosts of dead men
meet their ladies walking
two by two beneath the shade
and standing on the marble steps.

There is a sound of music echoing
through the open door
and in the field there is
another sound tinkling in the cotton:
chains of bondmen dragging on the ground.

The years go back with an iron clank,
a hand is on the gate,
a dry leaf trembles on the wall.
Ghosts are walking.
They have broken roses down
and poplars stand there still as death.

My Heart Has Known Its Winter

A little while spring will claim its own,
in all the land around for mile on mile
tender grass will hide the rugged stone.
My still heart will sing a little while,

And men will never think this wilderness
was barren once when grass is over all,
hearing laughter they may never guess
my heart has known its winter and carried gall.

Nocturne at Bethesda

I thought I saw an angel flying low.
I thought I saw the flicker of a wing

above the mulberry trees—but not again.
Bethesda sleeps. This ancient pool that healed
a host of bearded Jews does not awake.
This pool that once the angels troubled does not move.
No angel stirs it now, no Saviour comes
with healing in His hands to raise the sick
and bid the lame man leap upon the ground.

The golden days are gone. Why do we wait
so long upon the marble steps, blood
telling from our open wounds? And why
do our black faces search the empty sky?
Is there something we have forgotten? some precious thing
we have lost, wandering in strange lands?

There was a day, I remember now,
I beat my breast and cried 'Wash me God,
wash me with a wave of wind upon
the barley; O quiet One, draw near, draw near!
Walk upon the hills with lovely feet
and in the waterfall stand and speak.

Slip white hands in the lily pool and mourn
upon the harps still hanging in the trees
near Babylon along the river's edge,
but oh, remember me, I pray, before
the summer goes and rose leaves lose their red.'

The old terror takes my heart, the fear
of quiet waters and of faint twilights.
There will be better days when I am gone
and healing pools where I cannot be healed.
Fragrant stars will gleam forever and ever
above the place where I lie desolate.

Yet I hope, still I long to live.
Just if there can be returning after death
I shall come back. But it will not be here:
I want me you must search for me
beneath the palms of Africa. Or if
you are not there you may call to me
from the shining dunes, perhaps I shall
be following a desert caravan.

I may pass through centuries of death
lose quiet eyes, but I'll remember still

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a jungle tree with burning scarlet birds.
There is something I have forgotten, some precious thing
I shall be seeking ornaments of ivory,
I shall be dying for a jungle fruit.

You do not hear, Bethesda.
O still green water in a stagnant pool!
Love abandoned you and me alike.
There was a day you held a rich full moon
upon your heart and listened to the words
of men now dead and saw the angels fly.
There is a simple story on your face:
years have wrinkled you. I know, Bethesda
You are sad. It is the same with me.

A Black Man Talks of Reaping

I have sown beside all waters in my day.
I planted deep, within my heart the fear
that wind or fowl would take the grain away.
I planted safe against this stark, lean year.

I scattered seed enough to plant the land
in rows from Canada to Mexico
but for my reaping only what the hand
can hold at once is all that I can show.

Yet what I sowed and what the orchard yields
my brother's sons are gathering stalk and root;
small wonder then my children glean in fields
they have not sown, and feed on bitter fruit.

The Day-Breaker

We are not come to wage a strife
with swords upon this hill:
it is not wise to waste the life
against a stubborn will.

Yet would we die as some have done:
beating a way for the rising sun.

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

A biographical note on Langston Hughes appears in the Fiction section (see p. 96). We present ten of his poems. The first four are from his Selected Poems. The next five, starting with "Dream Boogie," are from his remarkable cycle of Harlem poems Montage of a Dream Deferred (1951). The last poem, "Ballad of the Landlord," achieved notoriety recently when a Boston school teacher, Jonathan Kozol, was fired by the Boston school system for using this poem in a class in a ghetto school.

Afro-American Fragment

So long,
So far away
Is Africa.
Not even memories alive
Save those that history books create,
Save those that songs
Beat back into the blood—
Beat out of blood with words sad-sung
In strange un-Negro tongue—
So long,
So far away
Is Africa.

Subdued and time-lost
Are the drums—and yet
Through some vast mist of race
There comes this song
I do not understand,
This song of atavistic land,
Of bitter yearnings lost

Without a place—
 So long,
 So far away
 Is Africa's
 Dark face.

As I Grew Older

It was a long time ago.
 I have almost forgotten my dream.
 But it was there then,
 In front of me,
 Bright as a sun—
 My dream.

And then the wall rose,
 Rose slowly,
 Slowly,
 Between me and my dream.
 Rose slowly, slowly,
 Dimming,
 Hiding,
 The light of my dream.
 Rose until it touched the sky—
 The wall.

Shadow.
 I am black.

I lie down in the shadow.
 No longer the light of my dream before me,
 Above me.
 Only the thick wall.
 Only the shadow.

My hands!
 My dark hands!
 Break through the wall!
 Find my dream!
 Help me to shatter this darkness,
 To smash this night,
 To break this shadow
 Into a thousand lights of sun,
 Into a thousand whirling dreams
 Of sun!

Dream Variations

To fling my arms wide
 In some place of the sun,
 To whirl and to dance
 Till the white day is done.
 Then rest at cool evening
 Beneath a tall tree
 While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me—
 That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
 In the face of the sun,
 Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
 Till the quick day is done.
 Rest at pale evening . . .
 A tall, slim tree . . .
 Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.

Daybreak in Alabama

When I get to be a composer
 I'm gonna write me some music about
 Daybreak in Alabama
 And I'm gonna put the purtiest songs in it
 Rising out of the ground like a swamp mist
 And falling out of heaven like soft dew.
 I'm gonna put some tall tall trees in it
 And the scent of pine needles
 And the smell of red clay after rain
 And long red necks
 And poppy colored faces
 And big brown arms
 And the field daisy eyes
 Of black and white black white black people
 And I'm gonna put white hands
 And black hands and brown and yellow hands
 And red clay earth hands in it
 Touching everybody with kind fingers

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The trellised sky, becoming
A bouquet of blackness

Unending
Touched with sprigs
Of pale and budding stars

Soft the night smell
Among April trees
Soft and richly rare
Yet commonplace
Perfume on a cosmic scale

I turn to you Mandy Lou
I see the flowering night
Cameo condensed
Into the lone black rose
Of your face

The young woman-smell
Of your poppy body
Rises to my brain as opium
Yet silently motionless
I sit with twitching fingers
Yea, even reverently

Sit I
With you and the blossoming night
For what flower, plucked,
Lingers long?

RICHARD WRIGHT (1908-1960)

A biographical note on Richard Wright appears in the Fiction section (see p. 113-114). The following poem first appeared in Partisan Review in the summer of 1935.

Richard Wright

Between the World and Me

And one morning while in the woods I stumbled suddenly
upon the thing,
tumbled upon it in a grassy clearing guarded by scaly oaks
and elms.
And the sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting themselves
between the world and me. . . .

There was a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly
upon a cushion of ashes.
There was a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt finger
accusingly at the sky.

There were torn tree limbs, tiny veins of burnt leaves, and a
scorched coil of greasy hemp;
A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat, and a
pair of trousers stiff with black blood.

And upon the trampled grass were buttons, dead matches,
butt-ends of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a
drained gin-flask, and a whore's lipstick;
scattered traces of tar, restless arrays of feathers, and the lin-
gering smell of gasoline.

And through the morning air the sun poured yellow surprise
into the eye sockets of a stony skull. . . .

And while I stood my mind was frozen with a cold pity for
the life that was gone.

The ground gripped my feet and my heart was circled by icy
walls of fear—

The sun died in the sky; a night wind muttered in the grass
and fumbled the leaves in the trees; the woods
poured forth the hungry yelping of hounds; the
darkness screamed with thirsty voices; and the wit-
nesses rose and lived:

the dry bones stirred, rattled, lifted, melting themselves into
my bones.

the grey ashes formed flesh firm and black, entering into my
flesh.

the gin-flask passed from mouth to mouth; cigars and ciga-
rettes glowed, the whore smeared the lipstick red
upon her lips,

And a thousand faces swirled around me, clamoring that my
life be burned. . . .

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And then they had me, stripped me, battering my teeth
 my throat till I swallowed my own blood.
 black wet body slipped in the roar of their voices, and
 they bound me to the sapling.
 And my skin clung to the bubbling hot tar, falling from
 in limp patches.
 And the down and quills of the white feathers sank into
 raw flesh, and I moaned in my agony.
 Then my blood was cooled mercifully, cooled by a baptism
 of gasoline.
 And in a blaze of red I leaped to the sky as pain rose like
 water, boiling my limbs.
 Panting, begging I clutched childlike, clutched to the
 sides of death.
 Now I am dry bones and my face a stony skull staring in
 low surprise at the sun. . . .

ROBERT HAYDEN (1913-

The Grand Prize for Poetry at the First World Festival of Negro Arts, held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1965, was awarded to Robert Hayden for his book of poetry A Ballad for Paul Brennan, published in the limited edition Heritage series of Paul Brennan, London. Hayden was born in Detroit, his undergraduate work at Wayne State University, and he received his M. A. from the University of Michigan, where he subsequently taught English for two years. He joined the faculty of Fisk University in 1946 and is now Professor of English there. He has received several American prizes and fellowships for his poetry: the Hopwood Award from the University of Michigan in 1938 and again in 1942, a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1947, and a Ford Foundation grant in 1954. He is poetry editor of the Baha'i magazine, World Order. Hayden edited the anthology Kaleidoscope: Poems by American Negro Poets (1967), where, in an autobiographical note, he wrote: "Opposed to the chauvinistic and the doctrinaire, he

Robert Hayden

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has no reason why a Negro poet should be limited to 'racial preference' or to having his writing judged by standards different from those applied to the work of other poets."

Tour 5

The road winds down through autumn hills
 in blazonry of farewell scarlet and
 occasional gold, past cedar groves, through static
 villages whose names are all that's left of Choctaw,
 Chickasaw. We stop a moment
 in a town watched over by Confederate
 sentinels, buy gas and ask directions
 of a rawboned man whose eyes revile us as
 the enemy, as menace to
 the shambling innocents who are the thankless
 guardians of his heritage. Shrill gorgon
 silence breathes behind his taut civility

and in the ever-tautening
 to that's dark for us despite the Indian
 summer glow. We drive on, following
 the route of phantoms, highwaymen, of slaves and armies.
 Children, wordless and remote,
 save at us from kindling porches. And now
 the land is flat for miles, the landscape lush,
 metallic, flayed; its brightness harsh as bloodstained swords.

On the Coast of Maine
 Sebasco Estates

1

Ancestral, alone, under stone they lie
 who from granite hewed foundation for
 this house, where now darklong darklong
 what once they must have heard I hear:
 the foghorn's veering. Where o where o—
 a racked lonely sound,

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I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized
Your luck
And your lives from your unfinished reach,
If I stole your births and your names,
Your straight baby tears and your games,
Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages
aches, and your deaths,
If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,
Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate
Though why should I whine,
Whine that the crime was other than mine?—
Since anyhow you are dead.
Or rather, or instead,
You were never made.
But that too, I am afraid,
Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?
You were born, you had body, you died.
It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.
Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved,
I loved you all.

The Preacher Ruminates Behind the Sermon

I think it must be lonely to be God.
Nobody loves a master. No. Despite
The bright hosannas, bright dear-Lords, and bright
Determined reverence of Sunday eyes.

Picture Jehovah striding through the hall
Of His importance, creatures running out
From servant-corners to acclaim, to shout
Appreciation of His merit's glare.

But who walks with Him?—dares to take His arm,
To slap Him on the shoulder, tweak His ear,
Buy Him a Coca-Cola or a beer,
Pooh-pooh His politics, call Him a fool?

Perhaps—who knows?—He tires of looking down.
Those eyes are never lifted. Never straight.
Perhaps sometimes He tires of being great
In solitude. Without a hand to hold.

The Children of the Poor

1

People who have no children can be hard:
Attain a mail of ice and insolence:
Need not pause in the fire, and in no sense
Hesitate in the hurricane to guard.
And when wide world is bitten and bewarred
They perish purely, waving their spirits hence
Without a trace of grace or of offense
To laugh or fail, diffident, wonder-starred.
While through a throttling dark we others hear
The little lifting helplessness, the queer
Whimper-whine; whose unridiculous
Lost softness softly makes a trap for us.
And makes a curse. And makes a sugar of
The malocclusions, the inconditions of love.

2

What shall I give my children? who are poor,
Who are adjudged the leastwise of the land,
Who are my sweetest lepers, who demand
No velvet and no velvety velour;
But who have begged me for a brisk contour,
Crying that they are quasi, contraband
Because unfinished, graven by a hand
Less than angelic, admirable or sure.
My hand is stuffed with mode, design, device.
But I lack access to my proper stone.
And plenitude or plan shall not suffice
Nor grief nor love shall be enough alone
To ratify my little halves who bear
Across an autumn freezing everywhere.

3

And shall I prime my children, pray, to pray?
Mites, come invade most frugal vestibules
Spectered with crusts of penitents' renewals
And all hysterics arrogant for a day.
Instruct yourselves here is no devil to pay.

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Children, confine your lights in jellied rules;
Resemble graves; be metaphysical mules;
Learn Lord will not distort nor leave the fray.
Behind the scurrings of your neat motif
I shall wait, if you wish: revise the psalm
If that should frighten you: sew up belief
If that should tear: turn, singularly calm
At forehead and at fingers rather wise,
Holding the bandage ready for your eyes.

4

First fight. Then fiddle. Ply the slipping string
With feathery sorcery; muzzle the note
With hurting love; the music that they wrote
Bewitch, bewilder. Qualify to sing
Threadwise. Devise no salt, no hempen thing
For the dear instrument to bear. Devote
The bow to silks and honey. Be remote
A while from malice and from murdering.
But first to arms, to armor. Carry hate
In front of you and harmony behind.
Be deaf to music and to beauty blind.
Win war. Rise bloody, maybe not too late
For having first to civilize a space
Wherein to play your violin with grace.

5

When my dears die, the festival-colored brightness
That is their motion and mild repartee
Enchanted, a macabre mockery
Charming the rainbow radiance into tightness
And into a remarkable politeness
That is not kind and does not want to be,
May not they in the crisp encounter see
Something to recognize and read as rightness?
I say they may, so granitely discreet,
The little crooked questionings inbound,
Concede themselves on most familiar ground,
Cold an old predicament of the breath:
Adroit, the shapely prefaces complete,
Accept the university of death.

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Gwendolyn Brooks

6

Life for my child is simple, and is good.
He knows his wish. Yes, but that is not all.
Because I know mine too.
And we both want joy of undep and unabiding things.
Like kicking over a chair or throwing blocks out of a window
or tipping over an icebox pan
or snatching down curtains or fingering an electric outlet
on a journey or a friend or an illegal kiss.
There is more to it than that.
It is that he has never been afraid.
Rather, he reaches out and lo the chair falls with a
beautiful crash.
And the blocks fall, down on the people's heads,
And the water comes slooshing sloppily out across the floor.
And so forth.
But that success, for him, is sure, infallible.
But never has he been afraid to reach.
His lesions are legion.
But reaching is his rule.

We Real Cool

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We
Lark late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We
Jazz June. We
Die soon.

into splintering fists
 messes up my head
 an I scream you out
 your thang
 is whats wrong
 an you keep
 pillin it on rubbin it
 in
 smoothly
 doin it
 to death

what you sweatin
 baby your guts
 puked an rotten
 waitin
 to be defended

poetry and a mimeographed collection of new poems (see bibliography); a novel; six plays; a collection of essays; *Blues People*, a study of "the Negro experience in white America and the music that developed from it"; and *Tales* (1967), a collection of sixteen short stories. The five poems that follow are from his first book of poems, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1961). On January 4, 1968, LeRoi Jones was sentenced, in Newark, to two and a half to three years in jail on a charge of illegally possessing a gun. He was subsequently released on \$25,000 bail pending an appeal. At the trial, the judge cited his disagreement with the ideas expressed in a poem by Jones as part of the motivation for the sentence. P.E.N., the international association of writers, has voiced protest against the sentence as a violation of freedom of expression. The United Black Artists (UBA), a group of more than two hundred Afro-American artists, writers, and intellectuals, has rallied to the defense of LeRoi Jones and has declared that "as long as the right of free expression and the dictates of individual conscience are violated, we will continue as black people to fearlessly affirm these rights and to support our brother LeRoi Jones and the principles of conscience and free expression which he so courageously exemplifies for mankind."

LeROI JONES (1934-

Poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, and polemicist, LeRoi Jones started out in literature as an avant-garde writer with a primarily aesthetic interest but has since become an active controversial black nationalist. He believes that it is the function of black writers to be "missionaries of Blackness," to inject the aesthetics and culture of white America, to study the African and Arabic languages, and to bring black people together as a separate group and force in the United States. He was born in Newark, New Jersey, and attended the public schools there. He did his undergraduate work at Howard University and graduate work at the New School for Social Research and Columbia University. He served in the Army from 1954 to 1957. Jones was awarded a Whittier Fellowship in 1961-62 and a Guggenheim award in 1964. His play *Dutchman* received the Obie award for the best off-Broadway play of 1964. Jones has published two volumes of

Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note

(For Kellie Jones, Born 16 May, 1959)

Lately, I've become accustomed to the way
 The ground opens up and envelops me
 Each time I go out to walk the dog.
 Or the broad-edged silly music the wind
 Makes when I run for a bus . . .

Things have come to that.

And now, each night I count the stars,
 And each night I get the same number.
 And when they will not come to be counted,
 I count the holes they leave.

Nobody sings anymore.

And then last night, I tiptoed up
 To my daughter's room and heard her

Talking to someone, and when I opened
The door, there was no one there . . .
Only she on her knees, peeking into
Her own clasped hands.

The Invention of Comics

I am a soul in the world: in
the world of my soul the whirled
light from the day
the sacked land
of my father.

In the world, the sad
nature of
myself. In myself
nature is sad. Small
prints of the day. Its
small dull fires. Its
sun, like a greyness
smeared on the dark.

The day of my soul, is
the nature of that
place. It is a landscape. Seen
from the top of a hill. A
grey expanse; dull fires
throbbing on its seas.

The man's soul, the complexion
of his life. The menace
of its greyness. The
fire throbs, the sea
moves. Birds shoot
from the dark. The edge
of the waters lit
darkly for the moon.

And the moon, from the soul. Is
the world, of the man. The man
and his sea, and its moon, and
the soft fire throbbing. Kind

death. O
my dark and sultry
love.

Look For You Yesterday, Here You Come Today

Part of my charm:
envious blues feeling
separation of church & state
grim calls from drunk debutantes

Morning never aids me in my quest.
I have to trim my beard in solitude.
I try to hum lines from "The Poet In New York".

People saw metal all around the house on Saturdays. The
Phone rings.

terrible poems come in the mail. Descriptions of celibate par-
ties

torn trousers: Great Poets dying
with their strophes on. & me
incapable of a simple straightforward
anger.

It's so diffuse
being alive. Suddenly one is aware
that nobody really gives a damn.
My wife is pregnant with *her* child.
"It means nothing to me", sez Strindberg.

An avalanche of words
could cheer me up. Words from Great Sages.
Was James Karolis a great sage??
Why did I let Ora Matthews beat him up
in the bathroom? Haven't I learned my lesson.

I would take up painting
if I cd think of a way to do it
better than Leonardo. Than Bosch.
Than Hogarth. Than Kline.

Frank walked off the stage, singing
"My silence is as important as Jack's incessant yatter."

RICHARD WRIGHT (1908-1960)

A biographical note on Richard Wright appears in the Fiction section (see pp. 113-114). His autobiographical essay, which follows, was first published in 1937 in American Stuff, a collection of writing by members of the Federal Writers' Project.

The Ethics of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch

My first lesson in how to live as a Negro came when I was quite small. We were living in Arkansas. Our house stood behind the railroad tracks. Its skimpy yard was paved with black cinders. Nothing green ever grew in that yard. The only touch of green we could see was far away, beyond the tracks, over where the white folks lived. But cinders were good enough for me and I never missed the green growing things. And anyhow cinders were fine weapons. You could always have a nice hot war with huge black cinders. All you had to do was crouch behind the brick pillars of a house with your hands full of gritty ammunition. And the first woolly black head you saw pop out from behind another row of pillars was your target. You tried your very best to knock it off. It was great fun.

I never fully realized the appalling disadvantages of a cinder environment till one day the gang to which I belonged found itself engaged in a war with the white boys who lived beyond the tracks. As usual we laid down our cinder barrage, thinking that this would wipe the white boys out. But they replied with a steady bombardment of broken bottles. We doubled our cinder barrage, but they hid behind trees, hedges, and the sloping embankments of their lawns. Having no such fortifications, we retreated to the brick pillars of our

homes. During the retreat a broken milk bottle caught me behind the ear, opening a deep gash which bled profusely. The sight of blood pouring over my face completely demoralized our ranks. My fellow-combatants left me standing paralyzed in the center of the yard, and scurried for their homes. A kind neighbor saw me and rushed me to a doctor, who took three stitches in my neck.

I sat brooding on my front steps, nursing my wound and waiting for my mother to come from work. I felt that a grave injustice had been done me. It was all right to throw cinders. The greatest harm a cinder could do was leave a bruise. But broken bottles were dangerous; they left you cut, bleeding, and helpless.

When night fell, my mother came from the white folks' kitchen. I raced down the street to meet her. I could just feel in my bones that she would understand. I knew she would tell me exactly what to do next time. I grabbed her hand and babbled out the whole story. She examined my wound, then slapped me.

"How come yuh didn't hide?" she asked me. "How come yuh aways fightin'?"

I was outraged, and bawled. Between sobs I told her that I didn't have any trees or hedges to hide behind. There wasn't a thing I could have used as a trench. And you couldn't throw very far when you were hiding behind the brick pillars of a house. She grabbed a barrel stave, dragged me home, stripped me naked, and beat me till I had a fever of one hundred and two. She would smack my rump with the stave, and while the skin was still smarting, impart to me gems of Jim Crow wisdom. I was never to throw cinders any more. I was never to fight any more wars. I was never, never, under any conditions, to fight *white* folks again. And they were absolutely right in clouting me with the broken milk bottle. Didn't I know she was working hard every day in the hot kitchens of the white folks to make money to take care of me? When was I ever going to learn to be a good boy? She couldn't be bothered with my fights. She finished by telling me that I ought to be thankful to God as long as I lived that they didn't kill me.

All that night I was delicious and could not sleep. Each time I closed my eyes I saw monstrous white faces suspended from the ceiling, leering at me.

From that time on, the charm of my cinder yard was gone. The green trees, the trimmed hedges, the cropped lawns grew very meaningful, became a symbol. Even today when I think of white folks, the hard, sharp outlines of white houses sur-