

I shudder at the thought of giving advice to anyone, let alone young writers. To paraphrase an old Army poster, your country needs you, but it doesn't know it. But you have a way around that, you can pretend it does. You can pretend you are not at all alone but in a community, a community of mutes, and you the only one around with the gift of speech. In this dream you alone have the responsibility for proving to your people what they are doing, and perhaps what they ought to do in order to be glorious and true to their nature. Remember, the writer has one gift from life which nothing can take from him—he is describing a species that has to die. So when the mutes signal to you that this world or this country is bound for glory and you are nothing but a pest, you can always ask if that's enough to die with, and if not, is it enough to live with? And if they signal that man is worthless, you, standing at the lip of the grave, you, with time pouring through your fingers, meaningless without your shaping hand, you can reply similarly, that if we are indeed worthless

how is it possible that we can know it when the very concept requires a concept of worth. You are writers because you have inherited the ageless tension between despair and faith, the two arms of the tragic cross. The situation never changes; but man does. How and why is what you have to say.

Now, forgive me this delay before your moment of recognition. I have kept you in tension between your own self-doubts and the faith which others may give you in these prizes. Permit me to say that I have won Hopwoods and also lost them, and I know the power that winning gives and the way the soul shakes when, all ears, you hear silence instead of your name. Either way it matters very much and always will, but not as much as knowing that it is not one another we must finally vanquish, but life's brute fist clamped around the reason for our being. To bend back one finger and glimpse what it conceals, and harder yet, to dare remember what one has seen inside that hand—this is the power you have a right to seek and the only recognition worth the work.

#### SUNSETS

Sunsets gave a splendor to the slum  
 While Plato rested lightly in my hand.  
 Old Socrates was a man like my father,  
 Garrulous and mute by turns, but mother,  
 No Xanthippe, was dad's chum.

A backyard stoop held my symposium,  
 Clapboards warmed me to my summer feast;  
 Reverently mother picked the parsley lace  
 And hovering, dad remembered greener years:  
 Sunsets gave a splendor to the slum.

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