By August it always seemed as though rain had forsaken Hacken-
sack, New Jersey, forever. The flower beds were parched, and the
leaves on the tiny maple trees had already begun to turn brown. The
grass in front of our garden apartments was withered and yellow,
anxiously awaiting the winter snow which would cover its bleached
ugliness. The superintendent's "Keep Off the Grass" sign stuck
forlornly in the center of the yard and prompted visitors to remark
wearily, "What grass?" Here and there, however, life persisted in
spite of the draught. Late summer flies hovered near windows, and at
twilight there was always the sound of brown miller moths butting
themselves gently against the screen door.

My favorite haunt as a small child was a spot adjacent to the
apartment next to ours. Small tables with turquoise and white
umbrellas stood precariously secured in the cement. There was also a
small wooden swing, and if one swung high enough, he could just
see the tops of the umbrellas. Young women sat at the tables drinking
coffee and talking of their children. But as a rule, no one came
before lunch. I would sit and swing with my mind empty and my
eyes closed, conscious only of the warm sun as it penetrated my thin
cotton dress. I swung lazily, holding on with one hand and brushing
my foot against the Queen Anne's lace that grew from the cracked
cement. On my left, the wild roses which had somehow managed to
survive the heat clambered up the side of the building. I often wondered
which flowers had the worse time of it: the roses which climbed the hot
brick wall, or the weeds which pushed resolutely through the cracks
in the pavement.

Recently I visited again the place where I had spent the first five
years of my life. The apartments seemed to have shrunk in size,
although they still appeared to be fairly new. The swings and umbrella-
tables were gone; the cracked cement had been replaced with black-
top. Ivy covered the wall which once had been decorated with wild
roses. All was changed. Nothing of the elusive atmosphere remained.
Nothing, that is, save the memory of it, as fragile and as persistent
as the Queen Anne's lace which had grown there in a former time.