

CBC TUESDAY NIGHT
“LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN”
CBL/CBC: TBA 8.05-10.00 p.m.

SCRIPT: George Whalley
[Radio 6 December 1966]
PRODUCTION: John Reeves

ANNOUNCER: CBC Sunday Night presents “Let us now praise famous men” by James Agee and Walker Evans, adapted for radio by George Whalley and directed by John Reeves: with Douglas Rain as James Agee and Budd Knapp as Walker Evans.

MUSIC: #1

ANNOUNCER: *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. A book of Hours. The Hours of three tenant families in the cotton country of Alabama, made in 1936 by James Agee –

AGEE: – a spy, travelling as a journalist –

ANNOUNCER: – and Walker Evans –

EVANS: – a counter-spy, travelling as a photographer.

AGEE: The nominal subject is North American cotton tenantry as examined in the daily living of three representative white tenant families. Actually, the effort is to recognize the stature of a portion of unimagined existence. More essentially, this is an independent inquiry into certain normal predicaments of human divinity. The immediate instruments are two: the printed word, and the still camera.

MUSIC: #2: EST. & UNDER

READER 1: Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begot us.
The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great
power from the beginning.
Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their
power.
Leaders of the people by their counsels.
Rich man furnished with ability, living peaceably in their
habitations:
All these were honoured in their generations, and were the
glory of their times.

READER 2: And some there be which have no memorial; who perished, as
though they had never been; and are become as though they had
never been born; and their children after them.

With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance.
Their seed shall remain for ever, and their glory shall not be
blotted out.
Their bodies are buried in peace; ...

READERS 1, 2: ...but their name liveth for evermore.

MUSIC: #2 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Alabama, 1936: *Part I*, Preface and first meetings.

MUSIC: #3 EST & UNDER

READER 1: Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle: or who shall rest upon
they holy hill?

READER 2: Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life: and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

READER 1: He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not: though it were to his own hindrance.

READER 2: He that hath not given his money upon usury: nor taken reward against the innocent.

READER 1: Whoso doeth these things: shall never fall.

MUSIC: #3 TO CADENCE, ENDS

EVANS: Fred, Fred Ricketts – there you were, when we came out of the courthouse, Jim Agee and I, and we sat and talked; ... and then two men came up and stood shyly, a little away; –

AGEE: – they were you, George Gudger, and you Mr. Woods – Bud Woods; you both stood there a little off side, shy, and taciturn, George, watching us out of your yellow eyes, and you, Woods, quietly modelling the quid between your molars and your cheek; and this was the first we saw of you; ... You had come down to see if you could get relief or relief work, but there is none of that for your kind, you are technically *employed*; ...

and we drove you out home; out to your home, Ricketts, the furthest along that branch road; and there you showed us your droughted corn, for you could not get it out of your head that we were “Government men,” who could help you: and there on the side porch of the house Walker made pictures, with the big camera; ...

EVANS: And it was here that we first saw most of you, scarcely knowing you by families apart – Paralee Ricketts, you came up a path barefooted carrying two heavy buckets, a cornshuck hat on the back of your head; you were wearing a dress that had been torn apart a dozen times and sewn together again with whatever thread was handy; so far gone, so all-the-way broken down in a work dress, there had been no sense to wash it in a year; it had a big ruffle of wrecked curtain lace down the breast; and as you came towards us you looked at us shyly yet very directly and smiling through your friendly and beautiful, orange-freckled black eyes; and I shall not forget you soon, your courtesy, your dreadful and unanswerable need; your manure-stained feet and legs as you stood in the path and smiled at us;

AGEE: – nor God knows, you, Margaret Ricketts, a year and a whole world more hopeless; – nor you, ½ children: you started out from behind bushes and hid behind one another and flirted at us and ridiculed us like young wild animals, even then we knew you were wonderful,...

EVANS: Mrs. Ricketts – Sadie – you realized what the poor foolishness of your husband had let you all in for, shouting to you all to come out, children sent skimming barefooted and slaver-mouthed down the road and the path to corral the others, the Woods and the Gudgers, all to stand there on the porch as you were in the average sorrow of your working dirt and get your pictures made;

AGEE: and to you it was as if you and your children and your husband and these others were stood there naked in front of the cold absorption of the camera in all your shame and pitiableness to be pried into and laughed at; and your eyes were wild with fury and shame and fear, and the tendons of your little neck were tight, the whole time, and one hand continually twitched and tore in the rotted folks of your

skirt like the hand of a little girl who must recite before adults, and there was not a thing you could do, nothing, not a word of remonstrance you could make, my dear, my love, my little crazy, terrified child; for your husband was running this show, and a wife does as she is told and keeps quiet about it: and so there you stood, in a one-piece dress made of sheeting, that spread straight from the hole where the head stood through to the knee without belting, so that you knew through these alien, town-dressed eyes that you stood as if out of a tent too short to cover your nakedness: and the others coming up: –

EVANS: – Ivy, blandly, whom nothing could ever embarrass, carrying her baby, her four-year child in a dress made of pillow-sack that came an inch below his navel; – he was carrying a doll; –

AGEE: – Pearl, with her elegant skin, her red-brown sexy eyes;

EVANS: Miss-Molly: –

AGEE: and Walker setting up the terrible structure of the tripod crested by the black square heavy head, dangerous as a hunchback, of the camera;

EVANS: – and you washed the faces of your children swiftly and violently with rainwater, so that their faces were suddenly luminous stuck out of the holes of their clothes, the slightly dampened hair swept clean of the clear and blessed foreheads of these flowers; and your two daughters, standing there in the crowding porch, yielding and leaning their heads profound against the pulling and entanglements, each let down their long black hair in haste and combed and *rearrayed* it – I made a picture of this; you didn't know; you thought I was still

testing around; there you all are, the mother as before a firing squad, the children standing like columns of an exquisite temple, their eyes straying; and behind, both girls, bent down in the dark shadow somehow as if listening and as in a dance, attending like harps the black flags of their hair.

AGEE:

– and we, the men meanwhile, Woods and George Gudger and I ... we were sitting at the roots of a tree talking slowly and eating one small peach after another and watching, while I was spreading so much quiet and casualness as I could; but all this while it was you I was particularly watching, Mrs Ricketts; you can have no idea with what care for you, what need to let you know, oh, not to fear us, not to fear, not to hate us, that we are your friends, that however it must seem it is all right, it is truly and all the way all right: so, continually, I was watching for your eyes, and whenever they turned upon me, trying through my own and through a friendly and tender smiling (which sickens me to disgust to think of) to store into your eyes some knowledge of this, some warmth, some reassurance ... but your eyes upon me, time after time, held nothing but the same *terror*, the same feeling at very most, of “if you are our friend, lift this weight and piercing from us, from my *children*” ... and at length, and just once, a change, a softening of expression; your eyes softened, lost all their immediate dread, but without smiling; but in a heart-broken and infinite yet timid reproachfulness, as when, say, you might have petted a little animal in a trap, beyond its thorn-toothed fierceness, beyond its fear, to quiet, in which it knows of your blandishments: and you looked a moment and withdrew your eyes, and gazed patiently into the ground, in nothing but sorrow, your little hand now loosened in your dress.

EVANS: – and there they are, thoroughly and quietly serious, waiting for the shutter to release them. And they slowly relax and move apart. And this was the last we had any particular reason to think we would see either of you or any of these others: –

AGEE: – yet at the very last, just as we left, the unforgiving face, the eyes, of Mrs. Ricketts at her door: which has since stayed as a torn wound and sickness at the centre of my chest, and perhaps more than any other thing has insured what I do not yet know: that we shall have to return, even in the face of causing further pain, until the mutual wounding shall have been won and healed, until she shall fear us no further, yet not in forgetfulness but through ultimate trust, through love.

MUSIC: #4 EST. & UNDER

READER 1: Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle: or who shall rest upon thy holy hill?

READER 2: Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life: and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

MUSIC: #4 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part II “Matins”, the Night Office: First Nocturn.

MUSIC: #5 EST & UNDER

READER 1: I will go unto the altar of God: even unto the God of my joy and gladness.

READER 2: O send out thy light and thy truth that they may lead me: and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling.

READER 1: And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness: ...

MUSIC: #5 TO CADENCE, ENDS

SOUND: FADE UP CAR ON COUNTRY ROAD: CAR IS DITCHED BELOW: TWILIGHT SOUNDS

AGEE: I wrung the wheel and drove the car so deep into the ditch that there was no longer any hope at all of getting it out: ... There was the very darkest kind of daylight which can be called daylight at all, ... and all the while it grew darker.

... Up this ravine, realising myself now near, I came stealthily knowing now I had at least half-contrived this, ... and for the first time realising that by now, a half-hour fully dark, you must likely be in bed, through supper, done with a day, so that I must surely cause disturbance: and standing here, silently, in the demeanour of the house itself I grow full of shame and of reverence from the soles of my feet up my body to the crest of my skull, and the leaves of my hands like a vessel quietly spread, full of water which has sprung from in the middle of my chest: ...

READER 2: O send out thy light and thy truth that they may lead me: and bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy dwelling.

AGEE: ... and so waiting, in doubt, desire and shame, my breathing, or the beating of my heart, must have been communicated, for there is a sudden forward rush to the edge of the porch of

(SOUND: DOG) bellowing barking, and a dog, shouting his soul out against me: ... and I feel I have done wrong enough already, and withdraw a little, hoping that will quiet him, and in the same hope hold forward my hand and speak very quietly.... I am ready to turn and leave when
(SOUND: GUDGER) a shadow heavily shuffles behind him –

GUDGER: Whooz-'at?

AGEE: – ready for trouble. I speak before I move, telling him who I am, then what has happened, why I am here, and walk toward him, and how sorry I am to bother them.

GUDGER: It-sall ra-it wi me. C'moan in. Thot you-uz a niggah. (Still antagonism in his voice) Show, c'moan in.

SOUND: AGEE MOUNTS PORCH

AGEE: I come up onto the porch shamefully, telling him again how sorry I am to have roused them out like this.

GUDGER: It-sall ra-it. Hit don' make me no nevah mine (mind). We wuz just got ta bed. They hain't none of us 'sleep yit.

AGEE: And to my asking could he put me up for the night –

GUDGER: Show, show, c'moan in.

AGEE: – adding –

GUDGER: Bettah et sum suppah.

AGEE: And I did all I was able to stop this, having made them enough
bother already; but no: –

GUDGER: Cain't go t'bed wi-out no suppah. Hold on a bit. Annamay?

AGEE: And he leans his head through the bedroom door, explaining to his
wife, and lights the lamp for her. She comes out barefooted,

(*SOUND:* carrying the lamp, frankly and profoundly sleepy as a child –

ANNIE-MAE)

And I say:

(to Annie-Mae) Hello, Mrs Gudger: say I want to tell you I'm
awful sorry to give you all this bother. You just – honest I don't need
much of anything, if you'd just tell me where a piece of bread is, it'll
be *plenty*. I'd hate for you to bother to cook anything up for me.

ANNIE-MAE: Hain - no botha a-tall. Don'chew fret nun.

(*SOUND: CRICKETS OUT*)

AGEE: – How quickly she has built a pine fire and set in front of me, on the
table in the hall, warmed over biscuit and butter and blackberry jam

(*SOUND: MEAL*)

and a jelly-glass full of buttermilk, and warmed field peas, fried
pork, and four fried eggs, and she sits a little away from the table out
of courtesy, trying to hold her head up and her eyes open, until I shall
have finished eating, saying at one time –

ANNIE-MAE: Hits awful poe kin-ah eatin, jes plain 'n maighty mean.

AGEE: O no, I tell her: and eat as rapidly as possible and a good deal more
than I can hold – all the eggs, a second large plateful of peas, most of
the biscuit, feeling it is better to keep them awake and to eat too
much than in the least to let them continue to believe I am what they
assume I must be: “superior” to them or to their food, eating only so

much as I need to be “polite”; and I see that they are, in fact, quietly surprised and gratified in my appetite.

READER 1: O how amiable are thy dwellings...

READER 2: Blessed are they that dwell in thy house....

EVANS: Mrs. Gudger’s biscuits are large and shapeless. They taste of flour and soda and damp salt and fill the mouth stickily. The butter is pallid, soft, and unsalted, about the texture of cold-cream; it seems to taste delicately of wood and wet cloth. Field peas are olive-brown, the shape of lentils, about twice the size. Their taste is a cross between lentils and boiled beans; their broth is bright with seasoning of pork, and of this also they taste. The broth is soaked up in bread. The eggs taste of pork too. They are fried in it on both sides. Of milk I hardly know how to say; it is skimmed, blue-lighted; to a city palate its warmth and odor are somehow dirty and at the same time vital, a little as if one were drinking blood.

AGEE: There is even in so clean a household as this an odor of pork, of sweat, so subtle it seems to get into the very metal of the cooking-pans beyond any removal of scrubbing; it is all over the house and all through your skin and clothing at all times, yet as you bring each piece of food to your mouth it is so much more noticeable, if you are not used to it, that a quiet little fight takes place on your palate and in the pit of your stomach; ... yet this is the odor and consistency and temper and these *are true* tastes of home....

READER 1: Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house.

READER 2: And the swallow a nest where she may lay her young.

AGEE: The best in this, though, was the experiencing of warmth and of intimacy toward a man and his wife at the same time (for this would seldom happen, it being the business of a wife to serve and to withdraw). I felt such an honor in her *not* just staying at more distance, waiting to clear up after me, but sitting near, almost equal in balance with her husband, and actually talking ... a new light and gentle novelty spreading a prettiness in her face that, beyond a first expostulation that she get back to her rest and leave me to clean off the table, I not only scarcely worried for her tiredness, or her husband's, but even somewhat prolonged the while we sat there and warmed to talking, even while fatigue so much more heavily weighed them under, till it became in the scale of their sleeping an almost scandalously late-night conversation, in which we were all leaned toward each other in the lamplight secretly examining the growth of friendliness in one another's faces ... and I broke through a little wait in what we were speaking, to say how sorry and ashamed I was, and that we must get to sleep; and this they received so genuinely, so kindly, that even in their exhaustion I was immediately healed, and held no fear of their feelings about it: ...

READER 1: My soul hath a desire and longing...
To enter into thy courts

AGEE: – and we drew back our chairs and got up and she cleared the table.
(*SOUND:* and there followed a simple set of transitions which are beautiful
FOLLOW TEXT) in my remembrance and which I can scarcely set down: a telling me where I would sleep, in the front room; a spreading of pallets on the floor of the back bedroom; a waking and bringing-in of the children from their sleeping on the bed I was to have: they came sleepwalking, along bare floor towards lamplight, framed in the

lighted upright planks of the door: the yielding-over to me of the lamp, which I accepted (there are courtesies you accept, though you are ashamed to), provided they should have used it first to get themselves to bed: ...

I say goodnight to Mrs. Gudger and she to me, smiling sleepily and sadly in a way I cannot deduce, and goes on in; I latch my door, that leads into their bedroom, and wait in this front room, new to me, with my night-light, sitting on the edge of the child-warmed bed, while in a confusion of shufflings and of muted voices which overspreads the sleeping of children like quiet wings; and rustlings of cloth, and sounding of bedsprings, they restore themselves for sleeping: then a shuffling, a sliding of light, a soft knock at the door

—

GUDGER: All ra-it in hyear hain'tcha?

AGEE: Ah, sure, fine. Sure am.

GUDGER: Annamay told me ta say she's sorri she hain't got no clean sheet, jes' hav' ta —

AGEE: — Oh, no! —

GUDGER: — mek out bes' way ya' caen.

AGEE: Oh, no. No. You tell her I certainly do thank her, but, no, I'll be fine like this, *fine* like this —

GUDGER: She jes' don' got none tell she duz a warshin.

AGEE: Sure, sure; I wouldn't want to dirty up a clean sheet for you, one night. Thanks a lot.

GUDGER: Door ra-it a hed er ya' bed, effen ya wanna git out.

AGEE: Yeah; thanks.

GUDGER: Nait.

AGEE: Night –

MUSIC: #6 BG AT (X) BELOW

(SOUND: DOOR)

AGEE: The door draws shut. (X) I stand alone, and I find that, without my knowledge or will, my left arm has slowly extended, the lamp in my hand at the end of it, as far as I can stretch, and I turn upon the centre of the room.

MUSIC: #6 CONTINUES

READER 2: O send out thy light and thy truth.....and bring me to thy dwelling.

MUSIC: #6 HOLDS ON PEDAL UNDER NEXT LINE AND THEN CONTINUES

ANNOUNCER: “Matins”: the night office. Second nocturn.

READER 1: The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground: yea, I have a goodly heritage.

MUSIC: #6 CONTINUES

AGEE: The light in this room is of a lamp. Its flame in the glass is of the dry, silent and famished delicateness of the latest lateness of the night, and of such ultimate, such holiness of silence and peace that all on earth and within extremest remembrance seems suspended upon it in perfection as upon reflective water.

MUSIC: #6 TO CADENCE, ENDS

AGEE: Six sides of me, all pine:
I looked along the walls. A door to the bedroom: a door by my bed to the hallway: in the wall at the foot of my bed, a square window, shuttered; another in the wall next at right angles. On the floor beneath this window, a small trunk. To its left, stood across the corner, a bureau and mirror. To its right, stood across the corner, a sewing-machine.....

SOUND: TWO OR THREE QUIET STEPS UNDER NEXT: AT END, TURN OF PAGE IN BIBLE

AGEE: It was in this first night, meditating those who were sleeping just beyond this wall, that I found, on the bureau, a bible; very cheap; bound in a limp brown fake-leather which was almost slimily damp; a family bible: I opened it up quietly in the lamplight and saw what was inscribed.

(SLIGHTLY FILTERED)

ANNIE MAE: *“Pruzen-et t’ Gowaj Gujah bah Anna-may Gujah.
Fambily Rekid: Parince Na-imes*

AGEE: After a couple of minutes I got up, stripped, and slid in between the sheets. I could feel the thinness and lumpiness of the mattress and the weakness of the springs. There was an odor something like that of old moist stacks of newspaper. I began to feel sharp little piercings and crawlings all along the surface of my body. I was not surprised; I had heard that pine is full of them anyhow. Then for a while longer I thought it could be my own nerve-ends: but it was bugs all right. I struck a match and a half-dozen broke along my pillow: I caught two, killed them and smelled their queer rankness. They were full of my blood. I struck another match and spread back the cover; they rambled off by dozens. I got out of bed, lighted the lamp, and scraped the palms of my hands all over my body, then went for the bed. I killed maybe a dozen in all; I couldn't find the rest; but I did find fleas, and, along the seams of the pillow and mattress, small gray translucent brittle insects which I suppose were lice. (I did all this very quietly, of course, very much aware I might wake those in the next room.) This going-over of the bed was only a matter of principle: I knew from the first I couldn't beat them; I might more wisely not have done so, for then I shouldn't have discovered the "lice". The thought of their presence bothered me much more than the bedbugs.

.....I put on my coat, buttoned my pants outside it, put my socks on, got into bed, turned out the lamp, turned up my coat collar, wrapped my head in my shirt, stuck my hands under my coat at the chest, and tried to go to sleep. It did not work out well.

MUSIC: #7 EST AND UNDER

AGEE: All over Alabama, the lamps are out. The fields lie there, with nothing at work in them, neither man nor beast. Mile on mile, there are only the tender desolations of profoundest night.

MUSIC: #7 CONTINUES

READER 2: In perfect peace and safety

READER 1: I will sleep and take my rest.

MUSIC: #7 HOLDS ON PEDAL UNDER NEXT LINE AND THEN CONTINUES

ANNOUNCER: “Matins”: the night office: third nocturn.

READER 1: He shall deliver the poor when he crieth: the needy also, and him that hath no helper.

READER 2: He shall be favourable to the simple and needy: and shall preserve the souls of the poor.

MUSIC: #7 CONTINUES

AGEE: All in this house save myself are sleeping. It is the middle and pure height and whole of summer and a summer night, the held breath, of a planet’s year; high shored sleeps the crested tide: what day of the month I do not know, which day of the week I am not sure, for less what hour of the night. The dollar watch I bought a few days ago ran out at seventeen minutes past ten the day before yesterday morning, and time by machine measure was over for me at that hour.

MUSIC: #7 TO CADENCE, ENDS

AGEE: Just a half-inch beyond the surface of this wall I face there lie sleeping, on two iron beds and on pallets on the floor, a man and his wife.....and four children, a girl, and three harmed boys. Their lamp is out, their light is done this long while, and not in a long while has any one of them made a sound. I have a not quite sensuous knowledge that they rest and I know the profundity of their tiredness as if I were in each one of these bodies whose sleeping I can almost touch through this wall, and which in the darkness I so clearly see, with the whole touch and weight of my body: –

EVANS: – George's red body, already a little squat with the burden of thirty years, knotted like oakwood, in its clean white cotton summer union suit that it sleeps in; and his wife's beside him, Annie Mae's in a plain cotton shift, slender, and sharpened through with bone, that ten years past must have had such beauty, and now is veined at the breast, and the skin of the breast translucent, delicately shriveled, and blue;....and Louise's green lovely body, the dim breasts faintly blown between wide shoulders, the thighs long, clean and light in their line from hip to knee, the head back steep and silent to the floor, the chin highest, and the white shift up to her divided thighs; and the tough little body of Junior, hardskinned and gritty, the feet crusted with sores; and the milky and strengthless little body of Burt whose veins are so bright in his temples; and the shriveled and hopeless, most pitiful body of Squinchy, which will not grow.

BURT: CRIES OUT

ANNIE MAE: Git ta sleep naw, Burt, git awn back ta sleep, they h'ain't nothin gwanna pestah ya, git awn back ta sleep.

GUDGER: Wazah maddah, Annymay?

ANNIE MAE: H'ain't nothin Gowg, jes Burt. Doan-cha bothah none.

AGEE: – and then once more that silence wherein more deep than starlight
this home is foundered.

There are on this hill three such families we would tell you of: the
Gudgers, who are sleeping in the next room; and the family of Bud
Woods, whose daughter is Annie Mae Gudger; and besides these, the
Ricketts, who live on a little way beyond the Woodses; –

EVANS: – Fred Ricketts and Sadie, and their children Margaret, Paralee,
Garvrin, Richard, Flora Merry Lee, Katy, Clair Bell; and the dogs,
and the cats, and the hens, and the mules, and the hogs, and the cow
and the bull calf:

AGEE: Bud Woods, and his young second wife Ivy, and her mother Miss-
Molly, and the young wife's daughter Pearl, and her son by Woods,
Thomas and their baby daughter Ellen, and the nameless plant of
unknown sex which enlarges in her belly; and the cat, and the dog,
and the mule, and the hog, and the cow, and the hens, and the
huddled chickens:

EVANS: And George, and his wife, Annie Mae, and their children, and their
animals, and the hung wasps, lancing mosquitoes, numbed flies, and
browsing rats:

AGEE: All, spreaded in high quietude on the hill:

VOICE 1: Goage Gujah? Wayah you dig him up? I ain't beyun back out dat
road in tweny -fi yeah.

VOICE 2: Ya stayin out a Gujah's is ya? How ya like da food out-dere? Yeah, aheh-heh-heh-heh –

VOICE 3: Gujah? He o.k. Purty good cott'n famah, but he hain't got no sense.

EVANS: George his lost birthright, bad land owned, and that boyhood among cedars and clean creeks where no fever laid its touch, and where in the luminous and great hollow night the limestone shone like sheep: and the strong, gay girls:

GUDGER: Wan hyear shill look laike thangs is gonna be purdy good, but-cha git a lil' bit a money saved, sompin allus happins.

READER 1: How did we get caught? Why is it things always seem to go against us?

ANNIE MAE: Ah tell ya ah'm not a gwanna be sorry win ah go. Ah woun't be sorry dis minute if'n it warn't fur L'eez 'n Skinchy heah. Rest 'ud git 'long alra-it.

EVANS: Annie Mae,and those first weeks when she was happy, and to her husband and to her heart it was pleasing to be alive:

ANNIE MAE: Whin we was fust moved in hyeah ah whoa-ned ta mek the haas purdy. Ah foled loss o dat thar paddin' papah n cut it purdy like lace 'n hung it ovah the fi-ah place... but - now ah jes doan caeh no longah. Ah don' caeh how nothin' looks:

READER 2: She is no longer beautiful:

ANNIE MAE: He doan caeh fur me no moe, he jes teks me effin he once me.

VOICE 2: How ya like dat fiine home cookin'; how ya like dat gud ol cahuntry food?

ANNIE MAE: Ah'm so hot win ah'm done cookin de vittles et's mor'n ah kin do ta set down ta et.

GUDGER: Dey's so much wuk seems like ya nevah sees da *end* ta it.

ANNIE MAE: Ah'm soo tied h'it doan seem ah kin evah git 'nuff rest.
Ah'm as tied in a moanin as when ah lays down at naite.

READER 1: How was it we were caught? In what way were we trapped? where, our mistake? what, where, how, when, what way, might all these things have been different, if only we had done otherwise? if only we might have known.

READER 2: Where lost that bright health of love that knew so surely it would stay; how, how did it sink away, beyond help, beyond hope, beyond desire, beyond remembrance; and where the weight and the wealth of that strong year when there was more to eat than we could hold, new clothes, a grafanola, and money in the bank?

READER 1: How are these things?

VOICE 1: Hain't none o' them folks got no sense, ner eny gumpshun nuther. Effin they did, they wunt be sharecroppin'.

VOICE 2: Yuh gi's 'em money 'n awl they duz is frow hit a'way.

VOICE 3: Tahmes ah invy thim: No risk, we taked awl tha risk: all tha cloes ta civer ‘em; food a comin’ rat out o’ they’s lan’.

RICKETTS: In ‘a hye-ahs when we wuz down baye da rivah, we ‘uns had had all da fish we wan-ed, ‘n yaller milk, ‘nuff ta sell, ‘n ev’n boat two mools.

AGEE: Fred Ricketts, the crazy clownish foxy father; and the mother; and two old daughters; crammed on their stinking beds, are resting the night.

VOICE 1: Frid Rikits? wha thet du’ty son uh a bish, he brags thet he hain’t bought his fambily a bah a soap in fahve yeahs.

RICKETTS: Ah reckon we is jes ‘bout da meanes paeople in ‘is hole cuntry.

VOICE 2: Rickitts? They is a bad lot. They’s got Millah blood mixed up in ‘em. Chillun is in bad truble in skaul.

FLORA LEE: Mah Momma made me a purdy kina drass, frish fur skaul. Ah wo’e it tha fust day. They awl laffed ‘n pok’t fun ta me jes cuzin ‘twas home made an’ warn’t sto’ bought, ‘n ah nevah...

MRS. RICKETTS: It were sech a purdy dress ah made her, ‘n she din’t but wahr it onest an’ ne’r agin.

READER 1: How were we caught? What, what is it has happened?

READER 2: What is it has been happening that we are living the way we are? The children are not the way it seemed they might be:

AGEE: And the children seem to say –

CLAIR BELL: Bud ah'm yung –

PEARL: – an' ah'm yung, 'n strong, 'n full o' halth –

LOUISE: – an' ah'm yung 'n good ta look on; an' ah'm too yung ta worry
none.

FLORA MERRY LEE: – an' so 'm ah, 'cause mah mamma's kin' ta me.

AGEE: – and we are growing they seem to say: one by one we are becoming
stronger, and one by one in the terrible emptiness and the leisure we
shall burn and tremble and shake with lust, and one by one we shall
loosen ourselves from this place, and shall be married, and it will be
different from what we see, for we will be happy and love each
other, and keep the house clean, and a good garden, and buy a
cultivator, and use a high grade of fertilizer, and we will know how
to do things right; it will be very different:

EVANS: Margaret dreams of a husband, and strong land, and ladies nodding
in the walks.

AGEE: And Sadie Ricketts, her mother who is the half-sister of Bud Woods,
she is dreaming now, and Bud; and drowned in their remembrance:
that long and spiral shaft they've climbed, from shacks on shale,
rigid as corn on the cob, out of the mining country, the long
wandering, *her* pride of beauty, *his* long strength in marriage, into
this: this present time, and this near future:

MRS. R: How was it we was caught?

EVANS: Ivy, and her mother: what are the dreams of dogs?

VOICE 3: Wha, Ahvy Woods wuz one o' the wus' hoes in 'is hole pa't th' cuntry, 'cep'in' her own momma. They is 'bout the lowes' trash yuh kin fin'.

VOICE 1: Wha, she had her a man back in 'a woods fur yeahs 'foah he ma'ied 'er... 'ah two chillun baye 'im.

AGEE: And all these children: These children, still in the tenderness of their lives, who will draw their future remembrance, and their future sorrow, from this place:

EVANS: – and the strangers, animals: for work, for death, for food: –

AGEE: – and the scant crops: doing their duty the best they can, like temperless and feeble-minded children: –

EVANS/AGEE: – rest now, between the wrenchings of the sun:

MUSIC: #8 EST & UNDER

READER 1: And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was *set*, his disciples came unto him:
And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

READER 2: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness
for they shall be filled.....

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

MUSIC: #8 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part III “Lauds”: the first office, which is said at dawn.

MUSIC: #9 EST & UNDER

READER 1: O praise God in his holiness: praise him in the firmament of his
power.

READER 2: Praise him in his noble acts: praise him according to his excellent
greatness.

READER 1: Praise him in the sound of the trumpet: praise him upon the strings
and pipe....

READER 2: Let everything that hath breath: praise the Lord.

MUSIC: #9 CONTINUES

AGEE: – not suddenly, nor with fright, but certainly with no line of crossing,
no beginning, there has been a change in the air, a crisis passed in
sleep; the air darkens to black violet, and the stars refresh:

And casually, and with rending triumph, the signal is delivered on
the dusk: the sure wild glittering yell of a rooster; light on a lifted
sword. He is some long distance away, it seems infinite miles, the
utmost ledge of the universe, to the east.

and then the answer:

the first again, much fiercer:

and, almost interrupting him, a third, beyond the woods:
three new ones now: another: now another:
they all strain on their horn toes and shout.

MUSIC: #9 ENDS

AGEE: ... while it was not yet light, at about the crowing of the second cock, Annie Mae woke, on her back, and watched up at the ceiling; –

EVANS: – and at this time Margaret Ricketts is already a half-hour up, and the stove crackling, and she is cooking by lamp before the windows are even pale, for her father suffers from stirrup corns, and has four miles through the woods to walk to work. And Fred, and his wife, and Paralee, lie in their beds collecting their strength, and the children still sleep.

AGEE: Annie Mae watches up at the ceiling, and she is as sick with sleep as if she had lain the night beneath a just-supportable weight: She has not lacked in utter tiredness, like a load in her whole body, a day since she was a young girl, nor will she ever lack it again;

ANNIE MAE: Ah'm as tied in a moanin as when ah lays down at naite. Et taimes seems lake they woon't be no end ta it, noahevin a lit-up.

AGEE: But when the ceiling has become visible there is no longer any help for it, and she wrenches herself up, and wriggles a dress on over her
(SOUND: FOLLOW ANNIE MAE) head, and shuffles barefooted across the porch to the basin, and ladles out two dippers of water from the bucket, and cups it in her hands, and drenches her face in it, with a shuddering shock that straightens her; and dries on the split flour sack that hangs from a nail; and is capable now of being alive, to work:

Her first work being, to build the fire, and to cook biscuits and eggs and meat and coffee.

ANNIE MAE: They is so much wuk, seems lak you nevah sees da *end* a it.

AGEE: With the noise at the stove, George wakes. Without having to look for it, he reaches on the floor by the bed and finds the book of cigarette papers and the tobacco, and the sweatproof matchbox he has made of a truncated Prince Albert tin. In a skilful and beautiful
(*SOUND: MATCH*) collusion of his stiff, thick fingers he rolls a cigarette, and he props his head, and smokes it, staring through the ornate iron at the wall, while the birds whet and sweeten:

READER 2: Praise him in his noble acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

EVANS: Ivy Woods is meantime up: she was wakened in the serene quietness of a heath animal, neither tired nor rested, but blank and fresh like water; her fine big feet soothe and seethe the floor, and Bud comes to, lifting his sardonic-gentle, innocent, dimly criminal, birdlike head a little from the pillow, the sheet drawn to his chin: the cleaning light is cool: the children sleep; Pearl, pale, adenoidal, already erotic; and Thomas like a dance, frog-legged, his fists in his eyes; and Ellen, like a baby, fish-mouthed between her enormous cheeks:

AGEE: The cleaning light is cool; the older Ricketts are hurrying through
(*SOUND: MEAL AND FEET*) breakfast. There is a rapid smattering of feet and Clair Bell sprints in affrighted: that her father has left for work before kissing her goodbye –

RICKETTS: Ah'd nevah do no sech a thang –

AGEE: – and they take her on their laps assuring her, and help her drink her coffee:

EVANS: and they come in, by order of age, and silent with sleep; and the
(*SOUND: MEAL CONTINUES*) animals raise themselves out of the floor and establish themselves beneath the table, lifting open heads:

AGEE: and breakfast is too serious a meal for speaking; and it is difficult and revolting to eat heavily before one is awake; but it is necessary, for on this food must be climbed the ardent and steep hill of the morning, steadily hotter, up to noon, and for Fred and George then a cold lunch only, and resumption, and hours more of work:

SOUND: MEAL ENDS, CHAIRS, DEPARTING FEET: OUT BY END OF NEXT (FADING)

EVANS: and the breakfasts ended, the houses are broken open like pods in the increase of the sun, and they are scattered on the wind of a day's work.

(AFTER A PAUSE)

ANNIE MAE: How wuz it we was ca-oat?

MUSIC: #10 EST & UNDER

READER 1: The fig-tree shall not blossom: neither shall fruit be in the vines;

READER 2: The labour of the olive shall fail: and the fields shall yield no meat.

MUSIC: #10 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part IV “Prime”: the First Hour; being six o’clock in the morning.

MUSIC: #11 EST & UNDER

READER 1: The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.

READER 2: He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

READER 1: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

READER 2: Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

MUSIC: #11 CONTINUES

EVANS: The sun had just cleared the tops of the pines so that they were still burnt away. Rising and twisting all through these close-growing pines, and on the high glittering grass and in long streams in the air, was the white smoke of the cold-now-swiftly-heating, early morning, which the sun drew up, and the sun struck through this smoke and diffused it so that the air was clear, transparent and all but blinding bright, as if it had been polished.

MUSIC: #11 HOLDS ON PEDAL UNDER NEXT THREE SPEECHES AND THEN MOVES TO CADENCE UNDER EVANS

GUDGER: Ah’m a gonna hafta git on ta wuk now.

AGEE: Well, I sure am obliged to you for taking me in last night.

GUDGER: Glada tuv halpt ya.

EVANS: And though the air is still cool, there is now the cutting odor of grass and weeds, and a cool sweat starts out and faintly stins in patterns upon the forehead, the wrists, the beam of the shoulders, and the spine. And Gudger's watch made thirty-two past six.

MUSIC: #11 ENDS

EVANS: Woods and Ricketts work for Michael and T. Hudson Margraves, two brothers, in partnership, who live in Cookstown: their nearest town, seven miles away: population about 300. Gudger worked for the Margraves for three years; now – 1936 – he works for Chester Boles, who lives two miles south of Cookstown.

Gudger has no home, no land, no mule; none of the more important farming implements.

GUDGER: Ah gits em from da lan'lode - Bowes - he takes his share'n a coen 'n cott'n, 'n fo'e munce o' da ye-ah he gi's me livin' money - Ma'ch ta Joon - an' 'e gi's me futilizah.

EVANS: Gudger pays him back with his labour, and with the labour of his family.

GUDGER: Ah'm jes a sharecroppah on haves. Whin da season's ovah, ah pays 'em back – half mah coen, half mah cott'n, half mah cott'n seed. Frum mah half the crop, ah gots ta pay him back fur the livin' money he gi'ed me, an' fur mah share o' the futilizah he gi'ed me, 'n fur

enythin' else ah owes him, an' ah has to pay him interest on ever'thin'.

EVANS: What is left, once doctor's bills and other debts have been deducted is his year's earnings.

And as for Woods and Ricketts, they own no land, but Woods owns one mule and Ricketts owns two, and they own their farming implements. Since they do not have to rent these tools and animals, they work under a slightly different arrangement.

WOODS: We is tenants - we wuks on thu'ds an' fo'ths. We gi's ou-ah lan'lode a thud o' ou-ah cott'n an' a fo'th o' ou-ah coen. Frm what's left, we owes him fo' two thu'ds o' tha cott'n futilizah an' three fo'ths o' tha coen futilizah, an' effin we borried eny livin' money from 'im, we gots ta pay him thet too, 'n inerest on ev'rthin'.

EVANS: These two types of arrangement – sharecroppers and tenants – with local variants of no great substance, are basic to cotton tenantry all over the South.

GUDGER: F'um Ma'ch ta Joon, whilst de cott'ns growin, we lives on a money he give us'n.

WOODS: Fum Joo-la ta late in Owgus, whilst da cott'ns makin, we lives mos-enyways we kin.

RICKETTS: F'um late Owgus ta Octobah, inta Novembah, when they's pickin 'n ginnin, we-uns lives on da money f'um owah shaeh o' da cott'nseed.

GUDGER: From thin 'til Ma'ch, we lives on wut we'se unned dat cheer, o' wut evah way we kin.

EVANS: During six to seven months of each year – during exactly such times as their labour with the cotton is of absolute necessity to the landlord – they can be sure of whatever living is possible in rations advances and in cottonseed money. During five to six months of the year, of which three are the hardest months of any year, with the worst of weather, the least adequacy of shelter, the worst and least of food, the worst of health, quite normal and inevitable, they can count on nothing except that they may hope least of all for any help from their landlords.

READER 1: The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.

GUDGER: Six uh us dun live on tin dollahs a month fo' fo' munce uh da yeah. We'se li'ed on ate, e'n six dollahs.

WOODS: Us Woodses, we'se six too, 'n nevah got bettah 'en ate dollahs a mont fo' them fo-ah munce till dis ye-ah...dis tahm we done got 'er up ta tin.

RICKETTS: That nahn uh us lives on tin dollahs a mont' 'till sprang 'n uhly summah.

EVANS: This debt for rations money is paid back in the fall at 8 per cent interest. Eight per cent is charged also on the fertilizer and on all other debts which tenants incur in this vicinity.

READER 2: Thou hast anointed my head with oil ...

GUDGER: Fo' nahmul prahces, us charecroppahs on haves gits 'bout sex dollahs a bayel foah owah sha'eh uh da cott'n. Wit' wan meul, we

meks 'bout tree bayels. So's we figgers on 'bout ate-een dollahs ta tide us during da pickin 'n ginnin'. Afta da fust bayels bin ginned, we don' git no moe.

WOODS: Wukkin on thu'ds 'n fo'ths, we gits nahn dollahs a bayel. Wit wan meul, ah kin mek tree bayels 'n gits twinny-seben dollahs. Rikits he-ah gots two meuls 'n meks twiced as many bayels 'n gits twiced 's much money ta live on frum da last a summah an' da fa-well.

READER 2: ... and my cup shall be full.

EVANS: The best that Woods has ever cleared was \$1300 during a war year. During the teens and twenties he fairly often cleared as much as \$300; he fairly often cleared \$50 and less; two or three times he ended the year in debt. During the depression years he has more often cleared \$50 and less; last year he cleared \$150, but serious illness during the winter ate it up rapidly.

WOODS: Wuk in da sowmill? No suh, Ah wuz too sick. Too ol' enyways.

AGEE: The best that Gudger has ever cleared in \$125. That was the plow-under year. He felt exceedingly hopeful and bought a mule: but when his landlord warned him of how he was coming out the next year, he sold it. Most years he has not made more than \$25 to \$30; and about one year in three he has ended in debt. Year before last he wound up \$80 in debt; last year, \$12; of Boles, his new landlord, the first thing he had to do was borrow \$15 to get through the winter until rations advances should begin.

GUDGER: Wan hyear shill look laike thangs is gonna be purdy good, but-cha gits a lil' bit a money saved, sumpin allus happins.

EVANS: Years ago the Ricketts were, relatively speaking, almost prosperous.

RICKETTS: In ‘d hye-ahs when we wus down baye da rivah, we ‘uns had all da fish we wan-ed, ‘n yaller milk, ‘nuff ta sell, ‘n ev’n boat two mools.

EVANS: Ricketts went \$400 into debt on a fine young pair of mules. One of the mules died before it had made its first crop; the other died the year after; against his fear, amounting to full horror, of sinking to the half-crop level where nothing is owned, Ricketts went into debt for other, inferior mules; his cows went one by one into debts and desperate exchanges and by sickness; he got congestive chills; his wife got pellagra, a number of his children died; he got appendicitis and lay for days on end under the ice cap; his wife’s pellagra got into her brain; for ten consecutive years now, though they have lived on so little rations money, and have turned nearly all their cottonseed money towards their debts, they have not cleared or had any hope of clearing a cent at the end of the year.

MUSIC: #12 EST. & UNDER

READER 1: Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that troubles me:

READER 2: thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

READER 1: But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

READER 2: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

MUSIC: #12 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: PART V: “Low Mass”; early in the day.

MUSIC: #13 EST AND UNDER

READER 1: The earth is filled with the fruit of thy works: that thou mayest bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man.

READER 2: And oil to make him a cheerful countenance: and bread to strengthen man’s heart.

MUSIC: #13 TO CADENCE, ENDS

AGEE: Cotton is only one among several crops and among many labors: and all these other crops and labours mean life itself. Cotton demands more work of a tenant family and yields less reward than all the rest. It is the reason the tenant has the means to do the rest, and to have the rest, and to live, as a tenant, at all It is his one possible source of money...But it is also his chief contracted obligation, for which he must neglect all else as need be; and is the central leverage and symbol of his privation and of his wasted life. It is the one crop and labour of which the tenant can hope for least, and can be surest that he is being cheated, and is always to be cheated. All other tasks are incidental to it; it is constantly on everyone’s mind; yet of all of them it is the work in which the tenant has least hope and least interest, and to which he must devote the most energy.

EVANS: In the late fall or middle February this tenant – a man, dressed against the wet coldness, may be seen small and dark in his prostrated fields, taking down the sometimes brittle, sometimes

rotted forests of last year's crops with a club or with a cutter, putting death to bed, cleaning the land: and late in February, he borrows a second mule and, with a two-horse plow, runs up the terraces, which shall preserve his land. When this is done, at about the first of March, the actual work begins.

SOUND: UNDER LAST SENTENCE ABOVE, TILL FURTHER NOTICE, A COOL BREEZE BG

AGEE: How to break the land in the first place depends on whether you have one or two mules or can double up with another tenant for two mules. It is much better to broadcast if you can. With two mules you can count on doing it all in that most thorough way.

SOUND: TWO MULES PLODDING ALONG FIELD BEHIND NEXT THREE SPEECHES

WOODS: Win we busts tha groun', we takes a twistah plow, sumpin lak a turnin' plow, 'n haid da mool 'roun' 'n 'roun' da shape o' da feel, 'n 'at du't lays out wide 'n deep's dat mool kin mek hit. Den we lays down tha furrachs, ever' tree 'n a haf foot wit' a shiv'l plow 'n puts down da futilizah. Af'a dat, we takes foah furrachs ad a tahme wit' a turnin plow, 'n covahs up da futilizah wit' du't.

GUDGER: They is two beddin's. Wan is a ha'd beddin. Ta bust hit, ya sits da plow 'long da rat o' las' yeahs stawks, follerin da row from one end ta tother. De groun' allus lays open on de rat. Den ya sits da plow close in agin d' stawks 'n go 'roun' agin ta clean out da daid stawks. Dat busts up da hard pan 'n leaves soaft du't 'tween 'a rows.

RICKETTS: Den, wit' a 'chine o' a ho'ne, yo strows yo gyeanner were de las' yeahs coen wuz. Den ya tuns da du't back ovah wi' two plowins jes lak afoah, 'n dat's da secint beddin. Yu'z gotta pitch de bed shaller, oah it won' wuk rat. Effin ya done hit rat, y' hain't got no place in yuh land what ain't broke, 'n you'se ready ta plant.

AGEE: But just, only as a matter of suggestion, compute the *work* that has been done so far, in ten acres of land – remembering that this is not counting in ten more acres of corn and a few minor crops:

WOODS: There is broadcastin' –

EVANS: – the whole unbroken plaque of field slivered open in rectilinear concentres, eight inches apart and six deep if with one mule, sixteen inches apart and twelve deep if with two:

AGEE: and then each furrow, each three and a half feet, scooped open with a shovel plow: and in each row the fertilizer laid:

EVANS: and each row folded cleanly back in four transits of its complete length:

WOODS: 'n they is beddin' –

EVANS: – the first bedding in four transits of each length:

AGEE: every one of the many rows of the whole of the field gone eight times over with a plough and a ninth by hand;

EVANS: and only now is it ready for planting.

*SOUND: HARROWING AND SEEDING BEHIND NEXT TWO SPEECHES
RESPECTIVELY*

WOODS: Plantin? They is *tree* harris yuh kin use, but ah laks a sprang-toofed harrah best...yuh harrahs jes one row 'ta tahm 'n rat behin' d' harrah comes d' plantah, a lil' seed bin settin' on lil' wheels, wit' a lil' plow pokin' fum un'er hit.

AGEE: The little beak of the plow slits open the dirt; just at its lifted heel the seed thrills out in a spindling stream; a flat wheel flats the dirt over.

WOODS: Gi'e fahve day, mebbe two week, pendin' on how wet the groun' is, an' de cott'n 'gins ta show.

EVANS: Cultivation begins as soon as it shows an inch.

WOODS: They is barrin' off, Den they is fust sweepin. Next de choppin, an' two moe sweepins, 'n than de layin' baye. 'N after 'at they ain't nottin moe a fahmah cin do till pickin tahme... 'ceptin' wait.

AGEE: With no rations money to live on while the cotton is making.

SOUND: BREEZE ENDS

EVANS: It is for the clothing, and for the food, and for the shelter, by these to sustain their lives, that they work. This arduous physical work, to which a consciousness beyond that of the simplest child would be only a useless and painful encumbrance, is undertaken without choice or the thought of chance of choice, taught forward from father to son and from mother to daughter.... The ends of this work are

absorbed all but entirely into the work itself, and in what little remains, nearly all is obliterated; nearly nothing is obtainable;

AGEE: The family exists *for* work. It exists to keep itself alive. It is a cooperative economic unit. It is called a force –

EVANS: A man: George Gudger, Thomas Woods, Fred Ricketts: his work is with the land, in the season of the year, in the sustainment and ordering of his family, the training of his sons:

AGEE: A woman: Annie Mae Gudger, Ivy Woods, Sadie Ricketts: her work is in the keeping of the home, the preparation of food against each day and against the dead season, the bearing and care of her children, the training of her daughters:

EVANS: Children: ... the grave mutations of a dance ... the Ricketts children like delirious fawns and panthers: Junior Gudger, jealous and lazy, malingering, his fingers sore; the Ricketts [grown] daughters, the younger stepping beautifully as a young mare, the elder at the stove with her mouth twisted;

AGEE: Then Annie Mae at twenty-seven, in her angular sweeping, every motion a wonder to watch; George, in his sunday clothes with his cuffs short on his blocked wrists, looking at you, his head slightly to one side, his earnest eyes a little squinted as if he were looking into a light: Miss-Molly, chopping wood as if in each blow of the axe she held captured in focus the vengeance of all time; Woods, slowed in his picking, forced to stop and rest much too often, whose death is hastened against a doctor's warnings in that he is picking at all:

MUSIC: *#14 BEGINS BG*

AGEE: And all this effort takes place between a sterile earth and an uncontrollable sky in whose propitiation is centred their chief reverence and fear, who read in these machinations of their heaven all signs of a fate which the hardest work cannot much help, and, not otherwise than as the most ancient peoples of the earth, make it the lodestone of their deepest pieties.

MUSIC: #14 CONTINUES

READER 1: Unto thee lift I up mine eyes: O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

READER 2: Behold, even as the eyes of servants: look unto the hand of their masters.

READER 1: And as the eyes of a maiden: unto the hand of her mistress.

READER 2: Even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God: until he have mercy upon us.

READER 1 & 2: Have mercy upon us. O Lord: have mercy upon us.

MUSIC: #14 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part VI “Terce”: The Third Hour. Nine o’clock in the morning, being the hour in which Pontius Pilate gave *sentence* upon Jesus that he be crucified.

MUSIC: #15 EST & UNDER

READER 1: Except the Lord build the house: their labour is but lost that build it.

READER 2: It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest,
and eat the bread of carefulness: for so he giveth his beloved
sleep.

READER 1: Lo, children and the fruit of the womb: are an heritage and gift that
cometh of the Lord.

READER 2: Like as arrows in the hand of the giant: even so are the young
children.

READER 1: Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them ...

MUSIC: #15 CONTINUES

AGEE: Slowly they have diminished along the hill path – (X) the Gudgers –
Annie Mae and her daughter, and her three songs, in leisured
enfilade beneath the light. She wore the flower-like beauty of the
sunbonnet in which she is ashamed to appear before us. (Y) At
length, well up the hill, their talking shrank and became inaudible,
and at that point will give safe warning on the hill of their return.
They are gone. (Z)

MUSIC: #15 START TO FADE AT (X) ABOVE: REACHES LAST NOTE AT (Y): IF NOT FULLY “DECAYED” BY (Z) FADE OUT BY (Z).

AGEE: No one is at home, in all this house, in all this land. It is a long while
before their return. I shall move as they would trust me not to, and as
I could not, were they here. I shall touch nothing but as I would
touch the most delicate wounds, the most dedicated objects. For I am
being made witness to matters no human being may see.

They have gone; and it is now my chance to perceive this, their home, as it is a human shelter, a strangely lined next, a creature of killed pine, stitched together with nails into about as rude a garment against the hostilities of heaven as a human family may wear.

EVANS: Two blocks, of two rooms each, one room behind another. Between these blocks a hallway, floored and roofed, wide open both at front and rear. On the left of the hall, two rooms, each an exact square. On the right, a square front room and, built later, behind it, using the outward weatherboards for its own front wall, a leanto kitchen half that size.

The hallway yields onto a front porch about five feet long by ten wide.

Three steps lead down at centre: they are of oak: the bottom one is cracked and weak, for all its thickness.

AGEE: And looking in the space underneath, I see the clean pine underside of the house, blond like the floor of a turtle, that sun has never and weather has scarcely touched, so that it looks still new, as if as yet it had sustained no sorrow above, but only a hope that was still in process of approach, as once this whole house was, all fresh and bridal, four hollowed rooms brimmed with a light of honey:

READER 1: O therefore in the cleanly quiet, calm hope, sweet odor, awaiting, of each new dwelling squared by men on air, be sorrowful, as of the sprung trap, the slim wrist gnawn, the little disastrous fox:

READER 2: It stands up in the sun and the bride smiles: quite soon the shelves are papered: the new forks taste in the food:

READER 1: Ruin, ruin is in our hopes: nor hope, help, any healing:

EVANS: For various reasons only two of these rooms, the kitchen and the rear bedroom, are really habitable. The right front room is not used to live in at all and the left front room is used only dubiously and irregularly, though the sewing machine is there and it is fully furnished both as a bedroom and as a parlor. The children use it sometimes, and it is given to guests (as it was to us), but storm, mosquitoes and habit force them back into the other room where the whole family sleeps together....

AGEE: In the right front room: a bed, a settee; before the fireplace, a small table, and above it, a mantel; also a bureau with a tall mirror above it; and variously disposed, a sewing machine, and a small trunk.

EVANS: The trunk – small, elderly, once gay, now sober, very pretty, the lid shallowly domed, somewhat tall and narrow, and thus bearing itself in a kind of severe innocence as certain farm houses and archaic automobiles do. It is surfaced with tin which was once coloured bright red and bright blue, and this tin, now almost entirely gone brown, is stamped in a thick complex of daisies and studded with small round-headed once golden nails; Opening this light trunk, a fragrance springs from it as if of stale cinnamon and fever powders and its inward casket is unexpectedly bright as if it were a box of tamed sunlight, in its lining of torn white paper streaked with brown, fresh yellow wood grained through the torn places, the bright white lining printed with large and bright mauve centreless daisies.

In this trunk: an old slightly soiled cotton slip; a little boy's stiff cheap grey cap; a baby's dress; a grey-white knit shoe for a baby; a

pair of ten-cent hard thin mercerized bold-patterned electric-blue socks, worn through at the heels, with a strip of green checked gingham tied through the top of one, for a garter, and a strip of pink gingham through the other. In one corner of the floor of the trunk, staring blue with black centres, waxed to the ends of a wire wishbone whose juncture is a light lead weight, the eyes of a small doll

AGEE:

...The surface of the bureau is covered with an aged, pebble-grained face towel, too good a fabric to be used in this house for the purposes it was made for. Upon this towel rest these objects: An old black comb, smelling of fungus and dead rubber, nearly all the teeth gone. A white clamshell with brown dust in the bottom and a small white button on it. A cream-coloured brown-shaded china rabbit three or four inches tall, with bluish lights in the china, one ear laid awry: he is broken through the back and the pieces have been fitted together to hang, not glued, in delicate balance. A small seated china bull-terrier bitch and her litter of three smaller china pups, seated round her in an equilateral triangle, their eyes intersected on her: they were given to Louise last Christmas and are with one exception her most cherished piece of property.

A heavy moist bible, whose cold, obscene, and inexplicable fragrance I found in my first night in this house.....

EVANS:

On the mantel against the glowing wall, each about six inches from the ends of the shelf, two small twin vases, very simply blown, of pebble-grained iridescent glass. Exactly at centre between them, a fluted saucer, with a coarse lace edge, of pressed milky glass, which Louise's mother gave her to call her own and for which she cares more dearly than for anything else she possesses. Pinned all along the edge of this mantel, a broad fringe of white tissue pattern-paper –

ANNIE MAE: (SLIGHTLY FILTERED AND VERY SLIGHT ECHO) Whin we was fust moved in hyea, ah whoa-ned ta mek th' haas purdy. Ah folled loss o dat paddin' papah 'n cut it purdy like lace 'n hung it ovah th' fi-ah place...bu - now ah jes doan caeh no moe 'bout how nuthin looks. A *hates* dis haase so *baid*. Seem lak they ain't nothin' in de hole wull ah kin do ta mek it purdy.

AGEE: On the wall, pasted or pinned or tacked or printed, set well discrete from one another, in not quite perfectly symmetric relations: –

EVANS: A small octagonal frame surfaced in ivory and black ribbons of thin wicker or of straw, the glass broken out: set in this frame, not filling it, a fading box-camera snapshot of Annie Mae's mother,

AGEE: A calendar, advertising shoes, depicting a pretty brunette with ornate red lips, in a wide-brimmed red hat, cuddling red flowers. The title is "Cheri", and written twice, in pencil, in a schoolchild's hand: –

LOUISE: (SLIGHTLY FILTERED AND VERY SLIGHT ECHO) – L'eez,
L'eez

EVANS: At the right of the mantel, in whitewash, all its whorlings sharp, the print of a child's hand.

AGEE: In the table drawer, in this order:

EVANS: A delicate insect odor of pine, closed sweated cloth, and mildew.

AGEE: A broad and stiff-brimmed soft-crowned hat, the brim broken in several places, the fabrics stained and moldered. The crown is gold of thin plush or the cheapest velvet. The ribbon is wide plaid

woodsilk weltering lights of orange and of pearl. It is striped white at the edges and the stripes are edged in gold thread. The brim is bordered an inch wide with gold brocade. The underbrim is cream coloured mercerized cotton, marked in one place by an indelible pencil. Through a tear the pasteboard brim is visible: it was cut out of a shoe-box. The stitching throughout is patient, devoted, and diminutive. The hat is one broken, half-moist, moldered chunk.

EVANS: One swooning-long festal baby's dress of the most frail muslin, embroidered with three bands of small white cotton-thread flowers. Two narrow courses of cheap yet small-threaded lace are let in near the edge of the skirt. This garment is hand-sewn in painfully small and laboured stitching. It is folded, but not pressed, and is not quite clean.

AGEE: Another, thinlined grey-blue faded checks on a white ground. The silhouettes of two faded yellow rabbits, cut out at home, are stitched on the front, the features are x'd in in pink thread,

EVANS: A nearly flat blue-cloth cat-doll, home-made, a blue tail, nearly torn off, the features in black thread,

AGEE: One child's brown cotton glove, for the right hand. The index finger ends in a hole,

EVANS: The two parts of a broken button,

AGEE: A small black hook, lying in its eye,

EVANS: Another small black hook;

AGEE: In the corners of the pale inward wood, fine grey dust and a sharpgrained unidentifiable brown dust;

EVANS: In a split in the bottom of the drawer, a small bright needle, pointed north ...

MUSIC: #16 FADES UP VERY SLOWLY FROM (X) BELOW

AGEE: But now on that hill whose mass is hung as a wave behind us I hear her voice and the voices of her children, (X) and in knowledge of those hidden places I have opened, those griefs, beauties, those garments whom I took out, held to my lips, took odor of, and folded and restored so orderly, so reverently as cerements, or priest the blessed cloths, I receive a strong shock at my heart, and I move silently, and quickly.

When at length I hear the innocence of their motions in the rear of the hall, the noise of the rude water and the dipper, I am seated on the front porch with a pencil and an open notebook, and I get up and go towards them.

In some bewilderment, they yet love me, and I, how dearly, them; and trust me, despite hurt and mystery, deep beyond making of such a word as trust.

It is not going to be easy to look into their eyes.

MUSIC: #16 TRANSITION

READER 1: I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the lord.

READER 2: Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness within thy palaces.

READER 1: For my brethren and companions' sake: I will wish thee prosperity.

MUSIC: #16 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part VII "Sext": the sixth hour; midday – being the hour in which Christ was crucified.

MUSIC: #17 EST & UNDER

READER 1: God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and shew us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us....

READER 2: He fed them with the finest wheat-flour: and with honey out of the stony rock did he satisfy them.

READER 1: Then shall the earth bring forth her increase: and God, even our own God, shall give us his blessings.

READER 2: Let me not: be disappointed of my hope.

MUSIC: #17 CONTINUES

EVANS: Late in August the fields begin to whiten more rarely with late bloom and more frequently with cotton and then still thicker with cotton, a sparkling ground starlight of it, steadily bursting into more and more millions of points, all the leaves seeming shrunken smaller ... These split bolls are now *burrs*, hard and edged as chiseled wood, pointed nearly as thorns, spread open in three and four and five gores or cells. It is slow at first, just a few dozen scattered here and there and then a few tens of dozens, then there is a space of two or three days

in which a whole field seems to be crackling open at once. ... and Gudger and his wife and the Woods family are a little more quiet than usual, as they might be if they were waiting for a train to come in, and keep looking at the fields, and judging them; and at length one morning (the Ricketts women are already three days advance in ragged work), Gudger says –

MUSIC: #17 ENDS

SOUND: TILL NEXT MUSIC CUE, DISCREETLY HERE AND THERE, CARDINAL AND MOCKING-BIRD AND CICADAS

EVANS: if they were waiting for a train to come in, and keep looking at the fields, and judging them; and at length one morning (the Ricketts women are already three days advanced in ragged work), Gudger says –

GUDGER: Wal; Wal; ah reckon t'morra we'd bettah git ta pickin'.

AGEE: And the next morning very early, with their broad hats and great sacks, they are out, silent, their bodies all slanted, on the hill: and in every field in hundreds of miles, black people and white, it is the same: and such as it is, it is a joy which scarcely touches any tenant; and is worn thin and through in half a morning, and is gone for a year.

EVANS: It is simple and terrible work. Skill will help you; all the endurance you can draw up against it from the roots of your existence will be thoroughly used as fuel to it: but neither skill nor endurance can make it any easier.

Over the right shoulder you have slung a long white sack whose half length trails the ground behind. You work with both hands as fast and steadily as you can.

GUDGER: Da trek 's ta git da cott'n 'tween yuh fangahs rat at hits roots in da burh an' awl tree oah foah oah fahve goahs de fustest tahme sos hits brung out clean 'n wan snatch.

EVANS: It is easy enough with one burr in perhaps ten, where the cotton is ready to fall; with the rest, the fibres are more tight and tricky. Another trick is, between these strong pulls of efficiency, proper judgment, and maximum speed –

GUDGER: not ta hu't yoah fangahs on d' burhs any wuse'n yuh kin hep hit.

EVANS: In two hours' picking the hands are just well limbered up. At the end of a week you are favouring your fingers, still in the obligation of speed. The later of the three to five times over the same field, the last long weeks of the season, you might be happy if it were possible to exchange them for boils.

AGEE: Meanwhile, too, you are working in a land of sunlight and heat which are special to just such country at just that time of year: sunlight that stands and stacks itself upon you with the serene weight of deep sea-water; and this brilliant weight of heat is piled upon you more and more heavily in hour after hour so that it can seem you are a diving bell whose strained seams must at any moment burst.

VOICE 1: Ain't none of these folks got no sense, ner eny gumpshun nuther. Effin they did, they wunt be sharecroppin'.

AGEE: Also the bag, which can hold a hundred pounds, is filling as it is dragged from plant to plant, four to nine burrs to a plant to be rifled swiftly, and the load shrugged along another foot or two and the white rows which have not yet been touched, and younger bolls in the cleaned rows behind already breaking like slow popcorn in the heat ...

EVANS: In the blasting heat of the first of the season, unless there is a rush to beat a rain or to make up an almost completed wagonload, it is customary to quit work an hour and a half or even two hours in the worst part of the day and to sit or lie in the shade and possible draft of the hallway or porch asleep or dozing after dinner. This time narrows off as the weeks go by and a sense of rush and of the wish to be done with it grows on the pickers and is tightened through from the landlord. I have heard of tenants and pickers who have no rest-period and no midday meal, but those I am acquainted with have it.

VOICE 3: Tahmes ah invy thim: food a comin' up rat out o' they's lan'.

EVANS: It is the ordinary every day food, with perhaps a little less variety than in the earlier summer, hastily thrown together and heated by a woman who has hurried in exhausted from the field as few jumps as possible ahead of her family, and served in the dishes she hurriedly rinsed before she hurried out on the early morning as few jumps as possible behind them. When they are all done, she hurries through the dish washin and puts on her straw hat or her sun-bonnet and goes on back into the field, and they are all at it in a strung-out little bunch, the sun a bitter white on their deeply bent backs, and the sacks trailing, a slow breeze idling in the tops of the pines and hickories along the far side but the leaves of the low cotton scarcely

touched in it, and the whole land, under hours of heat still to go, yet listed subtly forward toward the late end of the day.

MRS. RICKETTS: How cum we wuz coat?

AGEE: They seem very small in the field and very lonely, and the motions of their industry are so small, in range, their bodies so slowly moving, that it seems less that they are so hard at work than that they are bowed over so deeply into some fascination or grief ...

READER 1: Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well ...

EVANS: Ellen lies in the white load of the cotton-basket in the shade asleep; Squinchy picks the front of his dress full and takes it to his mother; Clair Bell fills a hat time after time in great speed and with an expression of delight rushes up behind her mother and dumps the cotton on all of her she can reach and goes crazy with laughter, and her mother and the girls stop a minute and she is hugged ...

READER 2: Let me not be disappointed of my hope ...

EVANS: ... but they are much more quiet than is usual to them, and Mrs. Ricketts only pauses a minute, cleaning the cotton from her skirts and her hair and putting it in her sack, and then she is bowed over deeply at work again.

READER 2: ... that the earth shall bring forth her increase.

AGEE: Woods is badly slowed by weakness and by the pain in his shoulder; he welcomes any possible excuse to stop and sometimes has to pause whether there is any excuse or not, but his wife and her mother are

both strong and good pickers, so he is able to get by without a hired hand. Thomas is not old enough yet to be any use. Burt Gudger too is very young for it and works only by fits and starts;

GUDGER: Hain't much 'spectid f'um li'l chillin, but they hain't no ha'm 'n w'at they duz...Yuh cain't larn 'em too yung.

AGEE: Junior is not very quick with it at best. He will work for a while furiously hard, in jealousy of Louise, and then slacken up with sore hands and begin to bully Burt. Katy Ricketts is very quick. Last summer, when she was only eight, she picked 110 pounds in a day in a race with Flora Merry Lee....

READER 1: Lo, children and the fruit of the womb: are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.

READER 2: Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant: even so are the young children.

AGEE: Louise is an extraordinarily steady and quick worker for her age; she can pick a hundred and fifty pounds in a day.

LOUISE: (SLIGHTLY FILTERED AND VERY SLIGHT ECHO) L'eez,
L'eez.

AGEE: The two Ricketts boys are all right when their papa is on hand to keep them at their work; as it is, with Ricketts at the sawmills they clown a good deal, and tease their sisters.

READER 1: Even so are the young children: Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.

EVANS: Mrs. Gudger picks about the average for a woman, 150 to 200 pounds a day. She is fast with her fingers until the work exhausts her
–

ANNIE MAE: – las' haf a da ah jes doan see how ah kin keep own it.

EVANS: George Gudger is a very poor picker. When he was a child he fell in the fireplace and burnt the flesh off the flat of both hands to the bone, so that his fingers are stiff and slow and the best he has ever done in a day is 150 pounds. The average for a man is nearer 250. His back hurts him badly too, so he usually picks on his knees, the way the others pick only when they are resting.

VOICE 3: Gujah? He o.k. Purty good famah, but he hain't got no sense.

EVANS: Mrs. Ricketts used to pick 300 to 350 pounds in a day but sickness has slowed her to less than 200 now

VOICE 2: Ricketts? They is a bad lot. They's got Millah blood mixed up in 'em.

AGEE: There are sometimes shifts into gaiety in the picking, or a brief excitement, a race between two of the children, or a snake killed; or two who sit a few moments in their sweat in the clay when they have taken some water, but they say very little to each other, for there is little to say, and are soon back to it, and mainly, in hour upon hour, it is speechless, silent, serious, ceaseless and lonely work along the great silence of the unshaded land, ...

GUDGER: Taimes 'er's so much wuk seems like ya nevah sees a end ta it.

EVANS: The cotton is ordinarily stored in a small structure out in the land, the cotton house; but none of these three families has one. The Gudgers store it in one of the chambers of their barn, the Woods on their front porch, raising planks around it, the Ricketts in their spare room. The Ricketts children love to play in it, tumbling and diving and burying each other; sometimes, it is a sort of treat, they are allowed to sleep in it.

MRS. RICKETTS: Rats likes et ta mek nest-es in ... 'n 'at draws radsnakes...

EVANS: It is not around, though, for very long at a time. Each family has a set of archaic beam scales, and when these scales have weighed out 1400 pounds of cotton it is loaded, if possible during the first of the morning, onto the narrow and high-boarded wagon, and is taken into Cookstown to gin.

MUSIC: #18 EST & UNDER

READER 1: God be merciful unto us, and bless us:

READER 2: And show us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us.

READER 1: Then shall the earth bring forth her increase ...

READER 2: Let me not be disappointed of my hope:

READER 1: That the earth bring forth her increase.

MUSIC: #18 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part VIII “NONE”: The Ninth Hour. Three o’clock in the afternoon – being the hour in which Christ commended his spirit into the hands of his father.

MUSIC: #19 EST & UNDER

READER 1: The householder said to the labourers, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

READER 2: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

MUSIC: #19 ENDS

SOUND: WAGON ON HIGHWAY, OUT AT END OF NEXT

AGEE: As often as you have picked a bale – and your field is combed over three, four or five times – you haul it to town – a long tall deep narrow load shored in with weathered wagonsides and bulged up in a high puff above these sides, and the mule, held far over to the right of the highway to let the cars go by, steps more steadily and even more slowly than ordinary, with a look almost of pomp, dragging the hearse-shaped wagon: and, at the reins, the father of the family, dressed in the better of his work clothes: –

EVANS: George Gudger in clean old overhauls, blue, and washed out blue work-shirt; a machinist’s cap; conventional middle-aged work shoes – a medium-height, powerful football player’s body modified into the burlings of oak ...

SOUND: FADE IN WAGON, OUT AT END OF NEXT

AGEE: – and high upon the load, the whole of the family is sitting, it is a small family, or if it is a large one, those children whose turn it is, and perhaps the mother too wearing such clothes as she might wear to town on Saturday...

EVANS: Mrs. Gudger: black or white cotton stockings; black low-heeled slippers with strapped insteps and single buttons; a freshly laundered cotton print dress held together high at the throat with a ten-cent brooch; a short necklace of black glass beads, a magenta straw hat. She wears her hat exactly level, on the exact top of her small and beautifully graven head. She is keenly conscious of being carefully dressed, and carries herself stiffly. Her eyes are at once searching, shy, excited, and hopelessly sad.

AGEE: Besides the magenta straw hat she wears at present, Mrs. Gudger has two other hats: and one of these is the great-brimmed triumphal crown found ruined yet saved in a table drawer, which had been so patiently homemade ... a hat of such a particular splendor that I am fairly sure it was her wedding hat, made for her, perhaps as a surprise, by her mother. She was sixteen then, her skin would have been white, and clear of wrinkles, her body and its postures and her eyes even more pure than they are today; and she would have been happy, and confident enough in her beauty, to wear it without fear: and in her long white home-made marriage dress and in that glory of a hat, with her sister Emma, then seven years old, marveling up at her, and her mother standing away and approving her while her image slowly turned upon itself on blank floor and in a glass, she was such a poem as no human being shall touch.

*SOUND: FADE WAGON SLOWLY IN AND GET TO FULL BG LEVEL
BEFORE NEXT, OUT AT END OF NEXT*

AGEE: ... and the children are happy and excited, high on the soft load, and even a woman is taken with it a little, much more soberly, and even the man who is driving, yet he has too, in the tightness of his jaws, and in his eyes, when they meet those of any stranger, the challenging and protective, fearful and fierce pride a poor mother shows when her child, dressed in its best, is being curiously looked at: ...

EVANS: Junior Gudger: clean-ready-made overhauls, the cuffs turned up; a ready-made blue shirt; a small frayed, clean grey cap.

Pearl Woods: a dress of brown and blue checked gingham; brown glass beads; white slippers.

Clair Bell Ricketts: a dress made of plain sheeting, with a flared skirt, a belt, and some tucking at the throat; closefitting pink rayon drawers; no shoes.

Paralee Ricketts has a new dress – with orange and blue and white stripes. Whenever she goes into Cookstown her hair is too carefully done and she wears all the jewelry she has with a blend of confidence and terror. Nearly all girls are married by seventeen; by the time they are eighteen, if they are unmarried, they will be spinsters. Paralee is nineteen.

SOUND: FADE WAGON BACK IN

AGEE: ... and it has some raw, festal quality, some air also of solemn grandeur, this member in the inconceivably huge and slow parade of mule-drawn, crawling wagons, creaking under the weight of the year's bloodsweated and prayed-over work, on all the roads drawn in

... a wagon every few hundred yards, all drawn toward the gins, toward that climax of one or more year's work which yields so little at best, and nothing so often, and worse to so many hundreds of thousands.

SOUND: UNDER NEXT CROSSFADE FROM SE OF WAGON JOURNEY TO SE OF GIN

READER 1: This shall be written for those that come after: and the people which shall be born shall praise the Lord.

EVANS: The gin itself, too, the wagons drawn up in line, the people waiting on each wagon, the suspended white-shirted men on the platform, the grand-shouldered iron beam-scales cradling gently on the dark doorway their design of justice, the landlords in their shirt-sleeves at the gin or relaxed in swivels beside the decorated safes in their little offices, the heavy-muscled and bloodfaced young men in baseball caps who tumble the bales with short sharp hooks ... the tenant gets his ticket and his bale number, and waits his turn in the long quiet line; the wagon ahead is emptied and moves forward lightly as the mule is cut; he cuts his own load heavily under as the gin head is hoisted; he reaches up for the suction pipe and they let it down to him; he swings and cradles its voracity down through the crest of, and round and round his stack of cotton, until the last line has leapt up from the wagon bed; and all the while the gin is working in the deafening appetites of its metals, only it is *his* work the gin is digesting now ...

WOODS: We wuks on thu'ds an' Fo'ths. We gi's ou-ah lan-lode a thud o' ou-ah cott'n an' a fo'th o' ou-ah coen. Frm what's left, we owes him fo' two thu'ds o' tha cott'n futilizah an' tree fo'ths o' tha coen futilizah,

an' effin we borried eny livin' money from 'im, we gots ta pay him thet too, 'n interest on ev'rthin'.

SOUND: FADES OUT BY END OF ABOVE

EVANS: Woods quit school at twelve when he ran away and went to work in the mines. He can read, write, and figure; so can his wife. Woods understands the structures and tintings of rationalisation in money, sex, language, religion, law, and general social conduct in a sour way which is not on the average curriculum.

AGEE: George Gudger can spell and read and write his own name; beyond that he is helpless. He got as far as second grade. By that time there was work for him and he was slow minded anyway.

EVANS: Mrs. Ricketts can neither read nor write. She went to school one day in her life and her mother got sick and she never went back.

AGEE: Mrs. Gudger can read, write, spell, and handle simple arithmetic, and grasps and is excited by such matters as the plainer facts of astronomy and geology. In fact, whereas many among the three families have crippled but very full and real intelligences, she and to a perhaps less extent her father – Bud Woods – have also intellects. But these intellects died before they were born; they hang behind their eyes like fetuses in alcohol.

READER 2: When thy word goeth forth: it giveth light and understanding unto the simple.

SOUND: FADE GIN BACK IN UNDER ABOVE

EVANS: ... out in front, the last of the cotton snowlike relaxing in pulses down a slide of dark iron into the compress its pure whiteness; and a few moments merely of pressure under the floor level, the air of an offstage strangling; and the bale is lifted like a theatre organ, the presses unlatched, the numbered brass tag attached, the metal ties made fast: it hangs in the light breathing of the scales, *his* bale, the one *he* has made, and a little is slivered from it, and its weight and staple length are recorded on his ginning slip, and it is caught with the hooks and tumbled out of the way, *his* bale of cotton, depersonalized for ever now, identical with all the others, which shall be melted indistinguishably into an oblivion of fabrics, wounds, bleedings, wars; he takes his ginning slip to his landlord, and gets his cottonseed money, and does a little buying; and gathers his family together; and leaves town.

SOUND: *WAGON ON ROAD, GIN FADING AWAY IN DISTANCE*

The family trip by loaded mule wagon is repeated as many times as you have picked a bale. The height of the ginning season is early October, and in that time the loaded wagons are on the road before the least crack of day-light, the waiting is endless hours, and the gin is still pulsing and beating after dark.

SOUND: *FADES OUT UNDER NEXT*

WOODS: Aftah dat comes hoag-killin', 'n gris'nin' coen 'n millin sawgum cane what was plan-ed laite ta come riddy laite. 'N than we warrys 'n wun'ers ...waell we moves on ta 'nuther man? Waell ohah lan'lode g'wan wit' us'n?...An' than they is siddlmint tahme.

MUSIC: *SNEAK IN #20*

AGEE: – and the sky descends, the air becomes like dark glass, the ground stiffens, the clay honeycombs with frost, the corn and the cotton stand stripped to the naked bone and the trees are black, the odors of pork and woodsmoke sharpen all over the country, the long dark silent sleeping rains stream down in such grieving as nothing shall ever stop, and the houses are cold, fragile drums, and the animals tremble, and the clay is one shapeless sea, and winter has shut.

MUSIC: #20 CONTINUES

READER 1: My heart is smitten down, and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread.

READER 2: My days are gone like a shadow: and I am withered like grass.

READER 1: And this shall be written for those that come after

MUSIC: #20 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part IX “VESPERS”: the early evening office; six o’clock.

MUSIC: #21 EST. & UNDER

READER 1: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.

READER 2: My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth.

READER 1: The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand:

READER 2: So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.

READER 1: The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth for evermore.

MUSIC: #21 CONTINUES

AGEE: Along the great silence of the unshaded land, each day ends in a vast blaze of dust on the west, every leaf sharpened in long knives of shadow, the clay drawn down through red to purple, and the leaves losing colour, and the wild blind eyes of the cotton staring in twilight, in those odors of work done and of nature lost once more to night whose sweetness is torture, and in the slow, loaded walking home, whose stiff and gentle motions are those of creatures just awakened.

MUSIC: #21 ENDS

SOUND: QUIETLY, TILL NEXT MUSIC CUE, FOLLOW TEXT WITH TWILIGHT SOUNDS (AGEE PARTICULARLY MENTIONS FROGS, LOCUSTS, CRICKETS AND NIGHT BIRDS HALF WAY THROUGH THIS PART) Whip-poor-wills

EVANS: ... and when the supper was finished, Annie Mae, her sister Emma who was visiting, her daughter Louise, the three women, rose to the work they had scarcely ceased during the meal (for they had served us, eating betweentimes), clearing, scraping, crumbing the damp oilcloth with damp cloth in the lamp light, dishwashing, meanwhile talking ... the women lifting themselves from their chairs into this

work; the children meanwhile sinking and laid out five fathom five mile deep along the exhausted floor:

AGEE: and we, following manners, transferred with George, a few feet beyond the kitchen door, in the open porch hall, leaned back in chairs against the wall, or leaned between our knees and our planted feet; he, with his work shoes off, his feet taking, thirstily drinking like the sunken heads of horses at the trough, the cool and beauty quiet of the grained and gritted boards of the floor; and he talking a little but too tired for talk, and rolling a damp cigarette and smoking its short sweetness through to the scorching of the stony thumb, with a child's body lifted sleeping between his knees:

EVANS: and when the women are through, they may or may not come out too, with their dresses wet in front with the dishwashing and their hard hands softened and seamed as if withered with water, and sit a little while with the man or the men: and if they do, it is not for long, for everyone is much too tired, and has been awake and at work since daylight whitened a little behind the trees on the hill, and it is now very close to dark, with daylight scarcely more than a sort of tincture on the air, and this diminishing:

AGEE: and the talking is sporadic, and sinks into long unembarrassed silences; the sentences, the comments, the monosyllables, drawn up from deepest within them without thought and with faint creaking of weight as if they were wells, and spilled out in a cool flat drawl, and quietly answered; and a silence; and again, some words: and it is not really talking, or meaning, but another and profounder kind of communication, a rhythm to be completed by answer and made whole by silence, a lyric song, as horses who nudge one another in pasture, or like drowsy birds who are heavying a dark branch with

their tiredness before sleep: and it is their leisure after work; but it does not last; and in fifteen minutes, or a half-hour at most, it is done, and they draw themselves into motion for bed:

EVANS: one by one, in a granite-enameled, still new basin which is for that single purpose, they wash their feet in cold water – for this is a very cleanly and decent family – and begin to move into the bedroom: first the children, then the women, last George: the pallets are laid; the lamp is in the bedroom.

AGEE: We lay on the front porch, Walker Evans and I (X) on our backs about two feet apart in silence, our eyes open, listening. The land that was under us lay down all around us and its continuance was enormous as if we were chips or matches floated, holding their own by their very minuteness, at a great distance out upon the surface of a tenderly laboring sea. The sky was even larger.

MUSIC: #2” SNEAKS IN AT (X) ABOVE, CONTINUES HERE

READER 1: For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.

READER 2: What is man, that thou art mindful of him: and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

READER 1: Thou madest him lower than the angels: to crown him with glory and worship.

READER 2: O Lord our Governor: how excellent is thy name in all the world.

MUSIC: #22 TO CADENCE, ENDS

ANNOUNCER: Part X “COMPLINE”: the seventh and last office; said at the hour of retiring for the night.

MUSIC: #23 EST. & UNDER

READER 1: Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the most high: shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

READER 2: I will say unto the Lord, Thou art my hope, and my stronghold: my God, in him will I trust.

READER 1: For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter: and from the noisome pestilence.

READER 2: He shall defend thee under his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers: his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

READER 1: Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

READER 2: For the pestilence that walketh in darkness: nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day ...

READER 1: There shall no evil happen unto thee: neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

READER 2: For he shall give his angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways.

MUSIC: #23 CONTINUES

AGEE: All over the whole round earth and in the settlements, the towns, and the great iron stones of cities, people are drawn inward within their little shells of rooms, and are to be seen in their wondrous and pitiful actions through the surfaces of their lighted windows by thousands, by millions, undressing, preparing for bed, preparing for sleep: and none can care, beyond that room; and none can be cared for, by any beyond that room: and we wonder only that an age that has borne its children and must lose and has lost them and lost life, can bear further living; but so it is ...

MUSIC: #23 ENDS

SOUND: QUIET MOVEMENTS FOLLOWING TEXT OF NEXT ELEVEN SPEECHES: ALSO MUFFLED EVENING SOUNDS (HEARD FROM INDOORS) TILL NEXT MUSIC CUE, AND THEN CROSS-FADE WITH MUSIC

EVANS: George sits in the porch dark, smoking another cigarette. Junior, morose and whimpering and half blind himself, sliding the straps from his shoulders and the overhauls from his nakedness and sinking in his shirt asleep already, along the thin cotton pallet. Burt scarcely half awakens as his sister strips him, a child of dough, and is laid like a corpse beside his cruel brother. Squinchy is drugged beyond doom-crack: his heavy tow head falls back across her bent arm loose as that of a dead bird, the mouth wide open, the eyelids oily gleaming, as his mother slips from his dwarf body the hip length, one-button dress; and the women, their plain shifts lifted from the closet nails, undress themselves, turned part away from each other, and careful not to look: the mother, whose body already at twenty seven is so wrung

and drained and old, a scrawny, infinitely tired, delicate animal, the poor emblems of delight no longer practicable to any but most weary and grunting use: ...

AGEE: and the still inviolate, lyric body of a child, very much of the earth, yet drawn into that short and seraphic phase of what seems unearthliness which it will so soon lose: ...

EVANS: and they are in bed and George throws his cigarette, hurdling its spark into the night yard, and comes in, and they turn their faces away while he undresses; and he takes the clean thin union suit from its nail by the scrolled iron head of the bed; and he slides between the coarse sheets and lets down his weight;

AGEE: and for a little while more, because they are stimulated, they keep talking, while the children sleep, and while Louise lies looking and listening, with the light still on, and there is almost volubility in the talk, and almost gaiety again, and inaudible joking, and little runs of laughter like startled sparrows; and gradually this becomes more quiet, and there is a silence full of muted thought; and George says –

GUDGER: Waell –

AGEE: – fluffs out the lamp, and after a few seconds Louise says –

LOUISE: Naht, Momma.

ANNIE MAE: Naht, L'eez.

LOUISE: Naht, Deddy.

GUDGER: Naht, L'eez.

ANNIE MAE: Naht Goage.

GUDGER: Naht, Annamay, G'naht. (X)

AGEE: And there is a silence, and a slow and constrained twisting on springs and extension of a body, and silence; and a long silence in the darkness of the peopled room that is chambered in the darkness of the continent before the unwatching stars....

MUSIC: #24 CROSS-FADE WITH SOUND FROM (X) ABOVE, CONTINUES HERE

READER 2: In perfect peace and safety, I shall sleep, and take my rest. If I give sleep to mine eyes, and slumber to mine eyelids. I shall sleep and take my rest.

ANNIE MAE: Ah'm soo tied when ah lays down at naite h'it doan seem ah kin evah git 'nuff rest.

MUSIC: #24 CONTINUES

READER 1: At this hour of Compline there is ended and fulfilled speaking, eating, and drinking, and labouring, and all bodily business. So that after that time ought to be kept great stillness, and silence not only from words, but also from all deeds save only soft prayer, and holy thinking, and bodily sleep. For Compline betokeneth the end of man's life; and therefore each person ought to dispose him to bedward, as if his bed were his grave.

MUSIC: #24 CONTINUES

ANNIE MAE: Ah tell ya ah'm not a gwanne be sorry win ah go. Ah woun't be sorry dis minute if'n it warn't fur L'eez 'n Skinchy heah. Rest 'ud git 'long alrai-it.

READER 2: The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.

MUSIC: #24 CONTINUES

AGEE: This has been happening for a long while: its beginning was before stars.
It will continue for a long while: no one knows when it will end.

MUSIC: #24 TO CADENCE, ENDS

EVANS: The graveyard is about fifty by a hundred yards inside a wire fence. There are almost no trees in it: a lemon verbena and a small magnolia; it is all red clay and very few weeds.

AGEE: Out at the front of it across the road there is a cornfield and then a field of cotton and then trees.

EVANS: Most of the headboards are pine but some of the graves have real headstones, a few of them so large they must be the graves of landowners.

READER 1: Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions:

AGEE: One or two besides a headpiece have a flat of stone as large as the whole grave.

EVANS: On one of these there is a china dish on whose cover delicate hands lie crossed, cuffs at their wrists, and the nails distinct. On another a large fluted vase stands full of dead flowers, with an inch of rusty water at the bottom.

READER 1: All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times.

AGEE: There are others about which there can be no mistake: they are the graves of the poorest of the farmers and of the tenants. Mainly they are the graves with the pine headboards; or without them.

READER 2: Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.

EVANS: When the grave is still young, it is very sharply distinct, and of a peculiar form. The clay is raised in a long and narrow oval with a sharp ridge, the shape exactly of an inverted boat. A fairly broad board is driven at the head; a narrower one at the feet. On some of these boards names and dates have been written or printed in hesitant letterings, in pencil or in crayon, but most of them appear never to have been touched in this way.

AGEE: ... there are a great many graves, so many they seem shoals of minnows, two feet long and less, lying near one another; and of these smallest graves, very few are marked with any wood at all, and many are already so drawn into the earth that they are scarcely distinguishable.

EVANS: On some of the graves of children there are still pretty pieces of glass and china, but on the smaller graves the forms of animals, and toys: small autos, locomotives and fire engines of red and blue metal; tea sets for dolls, and tin kettles the size of thimbles: little effigies in rubber and glass and china, of cows, lions, bulldogs, mice, and the characters of the comic strips; –

AGEE: *(his speech deepening in a long self-contained meditation)*
– and I knew, when Louise told me how precious her china dogs were to her and her glass lace dish, where they would go if she were soon drawn down: and the tea set we gave Clair Bell Ricketts, I knew when we bought it in what daintiness it will in a little while adorn her remembrance when the heaviness has sufficiently grown upon her and she has done the last of her dancing: for it will only be by a fortune that cannot be even hoped that she will live much longer; and only by great chance can Fred and Sadie Ricketts do for her what two parents have done here for their little daughter: not only a tea set, and a cococola bottle, and a milk bottle, ranged on her short grave, but a stone at the head and a stone at the foot, and in the headstone her six month image as she lies sleeping dead in her white dress, the head sunken delicately forward, deeply and delicately gone, the eyes seamed, as that of a dead bird, and on the rear face of this stone the words:

We can't have all things to please us,
Our little Daughter, Jo An, has gone to Jesus.

READER 1: And some there be which have no memorial; who perished as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born; and their children after them.

READER 2: Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.

AGEE: It is not likely for Clair Bell; it is not likely for any of you, my beloved, whose poor lives I have already so betrayed, and should you see these things so astounded, so destroyed, I dread to dare that I shall ever look into your dear eyes again: and soon, quite soon now, in two years, in five, in forty, it will all be over, and one by one we shall all be drawn into the planet beside one another; let us hope better of our children, and of our children's children; let us *know* there is cure, there is to be an end of it, whose beginnings are long begun, and in slow agonies and all deceptions clearing; and in the teeth of all that may threaten its denial and hope of good use to men, let us most quietly and in most reverent fierceness say, by its utmost meanings:

Our father, who art in heaven, hallow'd be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us: and lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom: and the power: and the glory: for ever and ever: amen.

MUSIC: #25, *FINALE*

(PAUSE)

ANNOUNCER: CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT

MUSIC: *FILL TO TIME IF NEEDED*