



MIDAMERICA IV

*The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature*

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PREFACE

With the publication of *MidAmerica IV* the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature begins its seventh year with a special Bicentennial examination of two hundred years of Midwestern literature. Included are essays that define a literary history that began in the travel literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and in the growth of "The Queen City of the West," that expressed itself in the popular music that spanned the mid-nineteenth century, and that before the end of that century became the voice of Chicago and the prairie beyond it.

In our own time that literature has not only become part of the American literary mainstream, but it has been subject to distortion and to misinterpretation as, in achieving its maturity, it began to seek its origins in myth, in reality, and in the movement inherent in the pursuit of the future. As the literature of the Midwest begins its third century its creative, critical, and scholarly vigor is nowhere more evident than in the appended annual bibliography.

During the past year the Society sponsored, as its Sixth Annual Conference, the Sherwood Anderson Centenary observance at Michigan State University; it provided programs at the Modern Language Association, the Midwest Modern Language Association, and the Popular Culture Association; and it continued the *Newsletter* and *Midwestern Miscellany*. This work is made possible by members, friends, and the Department of American Thought and Language of Michigan State University. This volume is dedicated to all of them, and especially to Toni Pienkowski, who did a great deal of hard work for the Society during the past two years, and, as always, to Pat.

DAVID D. ANDERSON

November, 1976

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THE QUEEN CITY AND A NEW LITERATURE

DAVID D. ANDERSON

The beginnings of Midwestern literature, like that of the nation itself, are found in diaries and journals written by the explorers, surveyors, and exploiters who began to move into the area in the mid-eighteenth century: Celeron de Bienville, whose *Journal* describes his 1749 expedition into Ohio to claim the territory for France; Christopher Gist, who explored the country for the Ohio Company of Virginia in 1750-51 and described his adventures in his *Journal*, as did his companion, Colonel George Croghan; Colonel John Mays, who published *Journey to the Ohio Country* in 1789. There were dozens more, particularly as the eighteenth century became the nineteenth.

But, although travel documents, however intriguing, exotic, or exciting may provide the identifiable beginning of a literature, by their nature they rarely provide the foundations upon which a substantial literature and literary tradition can be built. That can only be done as a result of settlement, of the stirrings of an incipient culture and, of perhaps greater significance in the settlement of North America, of the establishment of a journalistic tradition. It is not accidental that literary careers from Benjamin Franklin to Ernest Hemingway had their beginnings in journalism.

When William Maxwell wrote, set the type box, and published the first issue of *The Centinel of the North-Western Territory* in Cincinnati on November 9, 1793, he was not merely establishing the first newspaper in the area north and west of the Ohio River, the Old Northwest, but he was laying the foundation of what was to become in the next half-century a journalistic tradition that was, in turn, to bring to prominence men as disparate as Whitelaw Reid, William Dean Howells, David Ross Locke, and,

a bit later, even Warren G. Harding. At the same time Maxwell founded a publishing industry that was to flourish during that same half-century, sending the McGuffey readers and other works out to the nation; he provided the opportunity for literary journals to flourish—or at least to appear: *the Literary Cadet* (1819), *Ohio* (1821), *Literary Gazette* (1824), *Western Review* (1827-30), *Cincinnati Mirror* (1831-36), *Western Messenger* (1835-41), *Western Monthly Magazine* (1833-37), and the most durable of them all, the *Ladies Repository and Gatherings of the West* (1841-76).

Maxwell's ambitions were hardly pretentious enough to anticipate such a literary outpouring—his first four-page issue, which set the trend for the future, announced his editorial policy as "Open to all parties but influenced by none," and he filled the 8½ by 10½ sheets, three columns to a page, with three-month-old foreign news, two-week-old domestic news, a pirated chapter from Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, advertisements, lost and found announcements, and an eloquent appeal for support:

I am led to believe that the people of this country are disposed to promote science, and have the fullest assurance that the *Press* from its known utility will receive proper encouragement. And on my part am content with small gains, at the present, flattering myself that from attention to business, I shall preserve the good wishes of those who have already countenanced me in this undertaking, and secure the friendship of subsequent population . . . the EDITOR therefore rests his success on the merits of the publication, but as an inducement to the people of this country, to make exertions to support the *Press*, he must observe that they will have an opportunity, by means of this *paper* to make themselves and their situation known abroad; if they have valuable lands to dispose of, it can be made known; if they have grievances to lay before the public, it can now be done.

Maxwell built perhaps better than he knew, however; in 1796 he published the first book in the Territory—the Territorial laws, known as *Maxwell's Code*. And his paper survives yet: he sold it in 1796 to Edmund Freeman, who changed its name to *Free-*

man's Journal and in 1800 moved it to Chillicothe, the new territorial capitol, where after Freeman's death in 1801 it merged with the *Scioto Gazette*, now the *Chillicothe Gazette*. By 1810 sixteen papers were founded in what had become the state of Ohio in 1803. Among them were the *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Mercury* (1804), *Lebanon Western Star* (1807), *Steubenville Western Herald* (1806), *Dayton Repertory* (1808), *Cincinnati Whig* (1809), *Lancaster Ohio Eagle* (1809), and *Zanesville Muskingum Messenger* (1809), all of which continue to survive in one form or another.

In his publication of the three-and-a half column excerpt, "the Monk-Calais," from Sterne's novel, Maxwell had undoubtedly sought to fill his pages, a decision made more by expediency than by any desire to provide for the cultural growth of the territory, but at the same time he pointed out the way that journalism, publishing, literature, and education were to take in the next half-century, a period during which Cincinnati was to direct and dominate the cultural life of what was rapidly becoming the Midwest. By the late 1840's, Cincinnati had seven colleges, seminaries, or institutes; it had libraries with a total of more than 40,000 books available to subscribers; and it supported a flourishing publishing industry that not merely published the McGuffey readers, the papers, and the journals, but in the papers and journals was sending the work of dozens of Ohio poets out to the rest of the area and country. In William T. Coggleshall's *The Poets and Poetry of the West*, published in Columbus in 1860, are included the works of 152 poets, sixty of them Ohioans, many of whom had published in local papers, and the majority of whom had published most extensively in Cincinnati papers and journals. Although a flourishing meat-packing and shipping industry had already begun to give the city the title "Porkopolis," it already called itself proudly, "The Queen City of the West."

During the first half of the nineteenth century, a period that saw the Northwest Territory move from wilderness to agricultural empire as Americans sought a freer, open society in the West, the foundations were laid for the economic, social and political empire that was to come after the Civil War, and incidentally, almost unnoticed, under the leadership of the movement Maxwell had begun in Cincinnati, it had begun to produce

a literature, much of it, to be sure, minor and local, but a good deal—notably that of William Dean Howells, Alice Cary, Phoebe Cary, and Coates Kinney—to make its impact on the East.

Contrary to popular belief then and unfortunately even yet, these migrants from the Old Northwest, rapidly becoming the Midwest, were not refugees from a cultural wasteland, nor did they spring spontaneously out of a society pursuing the frontier goals of stability, order, and material success. Rather they were the results of a process of growth, of a local and regional literary flourishing, and they were the first of many, in that century and this, who were to make their marks, however fleeting or permanent, upon the literary development of the nation.

Among those who did not turn to the East for their success and audiences, but were instead largely responsible for the climate out of which the better-known poets came, were those who were part of the newspaper-publishing-literary complex of Cincinnati, who achieved a measure of local and regional success, both literary and financial, and who created the climate that produced Howells and his followers in the nineteenth century. Even more significantly, they made possible the emergence of those who, through Chicago, Cincinnati's successor as the focal point of the Midwest, and journalism, the oldest literary tradition in the region, went on to direct the course of American literature in this century.

Among this group are some of the most interesting, if forgotten, poets whom the Old West and America produced in the first half of the nineteenth century: those who found their inspiration in the geographical or mythic background of the Old West at the same time that they grew up with the country. These are the poets of whom the *Western Review* spoke when it said:

Little as they dream of the fact in the Atlantic country, we have our thousand orators and poets. . . . Now we are of the number who are so simple as to believe that amidst the freshness of our unspoiled nature, beneath the shade of the hugh sycamores of the Miami, or cooling forehead in the freezes of the beautiful Ohio . . . a man might write as well as in the dark dens of a city. . . .

These are the poets, most of them emigrants to the Ohio country, who found their muse and their subject matter in

uniquely American, uniquely Old Western themes. Among them are William Davis Gallagher (1808-1894), Otway Curry (1804-1855), and Charles A. Jones (1815-1851).

Gallagher, who was to become the best known as well as the best of those who refused to seek fame and fortune in the East, but instead chose to remain in the West, was, like most of his generation, born in the East, in Philadelphia. Brought at the age of eight with his three brothers to Cincinnati by his widowed mother, he began almost immediately to learn the printer's trade, and for much of his life he had an influential career in Ohio journalism in Cincinnati, Xenia, and Columbus before becoming editor of the Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*. Between 1826 and 1838 his career is synonymous with the ebb, flow, and flavor of Western journalism in the tradition begun by Maxwell; he worked on the *Western Tiller*, the Cincinnati *Register*, *The Western Minerva*, and the *Xenia Backwoodsman*, all of them characterized by the vigor and flavor of the West. Briefly, in 1838-1839, he financed, edited, and published the *Hesperian*, a literary journal that survived for three volumes before succumbing to the financial disease that was fatal to so many other Western journals.

During its brief life the journal subscribed to the two principles that dominated the mainstream of American literature to the East: it was avowedly American, and it was clearly romantic. Perhaps in response to Emerson's demand for an American literature, Gallagher and the *Hesperian* sought contributions that had found inspiration and subject matter in elements peculiarly American and Western: Indians and the mysterious Indian mounds scattered through the Ohio Valley; the rivers, the forests, and the early settlements; and growth, whether potential or real. During its brief tenure, the *Hesperian* was an authentic voice of the region and the time.

During his career as a practicing newspaperman and later, with the rise of the Republican Party, as a supporter of Salmon B. Chase and Abraham Lincoln and a political activist, his career was perhaps more typical than exceptional, but during those years he was also a practicing poet. Much of his early work is lost or scattered in the dusty files of Ohio newspapers, but he published three brief volumes in the late 1830's, all now virtually unobtainable. These are *Erato, No. 1*, thirty-six pages, published

in the Spring of 1835; *Erato*, No. 2, sixty pages, in September, 1835, and *Erato*, No. III, which I have not been able to find, in 1837. The best of these volumes, fourteen poems, was collected in his *Selections From the Poetical Literature of the West*, published in Cincinnati in 1841.

Gallagher's major work is "Miami Woods," a long pastoral verse that recreates the virgin forests of the Ohio Valley as they appear during the four seasons of the year. First he describes the forests that had covered the Western country for ages before the coming of settlement and as they could yet be found in Gallagher's youth:

Around me here rise up majestic trees
That centuries have nurtured: graceful elms,
Which interlock their limbs among the clouds;
Dark-columned walnuts, from whose liberal store
The nut-brown Indian maids their baskets fill'd
Ere the first pilgrims knelt on Plymouth Rock;
Giant sycamores, whose mighty arms
Sheltered the Redman in his Wigwam prone,
What time the Norsemen roamed our chartless seas;
And towering oaks, that from the subject plain
Sprang when the builders of the tumuli
First disappeared, and to the conquering hordes
Left, these, the dim traditions of their race
That rise around, in many a form of earth
Tracing the plain, but shrouded in the gloom
Of dark, impenetrable shades, that fall
From the far centuries.

Here are all the elements of conventional early nineteenth century romanticism: the reverence for nature and the past; the conviction that men in nature are nobler and more virtuous than their civilized brothers; the fascination with remnants of a long-gone race. But the specific details that Gallagher includes are peculiar to the uncorrupted country that he celebrates. But as the seasons change, so does the countryside as he notes the entry, still natural and uncorrupted, of the pioneer into that setting. As summer comes, he sees:

. . . Far away
The elder-thicket, robed in brightest bloom,

Is shining like a sunlit cloud at rest;
Nearer, the briar-roses load the air
With sweetness; and where your half-hidden fence
And toppling cabin mark the Pioneer's
First habitation in the wilderness,
The gay begonia to the ridge-pole climbs,
The yellow willow spreads its generous shade
Around the cook spring's margin, and the old
And bent catalpa waves its fan-like leaves
And lifts its milk-white blossoms. Beautiful!

Fall comes, with the vivid color of change and of life's last glory as it approaches its annual death:

. . . All through the night
The subtle frost has plied its magic art;
And in the day the golden sun hath wrought
True wonders; and the winds of morn and even
Have touched with magic breath the changing leaves . . .
Here, where the poplar rears its yellow crest,
A golden glory; yonder, where the oak
Stands monarch of the forest, and the ash
Is girt with flame-like parasite, and broad
The dogwood spreads beneath, and fringing all,
The sumac blushes to the ground, a flood
Of deepest crimson; and afar, where looms
The gnarled gum, a cloud of bloodiest red. . .

Then comes the respite, more beautiful for its briefness, that is peculiarly American and Midwestern: Indian summer, when the harshness to come and the beauty past merge for a moment:

----The weary gales
Come sighing from the meadows up the slope,
And die in plaintive murmurs; in the elm
The jay screams hoarsely, and the squirrel barks
Where the old oak tree stands naked: from the leaves
That rustle to my tread, an odor comes
As of mortality. It is the sad,
Sweet period of the year our calends call
The "Indian Summer". . .

But pastoral beauty becomes the harsh reality of winter:

. . . The heavens grow darker daily; bleakest winds
shriek through the naked winds; the robber owl

Hoots from his rocking citadel all night;
 And all the day unhous'd cattle stand
 Shivering and pinch'd. By many a potent sign
 The dark and dreary days of winter thus
 Inaugurate their king. A summer bird,
 I fly before his breath.—Loved haunts, farewell!

"Miami Woods" is part of the mainstream of romanticism that swept America during Gallagher's youth, and at the same time it is intensely personal. He identifies closely with his subject matter, as he does in other poems, among them "The Song of the Pioneers," a celebration of the beginning of settlement in the Ohio country, and "The Spotted Fawn," a retelling of an old Indian legend. "August" and "May" recreate natural settings and influences; "Conservatism" uses nature as the basis for a homily, and "in Memoriam" depicts the easing of grief at the passage of time. In all of his poems Gallagher explores an intimate relationship between himself as poet-observer and the natural setting, timeless and yet evocative of time past and the inevitability of change.

Like Gallagher, Otway Curry began his poetic career as a journalist in Cincinnati after a number of years as a farmer and carpenter in his native Highland County, in the South, and in Detroit. For six months he was associated with Gallagher in publishing the *Hesperian* in Columbus, and he later published and edited the Greene County *Torch-Light* in Xenia, until he became a lawyer in Marysville, where he spent the last decade of his life. Less polished as a poet than Gallagher, he was at the same time more conventional in subject matter and more moral in tone. In "The Lost Pleiad," in tones reminiscent of Lowell and Emerson, he emphasized the transience of time and the permanence of eternity:

Millions of ages gone,
 Didst thou survive, in thy enthroned place,
 Amidst the assemblies of the starry race,
 Still shining on — and on.

.....

Sadly our thoughts rehearse
 The story of thy wild and wondrous flight

Thro' the deep deserts of the ancient night
 And far-off universe.

We call — we call thee back,
 And suns of many a constellation bright
 Shall weave the waves of their illuming light
 O'er thy returning track.

Nevertheless, Curry could, on occasion, be appropriately rustic. Perhaps the best known of his poems was the famous "Buckeye Cabin," a Whig campaign song of 1840. In it Curry contributed to the myth of William Henry Harrison as an unspoiled man of the frontier, and he contributed at the same time to breaking the long Democratic hold on the West. In the song, Curry makes Ohio and Harrison one:

Oh, where, tell me where, was your Buckeye cabin made?
 Oh, where, tell me where, was your Buckeye cabin made?
 'Twas built among the merry boys that wield the plow
 and spade,
 Where the long cabin stands, in the bonnie Buckeye shade.

Oh, what, tell me what, is to be your cabin's fate?
 Oh, what, tell me what, is to be your cabin's fate?
 We'll wheel it to the Capitol, and place it there elate,
 For a token and a sign of the bonnie Buckeye State.

Oh, why, tell me why, does your Buckeye cabin go?
 Oh, why, tell me why, does your Buckeye cabin go?
 It goes against the spoilsmen, for well its builders know
 It was Harrison that fought for the cabins long ago.

Oh, what, tell me what, then, will little Martin do?
 Oh, what, tell me what, then, will little Martin do?
 He'll "follow in the footsteps" of Price and Swarthout
 While the long cabin rings again with old Tippecanoe.

Oh, who fell before him in battle, tell me who?
 Oh, who fell before him in battle, tell me who?
 He drove the savage legions, and British armies, too.
 At the Rapids, and the Thames, and old Tippecanoe.

By whom, tell me whom, will the battle next be won?

By whom, tell me whom, will the battle next be won?
The spoilsmen and leg treasurers will soon begin to run!
And the "Log Cabin Candidate" will march to Washington.

The song was first sung at the Ohio Whig Convention on February 22, 1840, when twenty thousand people gathered at Columbus to support Harrison and Tyler. The occasion featured a cabin on wheels, from Union County. It was made of buckeye logs, and in it was a group of singers singing Otway Curry's song to the tune of "Highland Laddie."

Charles A. Jones, born in Philadelphia but resident in Cincinnati for almost all his life, began his writing career as a contributor to the Cincinnati *Mirror*, *The Message*, *the Western Literary Journal*, and *the Hesperian*. A practicing lawyer for most of his life, he sought his subject matter in the Western past, both remote and more immediate. One of his best-known poems was a narrative of the outlaws who rendezvoused in the infamous Cave-In-Rock on the Ohio; another commemorates the death of Tecumseh at the battle of the Thames in Ontario on October 5, 1813. Perhaps his best poem, however, is his long, near-epic "The Old Mound," the now-gone prehistoric earthwork that gave its name to Mound Street in Cincinnati and at the same time contributed its share to a growing myth of the past:

Lonely and sad it stands:
The trace of ruthless hands
Is on its sides and summit, and, around,
The dwellings of the white man pile the ground;
And, curling in the air,
The smoke of thrice a thousand hearths is there:
Without, all speaks of life,—within,
Deaf to the city's echoing din,
Sleep well the tenants of that silent Mound,
Their names forgot, their memories unrenown'd.

Upon its top I tread,
And see around me spread
Temples and mansions, and the hoary hills,
Bleak with the labor that the coffer fills,
But mars their bloom the while,
And steals from nature's face its joyous smile:

And here and there, below,
The stream's meandering flow
Breaks on the view; and westward in the sky
The gorgeous clouds in crimson masses lie.

The hammer's clang rings out,
Where late the Indian's shout
Startled the wild-fowl from its sedgy nest,
And broke the wild deer's and the panther's rest.
The lordly oaks went down
Before the ax — the cane-brake is a town:
The bark canoe no more
Glides noiseless from the shore;
And, sole memorial of a nation's doom,
Amid the works of art rises this lonely tomb.

In this contrast between the unknown past and the non-romantic present, Jones also records the passing of the pioneer Midwest, the Old Northwest, as the primeval forest described by Gallagher in "Miami Woods" gave way to the farms and cities, and nature became transformed to a mockery of its once-proud self. Jones's mound had already had its top removed before he wrote, and shortly thereafter it was leveled, its only memorials in the name of the street and in Jones's poem, both of them remaining anachronistically after the time of the mound and the primitive past.

With the passage of time, change continued, and economic, social and literary leadership moved with the times to the north and west. By the Civil War, Chicago had already overtaken Cincinnati in pork shipping and processing, becoming the new Porkopolis, and it aspired to cultural leadership as well. By that time, in little more than half a century, other writers, more determinedly and consciously literary, began to emerge, often to greater fame and success. But the Cincinnati poets gave voice and vision to an age, a time, and a spirit that, even while it was vanishing, provided mythical and real foundations for the works of a great many writers, ranging from William Dean Howells to Sherwood Anderson and Harte Crane, who were yet to come.

MIDWESTERN TRAVEL LITERATURE OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY: ROMANCE AND REALITY

DOUGLAS A. NOVERR

It has been almost fifteen years since Robert R. Hubach published his landmark discursive bibliography, *Early Midwestern Travel Narratives An Annotated Bibliography 1634-1850* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961). Reading through that bibliography, one realizes what an invaluable contribution Professor Hubach has made in locating the published and unpublished literature and primary sources of the Midwest during its presettlement, colonial, territorial, and early statehood periods. Hubach's bibliography has been ably supplemented by the *Great Lakes Review Bibliography* No. 4 "Midwest Personal Narratives" (especially section III. "Some Prominent Narratives") in the Summer, 1975 issue (Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 64-75).

After consulting these two bibliographical sources, as well as Ralph L. Rusk's *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), I realized that my initial goal of surveying the first centennial hundred years (1776-1876) of Midwestern travel literature was an impossible one. I have narrowed the focus in three ways. First, I will restrict my analysis of Midwestern travel literature to the upper part of the Old Northwest Territory, specifically the "lakes region" of the Upper Great Lakes including Lakes Huron and Superior and the settlements from Detroit, to Mackinac Island, to Sault Ste. Marie, to the Fond du Lac settlement at the westernmost end of Lake Superior. This was one of the oldest parts of the Northwest Territory, truly, as most travellers of the period noted when entering Lake Huron, a wilderness region where *coureurs de bois*, *voyageurs*, French explorers, the proud native Indian tribes,

and the British military lived and survived in their particular ways and by their unique understandings. Second, I will confine my brief overview of travel literature to the period from 1815-1855 (from the Treaty of Ghent that ended the War of 1812 on December 24, 1814, to opening of the Soo Ship Canal and locks). This period saw Michigan advance its territorial status and become a state during the year of the first great extended depression of the new nation, the so-called Panic of 1837, and a period when all lands in lower and upper peninsula were cleared of Indian title, thus assuring the much desired state sovereignty of the Jacksonian period. Third, I will only deal with travel literature as distinct from travel narratives or reports. I define travel literature as coherent, unified travel books written for publication by a writer and consciously aimed at a reading audience or market (almost always Eastern) as well as employing certain conventions of this distinguishable literary genre. Thus, I will not be discussing travel diaries, collections of travel letters, guidebooks, gazetteers, or historical accounts of the area identified. I will also restrict my analysis to writings by native American writers, omitting the numerous foreign travellers (Alexis de Tocqueville, Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Anna Brownell Jameson, and others) who wrote about the Great Lakes legion.

I would like to focus on two particular works by American authors which fit this definition of travel literature: Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* (Boston and New York, 1844) and Charles Lanman's *A Summer in the Wilderness; Embracing a Canoe Voyage up the Mississippi and around Lake Superior* (New York and Philadelphia, 1847). I have chosen two examples of romantic travel literature from the 1840's in order to focus on: (1) the nature of the romantic response to the lakes region and the wilderness in terms of description and emotional reaction; (2) the observations on the native Indian population of this region, a group that was often romanticized as the noble savage or the last true remnant of a heroic but disappearing race; and (3) observations on the rapid transition in this region from contested wilderness to territory to state in terms of the national concern for progress and destiny.

Before turning to the specific business of the paper I think it is important to construct a genre context for the discussion.

Travel literature is a special genre which lacks hard and fast conventions and which relies on special qualities of concrete description, observer-outsider insights, an aura of immediacy and presentness, and the rhythms and facts of travel, including the mode of transportation. Much of travel literature is ephemeral in nature, for the traveller's record is one of fresh impressions or notions which are not tested by time or by the multiplicity of facts or situations which may well alter initial perceptions. But this is the very appeal of traveller literature—its emphasis on the heightened moment, a transient glimpse which often reveals the characteristic or unique qualities of people and locations. The travel literature of early nineteenth-century America anticipated and even inspired the local color and regionalism that developed later in American literature. It is important to see this connection, for the travel writer would often seek to capture and record the uniqueness of a place or coherent region. This would be done by noting the everyday appearances, speech patterns, local customs, news, and historical associations of a locale or unified area (as the northern Great Lakes wilderness was united by Indian guides and voyageurs in *batteaux* and canoes moving from military and trading outposts to settlements). The recording traveller saw as novel and picturesque those scenes and scenery often taken for granted by the local inhabitants. Or the travel writer might, by making a certain established circuit and returning by the same route, catch the society at a transitional or even stable moment in its development. Thus, travel literature in this period served a number of important social purposes.

Despite the limitations imposed by the biases or prejudices of the traveller as well as the human tendency to project one's own established view of things on to anything new, travel literature met certain social needs. First, it satisfied a national curiosity about a region recently (that is, in the second decade of the nineteenth-century) convulsed in the War of 1812 and the scene of both triumph (Perry's naval victory on Lake Erie at Put-in-Bay) and ignominy (General Hull's surrender of Detroit on the infamous day of August 16, 1812) for the new nation and then firmly secured in peace by the Rush-Bagot Agreement in 1817 and a boundary commission in 1820. Second, the travel reports

often encouraged those who were contemplating western settlement to move west with assurances that lands were plentiful, secure, and cheap, with familiar institutions firmly in place or rapidly developing. The travel books, in their own way, helped to solidify an emerging American nationalism by connecting Easterners to the Midwest regions and enabling them to see that the next stage of the spiralling or cyclical history of democratic institutions was the emerging Northwest Territory. Reports were, of course, not all glowing and optimistic, and many travellers lamented the incursions of civilization and progress in the romantic wilderness. Overall, however, travel writers saw the securing of the Northwest Territory as a decisive turning point in American history. Its military importance, its much needed lands for a burgeoning and restless population, its vital waterway links for commerce and trade, its potential for political alliance with the East, its potential for confirming anew the Jeffersonian democratic dream—all these were not lost on those who observed and wrote about its realities and potential. Third, the travel literature which described the "lakes region" and wilderness of the Northwest provided a testing ground for romantic conceptions about Nature on a grand scale with the added dimension of an area rife with historic associations connected with the Indians, colonial wars, and the first national war.

Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* (1844) narrates the trip she took with Reverend James Freeman Clarke and his sister Sarah Freeman Clarke, starting at Niagara, departing from Buffalo and travelling by steamboat on the Great Lakes to Chicago, from which she made excursions into Illinois and Wisconsin Territory. After several weeks using Chicago as a base, she went by boat to Milwaukee, where she spent two weeks, and then on to Mackinaw and Sault Ste. Marie, the high points of her summer tour. The book has characteristic transcendental themes: the self-reliant independence of the traveller; the testing of freedom and self reliance under self-imposed circumstances; a concern for individual freedom as a social value and reality; the impact of the romantic wilderness and lakes scenery on the mind in terms of new perceptions of beauty.

When the ship stopped at the Manitou Islands on the way to Chicago, a way station where wood was taken on for fuel, Mar-

garet Fuller observed the woodcutters of that island and "their slovenly hats." This caused her to consider the central fact of Western life: the fact of sudden and chaotic growth.

I came to the West prepared for the distaste I must experience at its mushroom growth. I know that, where "go ahead" is the only motto, the village cannot grow into the gentle proportions that successive lives and the graduations of experience involuntarily give. In older countries the house of the son grew from that of the father, as naturally as new joints on a bough, and the cathedral crowned the whole as naturally as the leafy summit of a tree. This cannot be here. The march of the peaceful is scarce less wanton than that of warlike invasion. The old landmarks are broken down, and the land, for a season, bears none except of the rudeness of conquest and the needs of the day, whose bivouac fires blacken the sweetest forest glades. I have come prepared to see all this, to dislike it, but not with stupid narrowness to distrust or defame. On the contrary, while I will not be so obliging as to confound ugliness with beauty, discord with harmony, and laud and be contented with all I meet, when it conflicts with my best desires and tastes, I trust my reverent faith to woo the mighty meaning of the scene, perhaps to foresee the law by which a new order, a new poetry, is to be evoked from this chaos. . . .

This honest admission of her prejudices and preconceptions about the West is forcefully stated, but it is the transcendental search for the unifying principle ("The law by which a new order, a new poetry, is to be evoked from this chaos. . . .") that dominates here. There was an ugliness to frontier growth and a violence by which settling man advanced on the virgin wilderness. This passage also sets the dominant tensions of *A Summer on the Lakes*: frontier development vs. the value of untamed, virgin wilderness, settled and cultured New England values vs. utilitarian, makeshift values of a frontier society, and romantic conceptions of Nature vs. the hard realities of pioneer growth on the land.

The results of Margaret Fuller's wooing of the "mighty meaning" of the scene were indeed mixed. She saw the degradation of the Indians by alcohol and dependence on the government, and although she noted that she could see that they "bear but a faint

impress of the lost grandeur of the race," she could note in certain of their movements that "they remind you of what *was* majestic in the red man." (p. 88) To Miss Fuller, there was no decisive answer to the condition of the Indian except moral introspection and the striving for a "clear view and right sense" which would end the ignominy and immorality of the whites' treatment of the Indian. One of the fruits of Margaret Fuller's summer was, as she noted, an expanded sense of the nobility of the Indian race, a majesty of spirit sensed even in "this broken and degraded condition":

There is a language of eye and motion which cannot be put into words, and which teaches what words never can. I feel acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures. There *was* a greatness, unique and precious, which he who does not feel will never duly appreciate the majesty of nature in this American continent.

Margaret Fuller even came to observe that in the West authority and order were not maintained by the weight of tradition as they were in the East, and she celebrated the fact that ability clearly led to advance and leadership.

In the West, people are not respected merely because they are old in years; people there have not had time to keep up appearances in that way; when persons cease to have a real advantage in wisdom, knowledge, or enterprise, they must stand back, and let those who are oldest in character "go ahead," however few years they may count. There are no banks of established respectability in which to bury the talent there; no napkin of precedent in which to wrap it. What cannot be made to pass current, is not esteemed coin of the realm. (pp. 76-77)

Miss Fuller met an Illinois farmer and his son on the boat back to Mackinac Island from Sault Ste. Marie, a man who had taken eleven other, younger men, including his son, "on an exploring expedition to the shores of Lake Superior." (p. 109) She noted that the man did not make the son "conform to an object and standard of [his] own" but rather the father "conformed to, and learnt from, a character [his son's] he could not change, and won the sweet from the bitter." (p. 110) These were indeed

worthwhile lessons about the liberality and openness of Midwestern society for a transcendentalist who valued personal freedom from unnecessary restraints and traditions which did not recognize individualism.

Margaret Fuller also came to the realization that the transition from a frontier, wilderness state to a society which demonstrated liberality, freedom, respect for all human beings, and enlightened self-government was a long and difficult process. In observing a settlement of German foreigners, she noted their chances for success hinged on adjusting to the lonely solitude of frontier life and overcoming the "insuperable obstacles" to procure "comforts or a home."

But let him come sufficiently armed with patience to learn the new spells which the dragons require, (and this can only be done on the spot), he will not finally be disappointed of the promised treasures; the mob will resolve itself into men, yet crude, but of good dispositions, and capable of good character; the solitude will become sufficiently enlivened, and home grow up at last from the soil. (p. 66)

Miss Fuller saw in the frontier struggle for survival and permanent settlement the challenge that society had, in her transcendental view, to make itself more liberal, humanistic, and open. She believed that the West, with its strong emphasis on a common life which was close to the undiluted lessons of experience and nature, was a refreshing tonic to her own intellectual mind too accustomed to the "subtilties of analysis, the philosophic strainings of which I had seen too much." (p. 50) The only true disappointment of Miss Fuller's summer in 1843 was her being unable to take the scheduled canoe voyage "into the truly wild and free region" of the Lake Superior shoreline and the Pictured Rocks.

A Summer on the Lakes was a highly personal travel book, written from Margaret Fuller's transcendental outlook and her need for a strong antidote, a strong dose of life in the raw and concrete to her intellectual life in the East. Her brother, Arthur B. Fuller, commenting on the book in an 1856 "Preface" to the Second Edition, noted that *A Summer on the Lakes* was not ephemeral but had "because of its philosophic and suggestive

spirit, what must always be useful." (p. v, Preface) The summer's experiences, strange and varied as they were, enlarged Margaret Fuller's conception of American life, confirmed her transcendental principles that individual freedom and independent self-assertion were still viable, and enabled her to appreciate the wild and the unsettled as independent realities which counterbalanced the intellectual. She saw the ugliness of a western society in transition, a reality she did not flinch from in documenting, but she saw the law of the new order in men and women of simple magnanimity and openness to experience, unencumbered by pretensions, unwarranted traditions, and needless privilege.

In contrast to Margaret Fuller's testimony to the vitality and emerging natural order of the West, Charles Lanman's *A Summer in the Wilderness: Embracing a Canoe Voyage up the Mississippi and Around Lake Superior* (1847) is a more highly romanticized account, treating his 1845 journey as a lost idyll and dream. Lanman, unlike Fuller, travelled in a fleet of ten canoes, accompanying Allen Morrison, an Indian agent who was on his annual visit to the North to make Indian payments in the form of annuities. Lanman travelled in the largest canoe of the fleet, some forty feet long and guided by five voyagers. The group traversed the entire length of Lake Superior from Fond du Lac to Sault Ste. Marie, to Mackinaw, and then to the Detroit area, where Lanman lived in the River Raisin settlement.

Lanman romanticized the conditions under which he travelled and viewed the upper lakes region. Referring to his trip as a "pilgrimage around the shores of Lake Superior," he saw this wilderness area as fastly disappearing because of the development of the copper mining interests in the upper peninsula, the development of tourism with the development of Great Lakes steamboats, and the large influx of immigrants into Michigan that took place in 1830's (the population growing from 31,640 in 1830 to 212,267 in 1840 and 341,591 in 1850). Describing the romantic conditions of travel by canoe with voyagers, Lanman stated:

The pleasures of this mode of travelling are manifold. The scenery that you pass through is of the wildest character, the people you meet with "are so queer," and there is a charm in the very mystery and sense of danger which attend

the windings of a wilderness stream, or the promontories and bays of a lonely lake. (p. 143)

Lanman characterized Lake Superior as a body of water with violent contrasts. In one situation the party was overtaken by a storm and driven to the safety of the shoreline, where they were unable to make a fire and cook any supper.

For my part, I looked upon our condition as perfectly wretched, and cared little what became of me. We had landed on a fine beach, where we managed to pitch our tents, and there threw ourselves down for the purpose of sleeping; and though wet to the skin, I never slept more sweetly in my life,—for the roaring of lake Superior is a most glorious lullaby. On the following morning, I was awakened *by the surf washing against my feet*. (p. 143)

This experience is further complemented by Lanman's description of the sudden changes in the lake and the way that these changes excite the romantic observer who sees nature on a grand and powerful scale.

Often have I floated on its sleeping bosom in my canoe at noonday, and watched the butterfly sporting in the sunbeams; and at the sunset hour of the same day, have stood in perfect terror upon the rocky shore, gazing upon the mighty billows careering onward as if mad with wild delight, while a wailing song, mingled with the "trampling surf" would ascend to the gloomy sky.

The idyllic experiences culminate in a mystical experience which Lanman has on one of the summer nights on Lake Superior, nights which "have made a deeper impression on my heart than those summer days." This scene is described with the careful composition of Lanman the landscape painter, a profession which actively complemented his writing of the romantic sketch. The tone of romantic mysticism and terror approaches the Romantic ideal of the sublime.

One of those wonderful nights I never can forget. I had risen from my couch upon the sand, and after walking nearly half a mile along the beach, I passed a certain point, and found myself in full view of the following scene, of which I was the solitary spectator. Black, and death-like

in its repose, was the illimitable plain of water; above its outline, on the left, were the strangely beautiful northern lights, shooting their rays to the very zenith; on the right was a clear full moon, making a silvery pathway from my feet to the horizon; and before, around, and above me, floating in the deep cerulean, were the unnumbered and mysterious stars—the jewels of the Most High. The only sound that fell upon my ear was the occasional splash of a tiny wave, as it melted upon the shore. Long and intently did I gaze upon the scene, until, in a kind of blissful frenzy, or bewilderment, I staggered a few paces, fell upon the earth, almost insensible, and was soon in a deep sleep. The first gleam of sunshine roused me from slumber, and I returned to our encampment perfectly well in body, but in a thoughtful and unhappy mood. In fact, it seemed to me that I had visited the spiritual world, and I wished to return hence once more. (pp. 150-151)

However, at the end of *A Summer in the Wilderness*, Lanman notes that his "treasured dreams" of the past summer days may never be relived.

. . . I cannot but sigh when I remember that I may never be privileged to enjoy the like again. My reason would not stop the tide of civilization which is sweeping to the remote north and the far Pacific, but if the wishes of my heart were realized, none but the true worshippers of nature should ever be permitted to mar the solitude of the wilderness with the song of Mammon. (pp. 149-150)

Lanman also described the disgusting scene of the fur trading post at La Point on Lake Superior, where the Chippewa Indians came to receive their designated annuities, travelling as he noted "more than a thousand miles" to obtain a "meager present" of four dollars, one blanket, and cloth to make a pair of leggings. In order to satisfy their starvation, the Indians were forced to spend their money at the American Fur Company post "for pork at *fifty* dollars per barrel and flour at *fifteen* dollars per hundred. . . ." To Lanman, the Indians lived in a degraded and wretched state, forced to play a pathetic role of dependency that had no future for them. As Lanman noted in speaking of the proud memories of the Indian tribes and such warrior chiefs as Pontiac and Tecumseh,

I have stood upon their graves, which are marked only by a blighted tree and an unhewn stone, and I have sighed deeply as I remembered their deeds. But they have gone,—gone like the lightning of a summer day. (p. 172)

Lanman also saw that beautiful and remote areas like Mackinaw would soon be overrun with tourists.

Like too many of our beautiful places on our western frontier, Mackinaw is now in a transition state. Heretofore it has been the Indian's congregating place, but its aboriginal glory is rapidly departing, and it soon will be the fashionable resort of summer travellers.

Lanman's perceptions of the changes in the Old Northwest reflect his extensive travels in this area and his close personal attachment to Michigan throughout his life. He was an inveterate traveller, a professional writer of travel books beginning with his *Essays for Summer Hours* (1842), which described Michigan and the wilderness region around 1840. He was a romantic chronicler of the Midwest, capturing its scenes and passing frontier environment. It is interesting to note that Lanman's symbolic tour of 1845 described in *A Summer in the Wilderness* is close in time to Francis Parkman's important trip beginning in April, 1846 from St. Louis west to the Rocky Mountains, a trip which enabled Parkman to come in contact with the frontier types and Sioux Indians who figured so greatly in his historical writing. Parkman's trip, of course, resulted in one of the most popular historical accounts of the nineteenth-century in America, *The California and Oregon Trail* (serialized in 1847 and published in book form in 1849). Parkman captured the romantic panorama of the Westward migration, while Lanman captured the transition of the upper Lakes area where the fur trade had declined and which was now committed to copper mining, lumbering, settlement, and internal improvements which saw a railroad and the Chicago Road traverse the lower peninsula.

Margaret Fuller and Charles Lanman wrote about the upper Northwest region at a time when the frontier, wilderness character of the place was rapidly undergoing changes. Both brought romantic points of view to their travel, and each wrote unique responses to what they observed and experienced. This area—

with a long heritage of wilderness survival and trade, colonial wars for empire, proud Indian strength and resistance to incursions, a polyglot population with a diverse culture of many nations and an area of a national war—moved rapidly from territorial status to statehood and a distinct section of the nation. Both captured, in their distinct romantic ways, what was left of such wilderness types as *voyageurs*, Indian guides, fur trading post entrepreneurs, early Indian agents, and others. Both described a wilderness nature that had a powerful impact on the romantic imagination, developing a distinct sense of the lakes region landscape with its unique sense of space and power to affect the mind. Their writings, as well as that of many others, constitute the romantic literature of the Old Northwest at a time when this region had a stronghold on the popular imagination.

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THE COMIC SONG IN THE AMERICAN MIDWEST,
1825-1875

JEREMY MATTSON

To the contemporary listener, sophisticated or otherwise, there may be considerable humor in much of nineteenth-century American popular music. If Henry Russell, an English singer and composer who enchanted American audiences at mid-century with his renditions of sentimental songs, were to present to an audience today his very popular elegy to Mother, "The Old Arm Chair," he would be greeted with laughter. The audience would laugh at the maudlin sentimentality of a man pouring his heart out to an old chair, which, if we believe the lyric, was where his mother spent most of her life. Our tastes have changed; we reject extremes of sentimentality. But in the 1840's, American taste demanded this kind of song. Lyrics like "The Old Arm Chair" were especially cherished by families, usually middleclass, who aspired to culture. The parlor piano was just beginning to be a standard piece of furniture in such homes, and the performing members of the family required music to play and sing.

Publishers responded to this demand with countless songs, song books, method books, and all the paraphernalia that could be marketed. In the popular category, excluding the so-called classical selections, the publishers found that the best sellers were sentimental songs, instrumentals (i.e., reveries, rhapsodies, dances, marches, etc.), and comic songs. The emphasis seems to have been on the sentimental song, and of the three groups, the comic songs were least numerous. But if we do not recognize the change in taste between then and now, we might be tempted to include many more originally serious songs in the comic category. We may laugh today at the extremes of sentimentality in the popular songs, but they were not intended to be funny.

In fact, some of the songs labeled "comic" were actually little more than vehicles for good advice, either practical or moral, such as "Not for Joseph," published in 1868. Joseph is a young man who used to be "green," but who has learned from experience to be frugal and wise. The lyric is comic in the large sense, as opposed to tragic. But it is meant to be received with knowing smiles, perhaps, not laughter. In the middle years of the nineteenth century, the songs that were meant to be humorous, in terms that we still accept today, were of many types, but my concern is with three: those having to do with courtship and marriage, those focusing on ethnic subjects, and a substantial number of songs that expressed a sense of comic wonder at the newness of the country.¹ These three types of comic songs enjoyed popularity throughout the country. There appears to be no clear distinction between the songs published in the East, where sheet-music publication began, and those published in the Midwest. For the most part, in fact, the Midwestern publishing houses were founded as outlets for the Eastern houses, to capitalize on the rapidly growing market in the territory west of the Alleghenies. "Reuben Wright and Phoebe Brown," for example, was published in 1856 in Boston, by the Oliver Ditson Company, and was distributed by David T. Truax, a publisher in Cincinnati. Three years later Truax was absorbed by the Ditson Firm and reorganized as the John Church, Jr., publishing house.² This sort of merging was quite common in the nineteenth century, and it provided a very close relationship between the eastern seaboard and the Midwestern states.

Sometimes the inter-regional connection was somewhat less legitimate. In 1871, two songs were published, "My Lover Is Shy," by Frank Howard, published in Cincinnati by John Church & Co., and "My Robyn Is Shy," by J. Owen, published by S. T. Gordon and Son, in New York. These two songs have identical melodies, and only moderately different lyrics. Clearly, the two publishers felt they each had a market for the humorous courting song. And this kind of interchange predominates in the popular music of the period.

The surprising thing about the popular music business in the Midwest was not its connection with the East but rather its magnitude. The major Midwestern song centers, with several

publishing houses, were Cincinnati, Cleveland, Louisville, Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee. But publishers also sprang up in Portsmouth and East Liverpool, Ohio; Ionia and East Saginaw in Michigan; Bloomington and Ottawa in Illinois, and Keokuk and Creston in Iowa. This is by no means an inclusive list, or a systematic one. These are merely a few of the small-town publishers represented in a rather modest library of sheet music, at the William L. Clements Rare Book Library of the University of Michigan. Some publishers were affiliated with parent companies in the East; some were independent. Although a few were established as early as the 1820's, the great expansion in the Midwestern music business came in the period between 1840 and 1870. Normally, when we think of American entrepreneurship in the nineteenth century, we call to mind railroads, mines, foundries, and varied types of manufacturing. We should not forget that such industrial progress created jobs, put money in people's pockets, and led indirectly to the establishment of what we could call luxury industries, and of these, the sheet music industry was an important one.

Of the three categories of comic songs, the most significant was the one with the oldest history—courting and marriage. The musical treatment of the comedy of love certainly dates back to the earliest years of man's musical history. We would be surprised if the young American republic did not share in this history. And the songs do indeed cover the field. They include comic images of the society beau, the militant feminist, the cheating lover (male and female), the lover lamenting his or her failure in love, and the lover who has a comic flaw, which may be lisping, sneezing, indecision, shyness, deafness, or, in the case of less than amply endowed women, secret padding.

"Lovely Wilhelmina," (1866, S. Brainard & Sons, Cleveland) has such a flaw. (Brainard and Sons had a large catalogue of comic songs; there are sixty-six others listed on the cover of this one piece of music.) Wilhelmina had a musical lover who went to great lengths to serenade her:

Lovely Wilhelmina, But Unhappy girl,
Would I'd never seen her, With her flowing curl,
Down her back it wandered, Saying, follow me,
How my time I squandered, On Miss Wilhelmina B.

Her, 'twas so romantic, I wished to serenade,
And became quite frantic, 'Till a tune I played.
A Professor taught me Cornet, and trombone,
Both of which he bought me, That I might indulge alone.

(Chorus) Lovely Wilhelmina, But unhappy girl,
Would I'd never seen her, with her flowing curl,
Down her back it wandered, Saying follow me,
How my time I squander'd, On Miss Wilhelmina B.

In an attic living, Down a quiet street,
Four and sixpence giving For my room so neat,
With of art a true sense, The trombone I played,
That it was a nuisance, Came a message by the maid.
So I was ejected From the attic land,
Then my steps deflected My light touch obeyed,
And my Wilhelmina, I learnt to serenade.
(Chorus)

With trombone and Cornet, and the Concertine,
Near her cottage, once, I play'd to Wilhelmine,
All the folks came out to laugh at me and stare,
So I danc'd about to show them I didn't care.
In the garden soon, I saw my Wilhelmine,
Then a touching tune I played her on the green.
I played an air from William Tell, for sixteen hours in F,
They told me when I breathless fell, Miss Wilhelmina's deaf!
(Chorus)

The English references in the lyric give away the national source of this song, but there is no reason to doubt the American appeal, indeed, the universal appeal, of this musical joke on the unobservant lover. The humor depends, of course, on the fact that no one is hurt, neither the persistent but mistaken suitor, nor the lovely Wilhelmina B.

The music business, too, shares in the laughter. While the suitor is versatile enough to learn the trombone, cornet, and concertina (all for naught), the publisher uses the back page of the sheet music in a most common way—to advertise music and method books for the amateur musician, in this case for the piano, flute, or violin. It is as if the publisher is taking part in, and contributing to, the suitor's dilemma. Music was clearly a market-

able product, and it was undoubtedly true, as it still is today, that a great many amateur musicians, young and old, played to deaf ears. Music lessons were fast becoming a tradition in middle-class homes, as they are today. We can share, therefore, in the humor of the musical baby steps taken by fledgling musicians.

The woman in the comic courting song is not always as innocent as poor Miss Wilhelmina B. One of the interesting by-products of the burgeoning railroad industry was the railroad con game, in all its varieties. The new twist that the railroad provided was the easy escape. The con could make his mark and then get off at the next station, leaving the mark in confusion. But the con in this song is a woman, not a man:

I live in Vermont and one morning last summer,
A letter inform'd me my Uncle was dead,
And also requested I'd come down to Boston,
As he'd left me a large sum of money it said;
Of course I determin'd on making the journey
And to book myself by the "first class" I was fain
Tho' had I gone "second" I had never encounter'd
The Charming Young Widow I met in the Train.

Yet scarce was I seated within the compartment,
Before a fresh passenger enter'd the door,
Twas a female a young one and dress'd in deep mourning,
An infant in long clothes she gracefully bore,
A white cap surrounded a face oh so lovely!
I never shall look on one like it again.
I fell deep in love over head in a moment,
With the Charming Young Widow I met in the Train.

The widow and I side by side sat together
The carriage containing ourselves and no more
When silence was broken by my fair companion
Who enquired the time by the watch that I wore.
I of course satisfied her, and then conversation
Was freely indulged in by both, 'till my brain
Fairly reeled with excitement, I grew so enchanted
With the Charming Young Widow I met on the Train.

The song goes on to eight verses, in a ballad form quite common to the period, but the repeated refrain, the last line of each verse,

tells the whole story, as the Charming Young Widow becomes the Artful Young Widow and then the Crafty Young Widow. As it turns out, the woman steals the young man's watch, purse, gold pencil case, and ticket, all of this achieved while she is crying on his shoulder. He does not discover his loss, of course, until after she has left the train, ostensibly to speak with a friend. And she leaves the young Vermonter holding her baby, which turns out to be "only a dummy."

The moral comes in the last verse:

Satisfied I'd been robbed they allowed my departure
Though, of course I'd to settle my fare the next day,
And I now wish to counsel young men from the country
Lest they should get served in a similar way.
Beware of Young Widows you meet on the Railway
Who lean on your shoulder, whose tears fall like rain,
Look out for your pockets in case they resemble
The Charming Young Widow I met on the Train.

Clearly, the young Vermonter is the typical country boy, the naif, running afoul of corrupted city ways, an old, old story in literature and folk song. We laugh at the young man partly because we feel superior to him; nothing like that would ever happen to us. And we feel comfortable laughing at him because, fortunately, he was not seriously damaged by the encounter. Possibly, too, the song had another kind of appeal, in that it dealt with a new-fangled contraption, the railroad train. A ride on a train would have been an exciting event for the average person, and an event which no doubt evoked a certain amount of fear. After all, one might meet all sorts of people on a train ride. This song surely allowed for an easy release on one's apprehensions. That too is a characteristic of humor.

The young man in the comic courting song is not always an innocent; the lyricists found numerous other foibles capable of making the suitor ludicrous. Male shyness, because it was generally regarded as an unmasculine trait, was a popular target: "My Lover Is Shy," (by Frank Howard, published by John Church of Cincinnati, 1871); "Bashful John," (by M.E.T., published by Brainard's Sons of Cleveland, 1875); and "Bashful Young Gentleman," (by "Himself," published also by Brainard's, in 1869) are

three examples of the comic treatment of shyness. The first one, "My Lover Is Shy," is interesting because it was apparently pirated in the same year by S. T. Gordon and Son of New York, with words by one "Talhaian." The melody and situation are nearly identical, with the lover or Robyn being unable to speak his mind, to attempt a kiss, or, especially, to propose marriage, all of which the young lady who sings the song dearly desires. It is mere speculation, of course, to suggest that Gordon pirated the song from Brainard, as it could have been just the reverse; indeed, both songs could have originated from a common English source. But regardless of the publishing history, the existence of the two versions is a measure of the popularity of the situation. It was a male-dominated society, of course, that produced the shy lover songs, and it could well be that in our own times the humor of such would be diminished. Today's analyst might say that both the shy young man and the frustrated woman are victims of sexual stereotyping. Of course, it would follow from this that a certain amount of good humor may have been lost to us.

Occasionally, the woman is the target of the joke in the comic courting song. "Her Name Is Mary Ann," (by Ned Straight, published by C. H. Ditson and Co., New York in 1875 and distributed by Lyon and Healy in Chicago and J. Church and Co. in Cincinnati) is a song about a girl who does not fit the nineteenth-century American male notion of feminine beauty. The title page is somewhat misleading, in suggesting nothing of Mary Ann's physical inadequacies, but on the first page of music, we find, surprisingly, a different title: "Second Rate Cook of a Hash Hotel." This is a more direct introduction to the lyric:

Perhaps you've all got pretty girls, Just wait 'till you see
mine,
Her hair is cut in a fighting style, She belongs to the Hash
house line,
Oh, she has got a smiling mug, She's a muscle like a real
man,
She scents her hair with mutton grease, And her name is
Mary Ann.

(spoken) May be you imagine My Mary Ann ain't a stunner? Get back! She lays over all your little dainty, flimsy

wimsy schrimps. She ain't no oyster a half shell, She ain't. If you don't believe what I am telling you, come down and cast a glance at her, and I'm blow'd if you won't sing:

(chorus) Oh, yes, you can just bet that she is a
Second rate cook of a Hash Hotel,
Of bacon and onions her breath does smell,
If you wish to call on her, please don't ring the bell,
You'll find her right down in the kitchen.

I went a sparking Sunday night, and call'd at the back door,
She was asleep in the rocking chair, Goodness me how the
girl did snore,
I cautiously approached her, And to kiss her cheeks had
just began,
A Bull dog caught me by the leg, And I holler'd Mary Ann.

(spoken) May be you think I didn't holler, with a big Bull dog, eating the seat of my pants up. But Mary Ann soon put an end to my woes, the darling delicious creature caught a broomstick in one hand and a poker in the other, and that canine ignominiously scatter'd. And when Mary Ann twined her beauteous arms around my alabaster form, I couldn't help singing:

(repeat chorus)

Mary Ann is a true vernacular heroine, even though the focus of the humor in the song is her mug, muscle, and odor of mutton grease. And her breath smells of bacon and onions. But when the "darling, delicious creature" chases off the bull dog with broom and poker, she wins our hearts, as well as her suitor's.

"Her Name Is Mary Ann; or the Second Rate Cook of a Hash Hotel," is very neatly aligned with the vernacular tradition, by virtue of its language, imagery, and form. The language includes grammatical irregularities like "she has got a smiling mug," and "to kiss her cheeks (I) had just began." (Of course, "began" must rhyme with Mary Ann.) It includes such colloquialisms as "May be you imagine My Mary Ann ain't a stunner?" and "I'm blow'd if you won't sing." And it even reminds us of one of Mark Twain's characteristics, in the humorously inappropriate formal

diction, juxtaposed with the vernacular concreteness: "and that canine ignominiously scatter'd." The abstraction of "canine" and "ignominiously" is more than balanced by the concrete but somewhat ambiguous "scatter'd," as the word operates on two levels. The bull dog may simply have run away, but it may also have been scattered, as if in several pieces, by the blows of the broom and poker.

Some of the imagery of the lyric suggests that the singer is poking vernacular fun at the cultivated tradition. In the first group of spoken lines, the young man observes that Mary Ann is anything but a classical beauty: "She ain't no oyster a half shell, she ain't." This image also works on two levels. The unsophisticated audience would recognize the contrast between oysters on the half shell and the usual hash house fare. But the better educated auditors would also recall Sandro Botticelli's late fifteenth-century masterpiece *The Birth of Venus*. And the point is clear: Botticelli's Venus would have been less able than Mary Ann to fend off the bull dog in the hash hotel kitchen. Then at the end of the song, the young man takes a final shot at the cultivated tradition by describing Mary Ann's "beauteous arms twined around (his) alabaster form." For an ironic moment, the suitor becomes perhaps, a Hiram Powers statue.³

The third vernacular element, the form of the lyric itself, is quite common in comic popular songs. The verses and choruses are separated by a spoken passage that is even longer than the sung passages. The existence of a spoken passage always indicates a comic song. The vernacular speaker is most comfortable in colloquial prose, as we learn in the romantic comedies of Shakespeare, where the vernacular speech of the low characters is contrasted to the poetry of the upper class.

One last example of the comic courting song is "Those Good Old Days," (by T. R. Bishop, published by John Church of Cincinnati, 1866). This is another misleading title page, to the extent that it suggests a bit of nostalgia for a time past. But the song focuses not so much on nostalgia for the past as on a belly laugh at the present.

There was a lady gay, who dressed in silk and satin,
And some good people used to say, she did not lack for
padding,

But to hasten on my story there's one thing I declare,
The curls that hung about her head, were nothing but
false hair.

(chorus) Oh dear, Oh, I grieve oh yes I grieve,
for the good old days those modest days, of our good mother
Eve.

I met her at a ball one eve indulging in a dance,
All eyes were gazing eagerly to see her form advance,
I noticed, that in balancing, she always chose to walk,
And soon found out the reason why, one leg was made of
cork. (cho)

Soon as she moved along the hall among the festive throng,
An accident befell her, I relate it in my song—
By some mishap or other from her head fell off a wreath,
She stooped to pick it up, and out dropped a set of teeth.
(cho)

The people all began to smile to see what had occurred,
And I among the others had my laughing senses stirred,
But the poor creature felt so bad, she could do naught but
cry,
To cap the climax of the whole, out fell a large glass eye.
(cho)

This will strike a familiar chord with many readers, since there is a series of rather off-color adolescent jokes based on the same premise. But the musical catalogue of virtues (padding, along with false hair, leg, teeth, and eye) is not so much an attack on an individual woman as it is a much broader comment on current fashion and the lengths to which people go to aid God's creation.

In sum, these few comic courting songs describe the comedy of love, or the battle of the sexes, in such a way as to suggest larger implications for the society in which they were sung and enjoyed. We can see implications for the music business itself in "Lovely Wilhelmina" and for the newly established railroad business in "The Charming Young Widow I Met In the Train." Sexual stereotyping is implied by such songs as "My Lover Is Shy," "Her Name Is Mary Ann," and "Those Good Old Days." And the latter two songs raise up, by implication, the value of

a vernacular directness and honesty, along with the corollary that the cultivated tradition is somehow inappropriate for the growing republic. There is no surprise in this, of course, since one of the major sources of popular song is the vernacular experience.

The comic ethnic songs that appear most often in the Clements sheet music collection, up to 1875, have to do with Germans, Irish, and Chinese. It is interesting, however, that the songs do not appear when one might have expected them. The most extensive German immigration before 1875 occurred in the 1850's, as a result of the Revolution of 1848; Irish immigration peaked in the late 1840's, following the famine of 1846; and Chinese immigration resulted from the need for cheap labor, after the discovery of gold and other precious metals in the West, in 1849.⁴ But the comic ethnic songs examined in the Clements collection appear to date from the 1860's and 1870's. It is clear that a more comprehensive study has to be done of the comic ethnic songs, but I can suggest two hypotheses that seem to provide a reasonable explanation of the time lag. One is commercial; the sheet-music business, in the Midwest at least, was just forming in the period 1840-1860, and after the Civil War it expanded rapidly. Commercial sheet music shared in the economic boom that the war provided; the market for songs expanded and the need for musical subjects resulted. The second thesis is that the Civil War was socially disruptive to such an extent that people were extremely conscious of their identities and thereby suspicious of those who were different.

But my purpose in this study is to describe and analyze a representative few ethnic comic songs, not to explore their underlying social causes. The stereotyped figure of the immigrant, with an identifiable accent, was a stock figure in the comic songs of the period. The transplanted foreigner was one of the popular sources of humor. "The Teuton's Tribulation," (by A. Dodge, published by Henry Tolman and Co., Boston, in 1867 was distributed by Root and Cady, Chicago) focused on the immigrant's difficulties with the English language:

Mine Cot! Mine Cot! vat language dat, I cannot English
spraken,
For shust so sure I speak him right, So sure I bees mistaken;
For ven I say I want my beer, I mean that lager fixen,

Bier means dem Tings folks ride upon, Ven day go dead as
blixen.

Meat means dem tings dat coot to eat, Meet also means
things proper;

'Tis only mete to measure tings, Ven steamboats meet they
stopper;

Shust de same word means ev'ry tings; It makes no business
whether

You spell him dis or tother way, Von sounds shoost like de
tother.

Mine Cot! Mine Cot! so sure I knows, I cannot English
spraken,

For ven I nose I speak him right, By tam I gets mistaken;
Mine Cot! Mine Cot! so sure I knows, I cannot English

spraken,

For ven I nose I speak him right, By tam I gets mistaken;

The big laugh in this song is just that the poor man cannot master the complexities of the English language, which the audience by and large learned to speak quite well in childhood. And the pidgin English includes wonderful linguistic mixtures that surely resulted in the same kind of gut response from the audience that slapstick comedy would produce. Yet, on a more thoughtful level, this same treatment of the immigrant might have led the audience to consider the difficulties of English homonyms, such as *beer* and *bier*, *meet*, *meat*, and *mete*, and *nose* and *knows*. On a secondary level, then, the laughter is directed at the English language itself.

More often, I think, the German immigrant is simply a joke, a humorous representation of certain weaknesses that the American audience shares. A good way of dealing with one's weaknesses is to project them upon someone else, someone "different," someone who, by definition, is weaker. The inclination to the bottle is a common weakness that appears in the comic ethnic songs. "Rhine Vine Sharley," (by Gus Williams, published by Oliver Ditson and Co., Boston, 1871, and distributed by Lyon and Healy in Chicago and John Church and Co. in Cincinnati) is one example:

Vat gare I for a den cend pie, No madder of ids made out
of cheese,
So long vat I have mine goot Rhine vine, I'll laugh und do
just vat I blease,
Never gare I how de dimes may go, Zinzinnatti, Oh, hio!
Bully goot Rhine vine does freely flow, Oh, I oh, I oh.

(chorus) Rhine vine Sharley vas my name, Und from Ger-
many I game;
Ven I go oud obon a spree, Drinking Rhine vine yust
suids me.

De beobles may of lager dalk, Und dold you dot it vill
make you stoud,
Venever I drink a keg of id, Id makes me sick of my
stomach oud:
Down ad a pank vat dey gall "faro," Oh, I oh, Oh, I oh.
Bully old Rhine vine is dere I know, Oh, I oh, I oh. (cho)

Vite vines are vite, pegause dere vite, De red indeed is
also red,
But Rhine vine is de sduff, you know, Pegause id don't fly
indo your head;
Some beoble god drunk on viskey I know, Oh, I oh, Oh, I oh,
Next day to de station house dey go, Oh, I oh, I oh. (cho)

So gome, who'll lend me fifdeen cends. Und tonide I vill
go on a spree,
Und ven I'm full, I'll give a doast to Villiam, de Emperor
of Germany.
For de fighting in Europe, not long ago, Oh, I oh, Oh, I oh,
Vas all apout de Rhine, you know, Oh, I oh, I oh. (cho)

The Cincinnati distribution of this song, by the John Church Company, was clearly no accident, for that city had (and still does have) a large German population. But here the Cincinnati connection provides simply a nonsense line, "Zinzinnatti, Oh, hio," and "Oh, I oh, I oh." The non-German audience would have enjoyed the lyric more than the Germans. Rhine Vine Sharley turns out to be just a wino, even though he claims "id don't fly indo your head." But linguistically, the song is less sophisticated than "The Teuton's Tribulation." The notion of German-English

dialect here is simply that all Germans have head colds. The consonants *t*, *p*, and *c* are voiced to become *d*, *b*, and *g*, and sometimes this is reversed. The initial *w* or *wh* becomes a *v* sound. And occasionally there is a syntactical inversion. But fundamentally it is not the kind of pidgin English one might expect from a newly arrived German immigrant. The simple changes allow it to be readily understood by the American audience, hence the song's commercial and entertainment value. The German stereotype was surely not subjected to close examination; this would have been a contradiction in terms.

The Irish comic songs, as one might expect, are more concentrated in the Eastern urban centers than in the Midwest. Still, the characteristics of the German lyric are carried over into the Irish, and occasionally such songs are found in the Midwest. The Irish stereotype is generally a muddling fellow, given to drink. In 1874, the John Church Co., Cincinnati published a song called "There's Monny a Shlip," by a writer signing himself "Pro Phundo Basso." Its subtitle is "Irish Song."

Och, list to my sorryfull song,
For matthers is all goin wrong;
And shure I must shpake,
Or me heart it will break,
An' I'll not be detainin ye long.

(chorus) There's monny, there's monny, there's monny a
shlip,
There's monny a shlip they say,
There's monny, there's monny a shlip 'twixt the cup and
the lip,
There's monny a shlip they say.

Bad luck to Miss Kittie McKay!
She's taken me sines away
Sayin' "Monny a shlip
Twixt the cup and the lip"
—Ah there's monny a shlip, now, they say. (cho)

Ah, Kittie was nate as ye plaze,
Faith she could make butther and chaze,
She minded the pig,

And the pratties she'd dig
In sich illegant ladylike ways. (cho)

I bot me a rake and a shpade,
A gim of a gairden I made,
"Coom tind it," I said,
But she shook her swate head
And I'm wonderfull sorry indade. (cho)

My shanty I plashtered wid mud,
And I shtop't all the howles that I could,
Thin my blankets I shpread
Wid new shtraw in my bed
And the matther so pleasantly shtood. (cho)

Then I towld her my love and intint,
But she said she wad niver consint,
And from my poor lip, thin,
The cup she let shlip, thin,
And off wid Mike Rooney she wint. (cho)

And shure, I'll be niver supplied,
While her shweetness to me is denied,
Me heart is so lone,
In my bosom, och, hone!
I'd as soon we'd a both of us died. (cho)

Me sorrows to smodder I'll try,
Tho' monny a time will I sigh,
To think that the cup
Which others may sup
Has no dhrop for my two lips so dry. (cho)

The limerick form used throughout and the unimaginative melody make this song one of the least successful that I have examined. But the image of the Irishman is predictable. Kittie McKay rejects the suitor for his careless ways, and it is more than likely that Mike Rooney, the competitor for Kittie's hand, will eventually get his rejection in turn. The dialect can best be described as drunken Irish, which would more than satisfy the supporters of the Temperance Movement, whose songs flooded the market during these times.

Within the Irish ethnic category is a rather well known song called "No Irish Need Apply," (by one O'Neill, published by Brainard's of Cleveland, 1863). It is a topical song of a very specific sort, having been inspired by an ad in the London *Times*, appearing in February, 1862: "WANTED: A smart active girl to do the general house work of a large family; one who can cook, clean plate, and get up fine linen preferred. N.B.—No Irish need apply." A simple Irish girl named Kathleen, who has come to live and work in America, sings seven verses to the effect that such an advertisement is an unfortunate slight to a proud people who can count numerous important personages in her history. She mentions Richard Sheridan (the playwright), Tom Moore (the poet), Catherine Hayes (the singer),⁵ and Sam Lover (a novelist and song writer).⁶ Then in verses six and seven she sings:

Och! the French must loudly crow to find we're slighted
thus,
For they can ne'er forget the blow that was dealt by one
of us,
If the Iron Duke of Wellington had never drawn his sword,
Faith they might have "Napoleon Sauce" with their beef,
upon my word,
They think now of their dead; his name will never die,
Where will they get another such if "No Irish need apply."

Ah! but now I'm in the land of the "Glorious" and "Free,"
And proud I am to own it, a country dear to me,
I can see by your kind faces, that you will not deny
A place in your hearts for Kathleen, and All Irish may apply.
Then long may the Union flourish, and ever may it be.
A pattern to the world, and the "Home of Liberty!"

"No Irish Need Apply" is in Brainard's third series of "Comic and Humorous Songs," including, according to the title page, such other titles as "Turn Off the Gas at the Meter," "The Torpedo and the Whale," "Merry Chink, Chink, Chink," and "Jacob Schmidt, Vere Vos You." In all, thirteen comic songs are listed on the cover, and "No Irish" is the only one that was still in print by 1870.⁷ The irony of this is that it is not what we would call a comic song today; that is, it is in that category mentioned pre-

viously that is comic only in the sense that it is a story with a happy ending. Kathleen makes a legitimate plea for justice in public attitudes toward the Irish and concludes on a most patriotic note, praising the United States as the "pattern to the world, and the 'Home of Liberty!'" The joke on Wellington Sauce is the closest thing to an outright laugh in the entire song. As a comic ethnic song, therefore, this one is doubly unusual: it lacks the usual joking elements, on the one hand, and on the other, it does not attack the ethnic minority.⁸

Brainard's of Cleveland also capitalizes on the issue of Chinese immigration. In 1869-70, they printed "John Chinaman," with words and music by P. P. Bliss. Like "No Irish Need Apply," this lyric is comic without the laugh, but unlike the other, it has a very sharp racial edge.

John Chinaman, Dear Sir: Since your (sic) making such a stir
 In the waves that wash along our western strand;
 Stop the jingle of your gong, While we sing our greeting song,
 As you gaze upon our broad and happy land.

John Chinaman, Esquire, Though we really don't admire
 All the Oriental notions you may bring;
 We have room enough for you, And we've work enough to do,
 And our nation's song of welcome now we sing.

John Chinaman, they say you have loitered by the way,
 While the nations of the world were marching on,
 So we're waiting now to see, What a "Forward March" there'll be
 In the future of our distant neighbor, John.

(chorus) Ho! John Chinaman, Now, John Chinaman,
 Leap o'er the crumbling wall,
 Bring along your tea, For don't you see
 We've room enough to welcome all!

The only comic element in this song is the fact that the tune has the typical lilting quality of the melodies of comic song. But as far as the lyric is concerned, Bliss presents an image of a lazy

fellow from a backward and crumbling culture. John Chinaman is asked to stop playing his gong and bring with him his strange Oriental notions and his tea, and America waits to see if he can fit into the "Forward March" of industrial progress. The musical welcome is graphically represented on the cover of the sheet music, which depicts the white-gowned female figure of the Republic carrying the flag and beckoning onward the figure of the Chinese "coolie," who is carrying his earthly possessions in two wooden crates, balanced from a stick supported on his shoulders. And the coolie, John Chinaman, is stepping over the "crumbling wall" of China.

If laughter is missing from "John Chinaman," certainly irony abounds. On the surface, the "nation's song of welcome" is clearly diminished by the notion that the backward Chinaman is on trial to see if he can measure up to the standards of the progressive American nation. But the welcome is doubly ironic in the larger context of the problems of Chinese immigration, problems that dated back to the early 1850's, almost as soon as the great numbers of Chinese laborers reached the shores of California in the time of the gold rush and the expansion of the railroads. Because of cultural conflicts and labor competition, anti-Chinese feeling ran high on the west coast and led to various attempts to limit immigration. But the apparent reason for this left-handed musical welcome to John Chinaman was the signing of the Burlingame Treaty in 1868, which established free immigration between China and the United States.⁹ This policy, of course, increased the potential for racial prejudice and conflict, to the point that within ten years the anti-Chinese factions in the country began to get their way. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Acts effectively nullified the Burlingame Treaty. In terms of the song "John Chinaman," therefore, the Chinese immigrant by 1882 was measured and found inadequate.

The comic ethnic songs examined here suggest a wide variety of attitudes toward the immigrant. Sometimes he is ridiculed for his inadequacies, as in "Rhine Vine Sharley" and "There's Monny a Shlip"; sometimes the humor is directed more at the situation than at the immigrant himself, as in "The Teuton's Tribulation"; sometimes the comic emphasis gives way to a social statement, as in "No Irish Need Apply" and "John Chinaman." And in this

latter category, the image of the immigrant may be favorable, like Kathleen, or quite unfavorable, like John Chinaman. But all of the comic ethnic songs are responses, sometimes quite immediate, to a significant aspect of the rapidly growing society—the inclusion of people who were *different*. Clearly the Puritan heritage of exclusive community was a strong influence in mid-nineteenth-century America.

The rapid growth of the country produced another large and significant category of comic songs—songs that expressed comic wonder at the newness and change prevalent in nineteenth-century American society. Industrial progress is the subject of such songs as “My Charlie, He’s a Railroad Boy” and “Have You Struck Ile?” The growing number of newspapers with the consequent opportunities for sensationalism figures in “It’s True ’Twas in the Papers.” Rapidly changing fashions in clothing are quite common subjects, as in “Better Be Out of the World than Out of Fashion,” “The Grecian Bend,” and “The Pull Back.” The opportunist who rides the crest of progress with the pretense of success is the focus of “How to Do It.” The bicycle is an invention that particularly attracts the song writers, as “The New Velocipede,” “The Flying Velocipede,” and “Velocipede Jimmy” exemplify. And even the lowly sewing machine appears in “Turn the Little Handle.” These few songs suggest the value of sheet music as social and historical documents. There is a wealth of detail pertaining to daily living to be examined in this source.

The advancement of technology that produced the steam sewing machine was perhaps a mixed blessing. From Detroit comes a song called “Turn the Little Handle” (by an anonymous lyricist, published by Whittemore, Swan and Stephens, 1871). The lyric tells the story of poor Sarah Toplin who operated a steam sewing machine filling clothing orders for a store.

Sarah Toplin, a young girl, about seventeen,
Who liv’d in a basement near Washington green,
Her living she got at a sewing machine—
This machine you must know, it goes by steam—and
(spoken) all you have to do, Gentlemen, is . . .

(chorus) To turn the little handle, Thread the needle well,

Lay the work upon the plate, And you can take a spell;
Run the seam with the machine it goes by steam but keep
it clean
And mind you don’t go bursting of the boiler.

Now Sarah made clothes, for a Store, understand,
But each day with her orders she was behind hand,
For she was so lazy—(the truth must be said)—
Instead of turning the handle, she turned into bed.
(spoken) When she ought . . . (cho)

Now one day when Sarah was taking a nap,
Her petticoats rather stuck out at the back;
The machine sewed her up, and before you’d say whack—
Sewed her up in a second, just like a sack.
(spoken) Then of course, it was all over with Sarah, and
the Machine she couldn’t cure, and . . . (cho)

Now the House it is haunted which causes much fright,
You have only to put in the Cloth over night,
It is made into shirts before the day-light—
And they are making their fortunes as fast as they might.
(spoken) Yes, and well they may, for as I said before, all
they have to do is to sit down upon a little stool and
begin . . . (cho)

To keep up with technological progress, one has to be “with it,” as the popular songs of the day put it, and Sarah Toplin was obviously somewhat wanting in energy and initiative. So the machine simply sewed her up. We have to laugh at poor Sarah, of course, but the lyric also implies a mixture of amazement and fear regarding the machine. Shirts are made overnight (in haunted houses, we are told) by such machines, and fortunes too, but people are swallowed up. Sarah’s story is a mild form of the *Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, and the machine shares with Dukas’ broom run wild a rather demoniac character. Still, the apprentice and Sarah were both at fault. In different ways, they simply did not tend to business. And business was a mighty concern of the nineteenth-century American, who knew, in his confidence, that the machine could be handled, and in such a way as to benefit man and society.

Another invention, for recreation rather than industry, was the bicycle, which was also a machine with both advantages and disadvantages. The song "Velocipede Jimmy," (by O. H. Harpel, published by John Church of Cincinnati, 1869) tells the story of a gay blade, Jimmy, who could make the velocipede work for him most of the time, but who also found it a source of occasional embarrassment. The last two of five verses tell both sides:

Next afternoon I thought I'd ride
The Avenue along,
That road where in their boasting pride
The "Sports" are sure to throng:
Up drove one with his fancy nag,
And called my steed a slow thing,
But I rather guess it stopped his brag
When I beat him all to nothing.

(chorus) For I'm the spark that can make it fly,
Velocipede Jimmy I'm called you see,
And if you this machine would try,
Why take a lesson or two from me.

But once, when just across the street
I saw my flame pass by,
Quick to salute her from my seat,
I rashly thought I'd try,
But when I bow'd, too far I leaned,
For by a mischance unkind
I fell kerslap on my "Grecian Bend"
And bursted my pants behind.

(chorus) Still, I'm the spark, etc.

Jimmy's mistake, of course, was to attempt the older horse-and-buggy manners on the newer vehicular invention. But the fact that Jimmy is not daunted suggests the American self-confidence and even the ability to laugh at oneself. The only thing damaged in his accident is his fashionable attire, "I fell kerslap on my 'Grecian Bend' and bursted my pants behind." "Grecian Bend" here is a metaphor for an obvious portion of Jimmy's anatomy, but it actually was a derogatory name for a particular style of female dress, of which the most obvious element was a large bustle in the rear. Such an appendage was often so heavy that

it required the woman to stand or walk leaning forward (hence, the bend) so as to balance the weight in the back.¹⁰ The not terribly accurate use of "Grecian Bend" as metaphor in this lyric merely suggests another dimension of the song's humor.

The Grecian Bend and other fashions in clothing were a rich source of humor in song. In quite a vernacular way, the American was always ready to laugh at extremes of fashion and the exaggerated concern to "keep up." One of the songs on this subject is "Better Be Out of the World than Out of Fashion," (by W. V. Laurance, published by John Church of Cincinnati, 1871). The second and fourth verses demonstrate both the laughter and the transformation of that laughter into something more serious:

The ladies, dear creatures so lovely and sweet,
Still try to look sweeter and fairer,
'Till pannier and frizzles, basques sashes and lace
Transform and envelop the wearer,
The sweet little hat and the neat little foot
Are fuel to kindle love's passion,
To 'tis better to be out of the world my dear,
Than in it and out of the fashion.

No matter how much the heart aches beneath
The jewels that flash in their brightness;
No matter how weary and heartless the round
The laugh must be sweet in its lightness.
The show must keep up though the life is crushed out,
Till wine shall bring the dread crash on
And drives its poor victims clear out of the world
Who strove to keep up with the fashion.

Although one might see some advantages to fashionable clothing in the earlier verses, despite its laughable excesses, the last verse suggests the sadness implicit in the hypocrisy of fashion: "The show must keep up though the life is crushed out." The mixed emotions of this lyric are characteristic of a great many comic songs, as we have seen. The progress of fashion in clothing in the nineteenth century is a symbol of social advancement, as well as a very practical means of economic success. But the ubiquitous vernacular vision in American society frequently allows a glimpse of the reality beneath the pretentious surface. And comic songs

like "Better Be Out of the World" become more than simple humorous ditties.

The newspapers of the period gave coverage to all of this social activity, and they shared in the country's economic progress. But like fashionable clothing, sewing machines, and bicycles, they had their imperfections. While the newspaper was becoming a most powerful tool of communication, it was also capable of distortion. If it could be cited as a legitimate authority in one case, it could be a trap for the gullible in another. Frank Howard's "It's True, 'Twas in the Papers," (published by Root and Cady of Chicago, 1870), deals with sensationalism in the press:

There has been a dreadful storm down east,
Its like was never known,
Oh it's very strange to say the least,
Huge rocks were ten miles blown.
One thing the mist'ry greater makes,
Tis said on many acres,
Was showered down large toads and snakes.
'Tis True 'twas in the papers.

(chorus) We'd find it hard to get along,
Without sensation makers,
And I really hope you'll like this song,
Its true 'twas in the papers.

The sophisticated and self-conscious narrator-singer manages quite neatly the ironic feat of chiding the gullible for believing the sensationalism in the newspapers at the same time as he is affirming, in the chorus, the truth of *his* story by the fact of its inclusion in the same newspapers. In this context, it is impossible not to think of Mark Twain's masterful use of irony. Nineteenth-century sheet music provides, I believe, a broad vernacular base for Twain's achievement, as do the newspapers themselves and popular fiction.

Finally, to come back to the sheet music industry itself, it occasionally handled its own publicity, with songs about songs, sometimes with exceeding cleverness and humor. Frank Wilder's "The Music Store Window," (published by Oliver Ditson of Boston, 1864, and distributed by John Church in Cincinnati) is

such a song. It is a tour de force (but not unique), made up of the titles of popular songs to be found in a music store window:

As I was straying through the streets,
As people often do, sir!
O, something rich attracted me,
It was a Music Winder!
I stood and gazed upon the scene,
The Titles were so queer;
Their funny names and quaint designs
You'd laugh to see and hear!

I saw the name of "Sally Come Up,"
The "Cure," and "Rat Catcher's Daughter";
"When Johnny comes marching home again,"
"I really Think He'd Oughter!"
"Ever of Thee," the "Maiden's Prayer,"
"Kiss me quick and go";
"Selections from the Hopera Arranged for the Pi-an-o."

(chorus) Just take a peep, just take a peep, whene'er you
promenade,
And look into a Window Where Music is displayed!

There are four more verses made up of song titles. In all, there are forty-five titles in the song, and thirty-four were still in print in 1870.¹¹ The main thrust of the lyric is pride of numbers, with a laugh at the funny titles; the sheet music industry in the nineteenth century produced a vast collection of songs, many with queer titles, funny names, and quaint designs on the cover, just as the singer observes. That the singer is given to vernacular speech is no accident ("Music Winder" and "Selections from the Hopera") since it is a vernacular industry to a large extent. The popular music published in this country is a direct line to vernacular life, the life of the people.

The vernacular is a complex tradition, as the courting songs, the ethnic songs, and the songs of change demonstrate. In these types of comic songs, the humor is often mixed with sadness, irony, or serious social commentary. The songs selected for this study were either distributed or published in the Midwest, mostly in the latter category. As Midwestern music its interest is not in

its uniqueness, but rather in its close relationship to the larger body of music published in the East. It must be observed, however, that the entire body of nineteenth-century Midwestern popular song has not been examined as yet; when this is done, regional differences may well be discovered.

The very purpose of the music, meant to be sold to common people for their own pleasure, resulted in a wide variety of subjects, often quite inconsequential, often quite transitory. But this is its value to the student of American cultural history. Extant sheet music in collections all over the country is a morass (I use the word advisedly) of the most concrete details of our cultural past. If the day ever comes when all this music is catalogued and cross-referenced, we will know a great deal more about our past than we do now. And in the comic songs, at any rate, we will have fun in the search.

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NOTES

1. I am excluding from the ethnic category the large number of minstrel songs, which have been adequately treated by Hans Nathan, in his *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (1962).
2. Ernst C. Krohn, *Music Publishing in the Middle Western States before the Civil War* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1972), p. 20.
3. The hash hotel or hash house figures also in American folk song and twentieth-century country music. According to the editors of *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book*, a country song called "Hungry Hash House" has been recorded four or five times (New York: Oak Publications, 1964, p. 236). One of the verse-chorus combinations is particularly relevant to the story of Mary Ann. The heroine here is Saro Jane, who is even more concretely described:
 Well, she promised that she'd meet me when the clock struck seventeen,
 At the stockyards just five miles outside of town,
 Where the pigs' feet and pigs' ears and those good old Texas steers
 Sell as sirloin steak at ninety cents a pound.
 (chorus)
 She's my darling, she's my daisy, she's humpbacked and crazy,
 She's knock-kneed, bow-legged, and she's lame,
 And I know her breath is sweet, but I'd rather smell her feet,
 She's my freckle-faced consumptive Saro Jane.
 Like Mary Ann, in the nineteenth-century lyric, Saro Jane "ain't no oyster a half shell, she ain't."
4. *Encyclopedia of American History*, ed. Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 473.
5. Catherine Hayes (1825-1861), an Irish singer who began her career in 1845 sang in Europe, Asia, and America. *The Century Cyclopedia of Names*, ed. Benjamin E. Smith (New York: The Century Co., 1894-97), p. 488.

6. Samuel Lover (1797-1868), an Irish novelist, song-writer, and painter, whose *Songs and Ballads* (1839) included such titles as "The Angel's Whisper," "The Low-backed Car," and "Molly Bawn." *The Century Cyclopedia of Names*, cited above, p. 625.
7. Board of Music Trade of the United States of America, *Complete Catalogue of Sheet Music and Musical Works, 1870*. Reprinted by Da Capo Press, 1973, with new introduction by Dena J. Epstein. (p. 92)
8. The fact that "No Irish Need Apply" was in print for at least seven years is ironic only in that it is a comic song without much humor; it is consistent, however, with the American propensity toward sentimentality during these years.
9. Thomas H. Johnson, *The Oxford Companion to American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 122.
10. Lester S. Levy, *Grace Notes in American History* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), p. 76.
11. Board of Music Trade, *Complete Catalogue, op. cit.*, pp. 8-153.

of urbanism. As a result, Chicago literature seems designed entirely for the present, for the "here-and-now." A cursory survey of Chicago novelists, for example, from Henry B. Fuller to William Brashler, will reveal a striking commitment to their immediate worlds, and any interest in the past seems strangely out of keeping with the elusive Chicago spirit. In rejecting the past Chicago writers have seemed to agree with Sandburg's character, Tomorrow, who said:

My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead.

When he published *Barriers Burned Away* in the year after the great Chicago Fire, the Reverend Mr. E. P. Roe captured some themes which appear strangely prophetic to many readers today. In his 1872 novel Roe presented the story of Dennis Fleet, the young man from the country who has to make his way in the sprawling, defiant city. Embodied here are the myths and realities of Chicago life. There is the all-pervasive belief in the American Dream and in Chicago as the place where one could succeed. Yet, underlying the romantic elements of the novel, there are other characteristics which were to become essential to the Chicago novel. There is, for example, the portrait of the businessman who is totally committed to business. There are descriptions of the young, groping, business-oriented society of the new city with the inevitable distinctions between the North, South, and West Sides of Chicago. And there is the belief that events in Chicago are symptomatic of American civilization. But what E. P. Roe did in 1872 was not new. He unconsciously had captured those existing patterns of the city's literature.

The literary productions in the city prior to 1871 were often crude and hastily written. But they shared a strong belief in the possibilities of the region. From the beginning there was the acceptance of a new American hero—the businessman who by his acumen was forging a city in an inhospitable wilderness. At the same time there was also a toleration for the application of a "different" set of standards. The rules which had governed the lives of men and women in the East and in the more traditional communities no longer were necessary. There was—in this new Midwestern city—an almost universal rejection of the

"THE PAST IS PROLOGUE"—CHICAGO'S EARLY WRITING

KENNY J. WILLIAMS

In *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) one of Henry B. Fuller's characters exclaims: "Chicago is a shibboleth." And certainly in that year of the great World's Columbian Exposition when creative artists were beginning to congregate in the city, when the names of writers such as Eugene Field were literally becoming household words, and when the circulation of such papers as the *Daily News* had reached spectacular numbers, the name of Chicago was indeed a "shibboleth." As time passed, Chicago became the center for much literary activity. Although his major work had been completed by the opening of the century, Henry B. Fuller continued to be a force in literary circles until his death in 1929; however, in the work of Robert Herrick and Theodore Dreiser the first years of the twentieth century found expression. All of this culminated in the Chicago Renaissance, which lasted until the 1920's. Here was a movement that was to involve, before it faded, many of the innovators and new voices of American literature: Harriet Monroe, Floyd Dell, Margaret Anderson, Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson, and Edgar Lee Masters. With the appearance of James T. Farrell, Nelson Algren, and Richard Wright in the 30's and 40's and with the major work of Saul Bellow and Gwendolyn Brooks in the 50's, Chicago became a literary symbol for much of the activity of the United States. One can read the work of any group of Chicago writers and discover some of the major concerns of this nation.

Studies of Chicago literature tend to focus on the period from the late 1880's to the present because—with its emphasis upon the use of the realistic method—Chicago literature seemed so attuned to the presentation of social problems and social concerns as the writers focused their attentions on the rising issues

past and what it symbolized as each settler appeared to look forward to a tomorrow when his dreams would be fulfilled.

I

The roots of Chicago and the city's culture go beyond those first spirited gamblers who arrived in the nineteenth century to speculate in land, cattle, transportation, or in anything which caught the fancy. History has shown that long before the first French missionaries and explorers arrived in the territory, the Indians had apparently used the Chicago territory as a meeting place. The evidence is in the number of Indian trails which met in the area, many of which still survive in the existing diagonal streets of the city. The name "Checaugou," or some version of it, has been in world history and literature since the seventeenth century. It appeared in French religious documents—which have been preserved in the *Jesuit Relations* and in the *Franciscan Recollects*—as the Jesuits and Franciscans tried to explain and to describe the territory and its inhabitants to their superiors in Quebec, Montreal, and Paris. The prairie in all of its glory captured their imaginations. They saw the possibility of great productivity. The land seemed to beg for cultivation. Some of these reports are rhapsodic; others are more realistic, but all of them contributed to the French interpretation of the "noble savage" as that philosophy was announced to the world in French romanticism. Perhaps if circumstances had been different, a notable French settlement would have arisen on the site of Chicago. But cities—like so many other facets of life—are frequently subjected to the whims of men, of society, and of conditions. And while Joliet could suggest to his superiors that a permanent settlement be established, those superiors in Quebec and Paris were not firmly convinced that this territory, which they had never seen, could indeed become (as LaSalle predicted) the "gate to an Empire." So as the French politicians argued among themselves and as the Jesuits and Franciscans battled for the minds and souls of the Indians, the Chicago portage was used merely as a point of convenience for those explorers who were intent upon discovering the riches which they thought travel on the Great River (the Mississippi) might bring.

Then came the eighteenth century, the century of conflict; and the Chicago territory was passed from France to England to the United States. The Indians—the native inhabitants—were frequently puzzled by the state of affairs because in essence it was their property which these nations used as a tool of negotiations. When they realized how they had been exploited, they fought—and fought bitterly—but it was too late. As "Checaugou" figured in the numerous treaties which involved the transfer of the territory between the major nations of the world, there was a recognition of the importance of it as the gateway to interior travel because the portage represented one of the quickest ways to get from the interior of Canada to the Mississippi River. Both France and England were more aware of the importance of the portage than were the American negotiators immediately after the Revolutionary War; thus, much of the trouble in the Northwest was fostered by the British, who did not wish to lose control of the Chicago territory. Consequently, before Chicago became a part of the Old Northwest and an outpost of the American frontier, its importance had been established by the French and British.

With the dawn of the nineteenth century came further developments which would affect what happened on the shores of Lake Michigan. The big year was 1803. Ohio was admitted to the Union, the Louisiana Purchase (called the greatest real estate bargain in history) gave the United States the territory from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, and a series of military forts were established in the West by the United States' government. Among these forts was Fort Dearborn in Illinois. The destruction of that Fort on August 15, 1812—a result of the War of 1812—was destined to play an important role in Chicago's culture.

The story of Chicago from the Fort Dearborn Massacre to the incorporation of the village in 1833 is an account of those families who in the midst of the wilderness had the faith to believe that they could create a civilization on the shores of Lake Michigan. The story of Chicago during this period is the record of a territory which led a precarious existence. It is a chronicle of a struggle for survival and of the gradual subjugation of the

Indians by men who were not necessarily smarter but who were more determined. In an attempt to secure its territorial rights in the West and to negate the British control over trading as well as over the Indians, the government of the United States had authorized the building of a new Fort Dearborn in 1815. And the old settlers returned. In 1818 Illinois was admitted to the Union, and in 1825 the opening of the Erie Canal made travel to the territory more convenient. And more settlers came. Some of them were destined to be the giants of commerce and the captains of finance. They early learned to speculate not only in land and lumber but also in life itself in order to create some of the great fortunes of nineteenth-century America. It was the period of one of America's most clearly defined monopolies: the American Fur Company. It was the day of men and women whose names have been listed among the founders of the city (some of whose names merely live today as the names of minor streets) such as Mark Beaubien and John Kinzie who left the legacy of his name and his drive to his son John H. Kinzie. And above all, it was the day of Gurdon Hubbard who controlled the American Fur Company in Illinois.

The period between the new Fort Dearborn and the incorporation of Chicago may not have caught the fancies of modern poets and novelists, but some of the people involved have recorded their stories which are full of excitement and suspense. Out of this historic context two types of writing emerged which achieved varying degrees of popularity: the personal narrative and the historical romance. It was also out of this historic context that certain myths were established which have persisted through the years.

In the work of Juliette Kinzie both of these literary traditions and types met. In the pamphlet *Massacre at Chicago* (1836) and in *Wau-Bun* (1856), subtitled "The Early Days in the Northwest," Juliette Kinzie recounted either her experiences or what she had heard. Her personal narrative does much to explain the relationship between the Indians of the area and the Kinzie family. While she was not a novelist, she established the myth of Fort Dearborn that has been used through the years in fiction. In both works she presented her father-in-law, John Kinzie, as

the heroic man of business whose advice—had it been followed—would have prevented the Massacre. One can simply compare her story with the records of what actually occurred to determine that Juliette Kinzie was apparently more interested in rescuing the family name than in the presentation of the actual facts. Yet it is significant that it is her story which forms the basis of what people have come to think and to believe about the events at Fort Dearborn on that fateful day in August, 1812. Perhaps this is a good testimony to the fact that the pen is not only mightier than the sword but also that the pen in the hands of a determined writer such as Juliette Kinzie can obliterate the truth.

While it has not been as popular as the personal narrative, the historical romance has had its practitioners. Writers of this genre have either used Fort Dearborn or have returned to the days of the French in the seventeenth century. As early as the 1850's the Canadian writer, Major John Richardson, wrote two novels dealing with the Chicago territory. Especially significant is *Wau-Nan-Gee*, of 1852, which in a poorly-disguised manner re-tells the story of the Fort Dearborn Massacre according to the gospel of Juliette Kinzie. Such later writers as Randall Parrish in *When Wilderness Was King* (1902), Myrtle Reed in *The Shadow of Victory* (1903), and Mary Bradley in *Old Chicago* (1934) are just a few of the later writers who have repeated the Kinzie version of the Massacre.

Kinzie and her followers relied on the Fort Dearborn myth to create a Chicago historical romance; however, Mary Hartwell Catherwood went beyond Fort Dearborn for the source of her romances, but like Juliette Kinzie she also celebrated the businessmen of the region. Writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century when Chicago's business culture was overwhelming, Catherwood rejected her present and became one of the few writers to return to the seventeenth century and to the French explorers. Here she was convinced that in the Jesuits and Franciscans the most noble ideas symbolized by the Cross met the pragmatism of Commerce as represented by the fur trade. Overlooking the negative features of what was frequently a clash between the ideals of religion and the reality of trade, overlooking

the exploitation of the natural resources and the subjugation of the human spirit, she viewed in this "long ago and far away" the possible solution for a commercial culture.

For reasons which are understandable the historical romance has never been extremely popular in Chicago literature in spite of the presence of a substantial number of them and in spite of such practitioners as Mary Hartwell Catherwood and George Barr McCutcheon. By the time Chicago writers searched for that usable past, there was little there. In the 1880's, for example, when the concern for an urban literature was becoming acute, the city was less than fifty years old. Its romance was tied to the "romance" of real estate deals, livestock exchanges, railroad-ing, and recovery after the Great Fire of 1871. To go further back in search of a noble past took one either to Fort Dearborn or to a seventeenth-century French culture which really was not located in the immediate Chicago territory. No matter how much one might wish to support Juliette Kinzie, the Fort Dearborn story represented defeat; and it is difficult to draw noble tales of noble characters out of such an ignominious defeat. To return—as did Catherwood—to seventeenth-century life to search another national culture for traditions and themes still provides a tenuous basis for the discovery of a region's usable past. In the meantime, the romance of what was actually occurring in the city, as the giants of industry created a new city, had far more of the ingredients for exciting narratives than did the past. It was not the historic past which furnished the inspiration to Chicago's writers; rather it was the present.

On the other hand, the personal narrative fared much better in the city. Many who took part in the Chicago experiment felt motivated to record their experiences. Following a pattern already noted in New England Puritan culture, the new Chicagoans spent a great deal of time in autobiographical writing. Like the Puritans, they also believed that this was a way by which they could record for all times the periods of great change in which they had participated. Thus in Chicago, there is a vast collection of journals, diaries, and reminiscences which provide an accurate portrait of events and life in early Chicago.

One of the best sources for a reconstruction of the Chicago territory from the time of the second Fort Dearborn (1815) to the beginning of the city in the 1830's is the *Autobiography of Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard*. No narrative, for example, of a business monopoly can actually rival what happened with the American Fur Company, and no personal narrative can surpass the adventure story of Hubbard (1802-1886). His story is one of adventure, of life with the Indians, of the pioneers' confrontations with nature, and of his association with the American Fur Company, often called America's first monopoly. His story is reminiscent of the early life of Cooper's Natty Bumppo, and the excitement of the narrative is within the Cooper tradition. Hubbard's work remained in manuscript for some time although it was passed among friends who read it. It was, however, eventually published (1911) by the Lakeside Press in its series of Christmas books known as the "Lakeside Classics." Although the action of the *Autobiography* ends rather abruptly with 1830, the narrative has a sense of immediacy which prevents it from becoming merely a nostalgic account of the "good old days." This is in contrast to Isaac Arnold's *William B. Ogden and Early Days in Chicago* (1882) and to Edwin Gale's *Reminiscences of Early Chicago and Vicinity* (1902), both of which cover the beginning years of Chicago. Because they were written years after the action, there is a distorted view of history which often results with the reminiscences of old-timers. Yet, interestingly enough, all three of these books make it extremely clear that the businessman was the region's cultural hero; and all three celebrate the ingenuity of the Chicago businessman as they pay homage to the business structure of the city.

When one thinks of the opening years of the life of the city, one is made aware of the constant emphasis upon commercial pursuits and upon a business orientation. "Getting and spending to get more" were the goals destined to lead citizens to the glorious realm of success. And there were some wild schemes in the city which oddly enough did lead to some earthly fortunes. Not that everyone who came had the touch of King Midas, but so much did turn to gold that the name of Chicago early became associated with the titans who were making the city. The legend

is a familiar one; it has been repeated often. Men came into the city with little or no money and within a few years had parlayed their limited funds into thousands—sometimes millions—of dollars. Men were daring, and the laws were loose. As Robert Herrick was to observe about the city's morality: "Nobody asks you, if you succeed." So before the Fire of 1871 equalized many of the citizens of Chicago, the fortunes of Gurdon Hubbard, William B. Ogden, John Jones, Marshall Field, Potter Palmer, George M. Pullman, Walter Loomis Newberry, and others had been made.

Yet in the midst of the commercial activity, there was the beginning of what some historians have called "the pursuit of the finer things of life." In addition to a general interest in art, music, and the theater, there were a number of clubs formed which were designed to elevate the cultural standards and to provide education for the members. Most of the clubs maintained private libraries for their members, and some even had reading rooms. That these were private and for the growing elite did not seem to bother the members who frequently spoke and wrote of the democracy of the West. However, these early clubs illustrate a fact that is frequently ignored. The development and fostering of a literary sensibility in those early days came from the efforts of businessmen in a peculiar marriage of Commerce and Culture.

Ever since John Calhoun opened the offices of the *Chicago Democrat* in 1833, descriptions of the area have displayed with missionary zeal the belief in the importance of businessmen to the development of the region. This sense of manifest destiny which permeates so much of Chicago's writing became apparent early. That a great city was to arise at the Mouth of the Chicago River was predicted by LaSalle in 1682. When he spoke, he could not have known that France would lose the territory to England which, in turn, would lose it to a nation yet unformed in 1682. Nevertheless, what he said then became an early definition of the city:

This will be the Gate of an Empire; this the seat of Commerce. The typical man who will grow up here must be an enterprising man. Each day, as he rises, he will exclaim,

'I act, I move, I push,' and then will be spread before him a boundless horizon, an illimitable field of activity . . .

II

The early literature of Chicago is in many ways inseparable from the development of journalism. The newspapers probably deserve much credit for helping to make Chicago such a successful experiment in urban living. There were monthly attempts to introduce new journals with the hope that they might provide a means to develop and to mold public opinion. These journals frequently declared their intentions to support local writing talent. There was often the strange ambiguity of essentially business papers calling for local poets and short-story writers to augment their pages. Needless to say, there were many failures among these newspapers and magazines, but their failures were not due to a lack of interest but to that old law of economics which makes it clear that a supply cannot exceed a demand.

To reconstruct the history of Chicago journalism before 1871 is made extremely difficult because of several factors, the first of which is the Fire of 1871. In addition to the mere physical destruction of so many records, there were many name changes for a single journal. Furthermore, there were frequent changes of ownership with inevitable shifts of editors, and often a single name might be used for several distinctly unrelated periodicals. For example, there was a *Chicago Commercial Advertiser* from 1836 to 1837 and another journal with the same name from 1847 to 1853. There are instances of elaborate proposals for newspapers; yet the papers never appeared. There are instances of only a single issue of a journal being circulated. One can discover a number of journals being published within a single year, never to appear again. These abortive attempts of journalism proved, however, that there were people who thought newspapers and magazines could succeed in Chicago.

In spite of the diversity of types, numbers of issues, length of ownership, and duration of editors, there are certain general characteristics of all of these journals. First of all, almost without exception, they were run by strong editors with dictatorial powers. This was still the day of obvious owner involvement

with the owner making no attempt to disguise his veto power. Secondly, all of these journals demonstrated extreme faith in the region, which was frequently translated to mean "if it is good for business, it is good for Chicago." Finally, the excessive pride in the region was illustrated by the identifying labels on the mastheads. Such words as "Chicago," "Western," and "Prairie" were common elements of titles. The following newspapers and magazines are some which were published in Chicago before 1860 which illustrate this sense of region: *Chicago Democrat*, 1833-61; *Chicago American*, 1835-42; *Chicago Commercial Advertiser*, 1835-42; *The Union Agriculturist and Western Prairie Farmer*, 1841-43; *Chicago Express*, 1842-44; *Western Citizen*, 1842-53; *Chicago Democratic Advocate and Commercial Advertiser*, 1844-46; *Gem of the Prairie*, 1844-52; *Chicago Daily Journal*, 1844-1929; *Western Magazine*, 1845-46; *Chicago Commercial Advertiser*, 1847-53; *Watchman of the Prairies*, 1847-1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 1847- ; *Lady's Western Magazine*, 1848-49; *Chicago Literary Budget*, 1852-55; *Western Tablet*, 1852-55; *Chicago Times*, 1854-95; *Prairie Leaf*, 1856; and *Chicago Magazine: The West As It Is*, 1857.

While they were intent upon relating daily events with a clear portrait of the culture of the city emerging in the news, editorials, and advertisements, the newspapers were limited by the haste with which many of them were put together. The emerging literary journals, such as the weekly *Gem of the Prairie* and the monthly *Western Magazine*, however, showed a conscious attempt to establish a western literature. In displaying a great faith that the region could actually become a cultural center, they implicitly believed that the power and independence of the city was ultimately connected to the possibility and probability of a distinctive and unique literature. The *Western Magazine*, first monthly literary magazine in the city, appeared from 1845 to 1846. Edited by William Rounseville, the magazine frankly made an appeal for regional writers. In the October, 1845, issue, Rounseville declared: "We shall be slow to believe that there is not talent enough in the West to maintain a character for a work of this kind." And in the issue of the following month he said: "Present indications seem to show that we did

not overrate the literary taste of the West, when we believed the western people able and willing to support a magazine of their own."

Then there was *The Literary Budget*, which appeared from 1852 to 1855. Beginning as a monthly, it became a weekly on January 7, 1854. In that issue the editor, W. W. W. Dannehower, declared:

The West should have a marked original literature of its own. Writers of fiction have used up all the incidents of our glorious revolutionary period. The romantic scenery of the East, too, has been made to aid in the construction of some of the best romances ever written. We do not object to this. On the contrary, we rejoice—are thankful it is so. But a new field is open to authorship. We wish to present its advantages.

The Great West, in her undulating prairies, deep-wooded highlands, mighty rivers, and remnants of aboriginal races, presents topics teeming with interest to every reader, and big with beautiful scenes for the artist's eye. The West is full of subject matter for legend, story, or history. Sublime scenery to inspire the poet is not wanting. All that is lacking is a proper channel. This channel we offer. *The Budget* claims to be a western literary paper, and we invite writers to send us articles on western subjects, for publication.

Since *The Budget* expected only western subscribers, the editor called upon "the friends of western literature" to organize clubs for cooperation "in the maintenance of a good literary paper in this section of the country."

Had the economy of the times been better and had the editor been less provincial, the *Chicago Magazine: The West As It Is* might have survived beyond the five monthly issues which appeared in 1857. "We believe failure was never yet wedded to Chicago," declared the editor in his "Introductory" which appeared during March, 1857. He continued: "We propose to fill these pages with such matters as will make this publication a Chicago-western magazine. We shall aim to make it a *vade mecum* between the East and the West—a go-between carrying to the men of the East a true picture of the West which will

satisfy their desire for information on the great topics connected with this part of their common country." With a ringing plea for the support of his regional philosophy, he concluded:

We therefore bespeak for our work a place in the eastern market, and [recognize] the competition we must meet with in the circulation of eastern periodicals in the western field. The West will learn to patronize this monthly for the love of its own ideas; the East will read it to get that knowledge of us which they cannot get from any other source.

In the following month's issue the confidence of the editor began to wane as he begged his readers to "buy extra copies to send east." In the August issue, which was the last, there appeared an advertisement addressed to "Men of the West," urging them to purchase extra copies of the magazine in order to aid in the establishment of a literature of their own and to help a monthly magazine also of their own "as good as *Harper's*, *Putnam's*, or *Godey's*." The editor, Zebina Eastman who was a lawyer, writer, editor, and prominent abolitionist, had had high hopes for the magazine. He wanted, for example, to be able to publish the magazine without any commercial advertisements whatsoever, but by the second issue he conceded: "We respond to the wish of a contemporary that we might be able to dispense with this avenue of public patronage. But at the present the law of necessity must overrule the law of taste."

Although these early attempts to provide literary journals in the rising marketplace of the West had a precarious existence, some rather exciting works of fiction appeared in these periodicals. W. H. Bushnell's novel "Prairie Fire" appeared in the *Gem of the Prairie* and was later serialized in the weekly literary magazine *Sloan's Garden City*, which appeared from 1853 to 1854. Interestingly enough, this was one of the first journals in the country to set forth the importance and the methodology of the local color movement which is generally associated with the post-Civil War days. Bushnell's legend of the upper Mississippi region appeared in the *Western Magazine* for October, 1845. Entitled "Ke-O-Saw-Que," it was a typical western story which utilized the culture and the myths of the Indians of the region.

Appearing also in this issue of *Western Magazine* was the first installment of a story entitled "A Pioneer of the Prairies" by William Rounseville. The rather popular work by T. Herbert Whipple, "Ethzelda, or Sunbeams and Shadows," first appeared in the *Literary Budget* during 1854. But the novella was eventually published separately and achieved a degree of success among the reading public of Chicago. Most of the fiction which appeared in the journals was confined to the more romantic versions of nature and Indians, and to the pioneer's confrontation with both. Few of these works addressed themselves to urban problems. Instead, they were content to provide entertainment for those who were forging a city out of the wilderness. The romantic tradition which was so much a part of American literature during these days found its counterpart in the early fiction written in Chicago about the region.

III

In addition to those primarily associated with Chicago journalism there were others who were instrumental in the development of the city's early literature. Beginning in 1844—just seven years after the city's incorporation—a series of histories began to appear. Many of them were based upon the diaries and the journals of the earliest settlers. Judge Brown's *History of Chicago* (1844) attempted to establish what had happened at Fort Dearborn and to view judiciously the events as well as the activities of the new city. While Brown's work evidenced an attempt toward an objective approach to history, Juliette Kinzie's *Wau-Bun* of 1856 (already mentioned in connection with the establishment of the Fort Dearborn legend) introduced the personal element as she frankly examined subjectively the early settlement of this section of the Old Northwest Territory. If one could summarize all of the histories written before 1871, there are certain dominant characteristics and features which were repeated in each work. John S. Wright's *Chicago: Past, Present, and Future* of 1868 illustrates the pattern of the majority of these histories. They were written by men who had been impressed by the city's phenomenal growth and who were convinced that the city was destined to become the most outstanding urban center

of the United States. Because they were either written or commissioned by businessmen, these early chronicles naturally emphasized the commercial growth and the mercantile possibilities of the city. Furthermore, they naturally highlighted the roles of the men of business in the evolution of the city. Thus long before the city's novelists used the businessman as the cultural hero of the city, the early historians had already examined his role. As they presented complimentary views of the city, these first historians were highly optimistic about the future of the city as they re-echoed the sense of manifest destiny and mission of the city.

Although much of Chicago's early writing appeared to be essentially utilitarian, one should not overlook the poets and writers of fiction who contributed to this phase of Chicago's literary history. From the very inception of Chicago's newspaper history, one can find tucked between the columns of stock and grain quotations the offerings of some of the city's poets. Poetry served in these early journals as "fillers" much as it does today in some types of newspapers. In 1845, however, just eight years after the incorporation of the city, there was published in Chicago *Miscellaneous Poems, To Which Are Added Writings in Prose on Various Subjects* by one William Asbury Kenyon, who referred to himself as "a humble artisan." In his "Preface" Kenyon echoed the faith of the literary artist in the area. He believed that the day was almost come when Chicago would be flooded with its own indigenous literature. Addressing himself to his own work which he believed had merit, he asserted: "As a whole, the collection has been designed for this community. The specimens here presented have spontaneously sprung and blossomed upon the prairie, and, it is hoped, if they possess either beauty or fragrance, [they] will not, like the flowers which spring to greet us, become extinct by the hoofs of rudeness." Many of his poems deal with the joys of life on the prairie and do not address themselves to the growth of the new city; however, in "Our Late Indian Hunt" he introduced some elements of social protest into his poetry as he questioned the validity of the Black Hawk War. He was not convinced that the cause of his people was a just one because the Indians had already been cornered and defeated.

Say! Did you hear of Black Hawk's war,
Where nature's own was struggled for?
Terror struck all the country through,
Raised by aggressors bugaboo!

A few poor Indians cornered up,
Saw, day by day, the Whites usurp
Their last game grounds, their childhood homes,
And even profane their father's tombs.
They saw, they wept with deep still grief;
Hope held no prospect of relief;
"Farther, yet farther we must go:
Swim to new wilds, like buffalo!"
They bore in silence, 'till their wives,
Whipped like the dogs, "We loathe our lives"
'Till from their mouths was snatched their bread;
'Till the last star of peace had sped.
Then roused they pride's expiring ray,
Their thickening deaths to hold at bay;
They roused for home, they stood for life;
Peace heaped them wrongs; wrongs called for strife.
Blow came for blow; the cry was raised,
"Behold the savage fury blazed,
The frontier wide in ruin lies!"
"Death to the race!"—the aggressor cries—
Death to the race! Yes, when no more
They turned the cheek, as heretofore,
'Tis "savage fury" prompts the stand,
On the last hold of childhood's land!

Take back the term! The wildman's heart
Abhors the deeds of savage art!
Expiring, starved, they fled like deer [sic];
Still, still the gorgeless hounds pressed near.

Wiskansan, and the Broad-Axe tell
Tales which your final dirge may knell!
A war! Alas! a ruthless chase,
For famished remnants of a murdered race.

Had Kenyon remained in the Chicago area his poetry might have become more "urban"; however, he returned to Hingham, Massachusetts, where he continued to write poems in the romantic tradition.

As might be expected, much of the city's literature during the Civil War period tended to deal with issues of the war. Most of it was in favor of the preservation of the Union and consequently supported the war effort. There were, of course, some notable examples of southern sympathizers in the city; but—aside from Wilbur Storey's *Chicago Times*—they were silenced by the persistence of the Union advocates. Lending emotional appeal to this support were the songs of Chicago's lyricist, George F. Root, who became a national figure. Such songs as "Lay Me Down and Save the Flag," "Just Before the Battle, Mother," and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching" were stirring calls to continue the war. However, opinion was divided on such matters as emancipation for the slaves and on what to do with the growing number of refugees who were flooding the city. It was a period of extensive argumentative prose.

One of America's least-known documents of freedom was published in Chicago during the closing period of the Civil War. Written by a Chicago businessman, John Jones, and entitled *The Black Laws of Illinois, and a Few Reasons Why They Should Be Repealed*, the work was published in 1864. In a closely-reasoned argument based upon America's existing documents of freedom, Jones pointed out the discrepancies between the Black Laws of Illinois and the commitment of the nation to democracy. At one point he declared:

Now it may be said by our enemies, that we are not citizens, and therefore have no rights. . . . If being natives . . . born on the soil, of parents belonging to no other nation or tribe, does not constitute a citizen in this country, I am at a loss to know in what manner citizenship is acquired by birth. Fellow citizens, I declare unto you, view it as you may, we are American citizens; by the principles of the Declaration of Independence, we are American citizens; within the meaning of the United States Constitution, we are American citizens; by the facts of history and the admissions of American statesmen, we are American citizens; by the hardships and trials endured, by the courage and fidelity displayed by our ancestors in defending the liberties and in achieving the independence of our land, we are American citizens. . . .

Seldom is a single work successful in achieving such an important goal; but the Black Laws of Illinois were repealed; and the Chicagoan, John Jones, was given the credit.

The close of the Civil War did not bring too much rejoicing to Illinois because it returned the body of Lincoln to the State. Writers in Chicago joined those of the nation to produce their share of eulogies. Then that October night arrived, 1871, and the city which had shocked the nation with its phenomenal growth, the city whose writers were consumed by the spirit of commercial expansion, was destroyed by fire. By 1871 there had been a call for western literature, and this had produced poetry and fiction which might seem distinguished today merely by its provincialism. Yet, by 1871, the writers of Chicago had shown an amazing ability to adapt the Puritan concept of history for their own use. Through autobiographies and newspapers, the writers drew detailed portraits of the early businessman and showed his importance in the region's growth. These portraits make clear that in the city men were committed to a "business morality" which did not necessarily agree with the traditional ethical concerns. If a conflict arose between the two, it was the Chicago "business morality" which prevailed. One can see this operate in the novels of Fuller, Herrick, and Dresier, who were merely recording for their age the cultural hero who had already been accepted as Chicago's pioneer. What happened before 1871 prepared the way for the golden age of Chicago's literature. The past was indeed prologue for that golden age.

Northeastern Illinois University

NORWEGIAN IMMIGRANT NOVELS SET IN CHICAGO

GERALD THORSON

Chicago played an important role in the development of Norwegian-American literature. For many years it was the publishing center for the Norwegian immigrants; artists and aspiring authors were drawn to the city—in part because of the publishing firms located there; and, eventually, the city itself furnished the setting of some of the narratives the immigrants were writing. Chicago, its rise from frontier town to teeming metropolis coinciding with the movement of the Norwegian immigrants into the United States, early attracted the Norwegians, and the Norwegian “colony,” as they referred to it, assumed a position of leadership in Norwegian-American affairs. The newspapers, publishing houses, and bookstores in Chicago, established to aid the immigrants in their transition to American life, helped keep alive the social, political, and literary interests of the expanding Norwegian population in the Upper Midwest, reminding them that there were other Norwegians in America and that they shared a common heritage. In the process, the community of Norwegians in Chicago was looked upon as the cultural center—a position it held until the turn of the century.

Chicago had the largest concentration of Norwegians in the United States.¹ They first settled in the Wicker Park area, which they nicknamed “Hommandsbyen” after a fashionable suburb of Oslo, but later they moved to the Humboldt Park and Logan Square area on the northwest side. Around the Norwegian business district on Milwaukee Avenue were found the homes of the working classes. Some of the early settlers prospered along with the city, and by the time the emigration from Norway reached its heights in the decades following the Civil War, these early residents were well established as men of wealth and

position in the larger Chicago community. As Theodore Dreiser indicates in *The Titan*, when he lists Albert Thorsen as one of the directors of North Chicago City Company, Norwegian businessmen took part in the building of streetcars and public utilities. Newly arrived immigrants tended to show deference to those already settled in Chicago, and several business and professional men assumed roles of leadership also in the Norwegian community.

Chicago offered work to a number of common laborers and artisans from Norway, but it also attracted professional men: physicians, lawyers, engineers, and sea captains settled there. Norwegians with an artistic bent or intellectual aspirations, many of them educated at the university of Oslo or other European universities, were also drawn to Chicago. In Chicago these immigrants developed their own cultural organizations—some of them exclusively Norwegian, others embracing also the Swedish and Danish immigrants. As early as 1868 there was an active Norwegian Dramatic Society producing plays by Ibsen, Bjørnson, and other Scandinavian dramatists. Numerous musical groups and literary clubs were organized. Ultimately, buildings were erected as social and cultural centers. Important in this cultural development were the numerous newspapers, some of them short-lived, others prospering for many years and exerting an influence throughout the Upper Midwest. Foremost among these were *Norden*, *Amerika*, and *Skandinaven*. The latter, founded in 1866 by John Anderson and Knud Langeland, with a succession of able editors such as Nicolai Grevstad, at one time editor of one of Oslo's leading dailies, had regular literary columns and published Norwegian novels and translations of English and American novels serially and poetry. For a while it appeared in weekly, semi-weekly, and daily editions. It had its own bookstore and publishing house, which reprinted classic Norwegian titles as well as the books written by the immigrants. These efforts in Chicago to keep alive the literary and musical traditions of the homeland perpetuated the Norwegian language and promoted the kind of intellectual ferment and cultural awareness without which *Giants in the Earth* would have been impossible.

It is not strange that Chicago should also become the locale for some of the more than two hundred novels written in Nor-

wegian in the United States. While the number of Chicago novels is not large nor their literary art noteworthy, they do manage to reflect the immigrants' apprehensions about city life and give glimpses of a variety of situations in which Norwegians found themselves in Chicago. What is strange is that so few of the novels give more than a cursory glance at the social elite among the Norwegians in Chicago. They acknowledge their presence, but their interest is more often in life at the fringes rather than at the center.

To the new immigrant Chicago was the place of opportunity. At the same time, it was full of problems and uncertainties. The dangers of city life were recognized in the earliest novels making reference to Chicago. Two novels of the 1880's include Chicago as a part of their setting. Both are immigrant success tales, reflecting a common theme of the early immigrant fiction, where the poor but intelligent Norwegian cotter boy turns to America for the source of wealth that will allow him to return to Norway to win the hand of the landowner's daughter.

Ole Buslett, the Wisconsin author, began his writing career in 1882 with *Fram!* ("Forward!").² In 1884 *Husmandsgutten* ("The Cotter's Boy"), the first novel of Hans Anderson Foss, began appearing as a serial in *Decorah-posten*.³ The heroes of both novels arrive in Chicago after they have made their fortunes in Wisconsin. For Buslett's hero, Eivind Fjeld, the Chicago experience spells disaster: a Chicago banker absconds with his money. For Foss's hero, Ole Haugen, Chicago becomes the means to an even larger fortune: warned by a friend of the impending closing of the bank where he has deposited his money, Ole withdraws his deposit, invests in real estate, then "Clipper" stock, and builds what eventually becomes the "leading dry goods and grocery store" in Chicago. Both heroes return to Norway, though Eivind has to return to Wisconsin first to recoup his fortune. Ole sells his store and returns to Norway "with the best of wishes, a great deal of money, and a trunkful of American curios. . . ." In Norway everyone acknowledges that "he looked more like a well-to-do merchant than the cotter's son that they used to know."

Neither of these novels gives any indication of life in Chicago; neither the city nor the Norwegian community is depicted.

Chicago is simply the place where fortunes are altered, for good or for bad, and there is no indication that human beings live and work and dream in the city. Both novelists are more interested in the dream than the dreamer. But a few years after their publication a novel appeared that managed to capture some of the strength of the city and get at its effects upon the immigrant. *Sara*, published by Kristofer Janson in 1891,⁴ is basically a romance, where Chicago becomes one of the means of liberation, the expansion of the mind, an introduction to the cultural values of life, but since the city is also seen as a place where the unprepared and helpless individual can succumb to defeat, the romance is fused with social criticism, an anatomy of the forces at work in Chicago to prevent its inhabitants from achieving their ideals. In the course of this protest, Janson describes several segments of life in Chicago.

Kristofer Janson, who had been in Minneapolis as a Unitarian pastor for the Scandinavians for a decade, had been a leading author in Norway in the seventies: along with Ibsen, Bjørnson, and Lie, he had received a stipend from the government. In Minneapolis he continued his writing, chiefly fiction dealing with the lives of the Norwegian immigrants in the Upper Midwest. Imbued with a strong humanistic philosophy, Janson's optimistic and idealistic view of life prompted him to use his fiction as a platform for his ideas and social criticism. In *Sara*, Janson's final novel on Norwegian-American life, the realization of the dreams of the heroine for beauty and a life of service is hindered by the fundamentalist religion of the Lutheran churches, a capitalistic society more interested in profits than in human lives, and a concept of values, both in the American society and in the immigrant communities, that relegates woman to an inferior position.

Sara relates the life of a young Norwegian-American girl in her search for identity and meaning; it takes her from a farming community in Wisconsin to Chicago and, finally, to Rome; then, after an unsuccessful attempt to put her ideals into practice in her home community, she marries an American, Henry Brown, and returns to Chicago to live in a mansion on the shores of the lake. Sara's childhood, devoid of beauty or entertainment, is lived in an atmosphere of potatoes, cows, pigs, and the Bible—the sole conversational topics of her father. At an early age

she is married off to the young Lutheran pastor, Abraham Jensen, but life in the parsonage is just as dreary as life on the farm had been. Then a young Norwegian vagabond, an artist, comes to the community. He manages to wheedle the pastor into giving him a room in the parsonage by painting portraits of the pastor and wife and offering to work on an altar painting. Thomas Falk and Sara have frequent discussions, in which he opens Sara's eyes to the excitement of the life of the mind and the larger world beyond the Wisconsin farm community. He introduces her to literature, especially works by contemporary Norwegian authors, and smuggles books to her which she reads in secret. Most influential is Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Later, after Falk has left the community, the pastor finds the novel and casts it into the fire; and Sara sets off by train for Chicago to locate the young artist. In Chicago Falk shuns her, and she walks aimlessly on the streets of the city until she is befriended by a drunken Norwegian, her childhood friend, Peter Hanson, who had also run away from home. With the solicitous encouragement of Peter, Sara struggles at various jobs until she ends up in a hospital, the victim of an epidemic. There she is befriended by a wealthy American widow, Mrs. King, who helps her to recuperate and offers her a position as companion. There Sara is able to educate herself through books and in discussions with the numerous intellectuals and artists who frequent the King home. Not until she accompanies Mrs. King on a trip to Rome, however, does her final enlightenment arrive, and then it comes in large part through a meeting with young artists, chiefly Scandinavian and including Thomas Falk. The Norwegian artist shows her the dream, and the American social worker shows her the reality. To make the dream a reality and the reality a dream is her goal, and she sees that possible in a life of social service. As a Norwegian-American, she is well equipped, for the Norwegian has kept the dream but ignored the reality. In Chicago she experiences reality and the absence of the dream. The good life is possible, she concludes, only when the two can be brought together.

In Sara Janson's social criticism allows him to realistically detail various aspects of life in the city. Although his chief protest is aimed at the conditions of the common laborers, he also deplores the position of women and the special indignities that

befall the immigrant. In the process, he attacks the factory owners and the church landlords in the slums; and he even aims a gentle satire at those like Mrs. King and her friends who salve their consciences in numerous social service activities without having any concept of the actual conditions under which most of the workers in the city are living.

Sara's labor in a garment factory permits Janson to describe the working conditions: unreasonable hours, unsatisfactory places to work, and ridiculous rules and regulations. At the end of Sara's first week, where she is paid by the piece, her salary comes to \$1.30, but she has so many fines that she discovers she owes the company fifteen cents. When Peter, the young immigrant worker, learns about this, he barges in to confront the manager: "I want you to know that you are a thief, a dirty dog, a cannibal, who sucks blood out of all these miserable wretches who allow you to make fools of them. I want you to know that you are one of the biggest crooks in Chicago—and that's saying something, it is. You ought to hang in the highest gallows and be spit upon by all honorable people who go by." Such strident criticism abounds throughout the novel. "This was, of course," Janson writes, "the way these men became rich—by robbing and stealing and deceiving the poor newcomers, who didn't know all the tricks. . . . And this was permitted to take place in a so-called Christian society, under the very eyes of the law." Janson is especially vehement towards Armour & Company, whose treatment of Irish Pat brings the entire family to murder and suicide. Only for the Marshall Field Company does he have anything good to say.

Sara accompanies Peter to a meeting of the workers and anarchists, discovers how some women have been forced into a life of prostitution, and in general experiences what it means to be a poor newcomer and a woman in Chicago. Most of the criticism is voiced through one of the characters—sometimes Sara, most often Peter, but also Lizzie, a Norwegian prostitute, and Henry Brown, an American.

Sara finds her enlightenment, the meaning of life, in Chicago. But it is a bitter struggle, and salvation is achieved only because she—unlike most—stubbornly keeps her ideals, her dreams, before her. For the most part, Chicago emerges as the villain,

embodying and perpetuating all that is evil among those who control the city and the lives of those who live in it. One evening Sara is invited to a farewell party on the rooftop of Holy Trinity Ark, the tenement house owned by Holy Trinity parish. The party is thrown by Irish Pat to celebrate his departure—achieved shortly afterwards by murder and suicide. At one point, Sara stands alone and looks down at the city below her. In her thoughts we find the image of Chicago that is most forcefully expressed throughout the novel: "Peaceful and satisfied, this dreadful monster, the city of Chicago, lay down below. Daily it sucked the life blood of thousands of people without giving them anything in return. It heard their wailing and their moans without blinking an eye. It had only one thought—to put into motion all those wheels and machines that would grind human life and happiness to bits in order to bring gold streaming into the rich men's coffers. It lay there—hard-hearted as a millionaire, cold as a business man, flaunting its contemptuous smile up to the roof, saying to them: 'Yes, play and laugh all you want. I'll still get you in my claws and crush you to pieces. Tomorrow you'll begin over again.'" It is this view of Chicago that is consistently reinforced in Janson's *Sara*. He saw it not as the epitome of modern civilization but as the new monster that devours the weak, the poor, and—especially—the immigrant.

That this potentially destructive monster could also be viewed less seriously was demonstrated by Alan Saetre's novel published five years later. In *Farmerkonen Marit Kjøfseths erfaringer i Chicago* ("Farmer Wife Marit Kjøfseth's Adventures in Chicago")⁵ he takes Marit from the Wisconsin farm to Chicago to assist her niece, whose husband has become ill. Her experiences include such farce as shaking the conductor's hand when he asks for her ticket, reaching for her box-lunch and spilling it all over the train, being duped out of some money by a Chicago newsboy, bumping into a waiter and upsetting his tray, and replying to the waitress when offered a menu: "You don't think I want to eat paper, do you?" After many supposedly uproarious adventures Marit finds herself in court, arrested for biting a newsboy's hand; but in the end she locates her niece and gets safely back to the farm in Wisconsin, apparently none the worse and none the better for her experiences.

The details of city life never become important in the novel. What emerges is rather a state of mind, a reminder of a situation and a place perhaps totally different, with which readers could recognize and associate. The popularity of this book (it went through at least twenty-four editions) can be accounted for. It undoubtedly captured for the immigrants their own introductions of American life. For many of them Chicago was the location of that introduction. Now they could look back upon those days with a sense of relief and laugh at Marit's follies with a complete sense of identity and yet a feeling of detachment.

The success of Saetre's novel gave birth to a sequel. In 1903 Gudmund Hagen, editor of *Vesterheimen* ("The Western Home") in Crookston, Minnesota, published *Per Kjøfseth, eller Manden til Marit* ("Per Kjøfseth, or the Husband of Marit"),⁶ undoubtedly trying to capitalize on the popularity of Saetre's novel. He takes Per from the Red River Valley, where the Kjøfseths now farm, to New York City and Washington, D. C. Marit's trip to Chicago had unsettled him, and anyway he has become tired of always having Marit retort: "When I was in Chicago—" Enroute to the East he stops off in Chicago to see if all that Marit had said about it could be true, but he does not intend to tell Marit of his visit. As he gets off the train, he tries to dispose of the strong cheese left from the lunch Marit had packed for him. A policeman suspects him of being an anarchist putting dynamite under the building, and Per ends up in court with his cheese. After many other adventures, he can only conclude: "Now I have been here only one day, but I have seen and experienced more than ever before in my whole life."

A later novel set partially in Chicago also suggests that Chicago can cause frustrations. Gulbrand Sether, the landscape painter and novelist in Chicago, published *Bernt Myrstua*, an autobiographical novel.⁷ The protagonist, Bernt, an artist, has decided to write a book about himself, but the noise and clamor of the city make it impossible for him to collect his thoughts. Finally, after being asked to leave his rooming house because he disturbs the other roomers with his attempts to write at night, he concludes that "it is impossible to write a book in a city like Chicago, with its noise and busy people, who run around enough to make a person crazy" and takes off for Wisconsin.

Not until 1906 did any author turn to the specifically Norwegian community in Chicago. J. N. Kildahl, at the time the president of St. Olaf College, had been a pastor in Chicago in the 1890's. *Naar Jesus kommer ind i huset* ("When Jesus Enters the Home")⁸ is his attempt at creating a city novel, but the work is more of a religious and temperance tract than a convincing narrative. His novel about the misfortunes of Frederick and Martha Holst, brought on by their weakness for beer, takes the family through a series of reversals until they end up destitute in two rooms on Bismark Court. Through the ministrations of a deaconess and pastor from the neighboring Lutheran church, by the end of the novel, the Holsts have moved back to six sunny rooms on May Street and he is a deacon in the church and a foreman in a factory.

Not only the poor were victimized by the city. Even those Norwegians who had risen to positions of prominence could be corrupted. One such was Paul O. Stensland, president of the Milwaukee State Bank. At one time he had been a member of the Chicago School Board, a member of the Board of Directors of the 1893 Exposition, and a good friend of Mayor Carter Harrison. In 1906 he disappeared from Chicago, taking the bank's money with him. The following year Lars Stenholt, the Minneapolis writer who dealt in diatribes and popular trash, published a fictional version of Stensland's career in Chicago. *Paul O. Stensland og hans hjaelpere, eller Milliontyvene i Chicago* ("Paul O. Stensland and His Associates, or the Millionaire Thieves in Chicago")⁹ recounts the many swindles of this "leading citizen" in the Norwegian community who tries to be all things to all people in order to gain his fortune. While the book is chiefly didactic, giving Stenholt opportunity to vent his spleen against numerous adversaries, there is an attempt to develop the various ramifications of the embezzlement, and Stenholt does manage to convey some impressions of life in the Norwegian-American community, with its intrigues and rivalries.

The Norwegian community is the setting of yet another novel. George Taylor Rygh, who succeeded J. N. Kildahl as pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Chicago, published *Morgenrødens Vinger* ("The Wings of Dawn") in 1909.¹⁰ This novel is the story of Markus Ryerson, a gifted wood carver and cabinet

maker who, through hard work and the pursuit of further education in night school, goes from factory worker to owner of a furniture factory. Though his first building is destroyed in the Chicago fire, he rebuilds and prospers. By the end of the novel the mystery of Ryerson's past in Norway is cleared up, and various aspects of life in the Norwegian "colony" have been chronicled, but the Chicago experience is empty and unimportant.

In all three novels from the opening decade of the twentieth century the Norwegian community is explored. The focus is fairly well limited to the city's northwest, where the Norwegians had congregated. In each novel there is reference to specific places and streets, and the realistic detail is there. Yet, in the end, Chicago and the Norwegian community in Chicago are kept from the reader by the author's desires to preach: the narratives are smothered by excessive moralizing, and one comes away from them with no literary experience of life in the city.

Not until 1910, when Peer Strømme published *Den vonde ivold* ("In the Clutches of the Devil"), did a Chicago immigrant novel succeed in conveying the many ramifications of the immigrant experience without excessive didacticism. The novel was begun pseudonymously as a serial in *Eidsvold*, a new literary magazine published in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Only the first chapter appeared, however, and in the next issue of the magazine the editor remarked: "Den vonde ivold and such things will, in the future, not appear in this publication." That same year the novel was published in book form by the Normanden Publishing Company of Grand Forks.¹¹ Peer Strømme, the author, had been a pastor in the Red River Valley before he assumed the editorship of *Norden* in Chicago in 1888 and made his residence in the Wicker Park area. By 1910, no longer in Chicago, he had become well known in Norwegian America as a journalist, lecturer, campaign speaker, and author.

Den vonde ivold is a novel of decadence in the tradition of Hans Jaeger's *Fra Kristiania-Bohømen* ("From the Oslo Bohème"), 1885. The influence of that novel is evident. Strømme was undoubtedly also familiar with the novels of Arne Garborg, whom he had met in Norway, and the sardonic analysis of decadence in Garborg's *Traette Maend* ("Weary Men"), 1891, or *Bondestudentar* ("Peasant Students"), 1883. In his examination

of Norwegian bohemians in Chicago, Strømme, like his Norwegian predecessors, stresses the influence of heredity and environment in his analysis of character. Conceived as a confession, the novel is consistent in form as the protagonist looks back upon his life in Norway and the three years he has been in Chicago.

Strømme may have drawn his narrative from his acquaintance with a specific individual, but it is more likely a composite fictional account imposed upon the Chicago scene. That there was a reality to his fiction is evident from numerous references to those immigrants who lived at the edge of society. In 1881 a man from Chicago wrote to *Morgenbladet* in Oslo that there had come to Chicago an extraordinarily large number of young persons who did not belong to the working class. In Chicago they would have a difficult time, he said, and he warned them against coming there.¹² An early historian of Norwegian immigration made a similar observation: "To Chicago came also drunken good-for-nothings, who thought that the city's streets were paved with gold, and unsuccessful merchants and unfortunate sots who wanted to begin a new life. Disreputable sons of prominent families and alcoholic students cut themselves off from their pasts, but it was evident from their speech that they came from the educated class. Chicago was a labyrinth huge enough to hide one and all."¹³ Marcus Thrane, the socialist leader forced out of Norway, arrived in 1864. Men like Arne Dybfest, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, and Knut Hamsun, who later returned to Norway to become recognized authors, spent some time in Chicago. The intellectuals and artists were primarily rationalists, socialists, and radicals, and they gave support to many of the activities of the anarchists in the city.

In the lives and activities of this group of immigrants are found the prototypes of Strømme's characters. The protagonists, Halvdan Moe, and his friend, Nils Holmsen, are dissolute students from Oslo who looked for escape in Chicago. Arriving in the city the day that Mayor Carter Harrison is assassinated (1893), they proceed on an ever downward trek as they find odd jobs translating for a Norwegian publishing house and reporting for Norwegian and English Newspapers. Contrary to Nils Holmsen's first impression ("I'm more sure than ever . . . that I'll get along beautifully in Chicago! Here, at least, we won't

be bored to death"), the two go from bad to worse through their addiction to alcohol, poker, and carousing. Three years later Nils has committed suicide and Halvdan writes his memoirs while awaiting death in the sanitarium at Dunning. All this is related with complete detachment by the author: there is no condemnation of the decadent young men or their associates but a tolerance of their morality and a genuine understanding of their situation. Halvdan, the protagonist, has the final word: his quest for understanding the forces at play in their lives and his defense of their actions dominate the book. Only in the final lines, and then only barely, is there any indication that their situations should have been otherwise: "As the saying goes: if it were only over when it's over, then it would be good if it ended soon. But who knows? God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner."

Most interesting in the novel is Strømme's psychological realism. The forces of heredity and environment at work on these two young men are explored. Halvdan's physical deformity and his childhood in Norway give credence to the homosexual attitudes hinted at in his confession, and Nile's dissipation and degeneration are traced to his illegitimate birth and subsequent childhood. That men of their psychological makeup, in spite of their intelligence, would succumb to life in Chicago is taken for granted by the narrator. In describing their decadence, then, Strømme is true to the concepts of the decadent writer: "The genuine decadent is a completely disillusioned man, a man, therefore, in whom will, as an instrument of morality, tends to become increasingly less active—until, theoretically at least, it ceases to exist at all as a stabilizing influence in life or art."¹⁴ Halvdan and, especially, Nils find the essence of life in the lives of the lowest dregs of society. In his dealings with prostitutes and "society's stillborn" Nils is happiest. His aim is to find a way to prison, where he will have the best society and companionship.

In spite of the action and constant penchant of the protagonist for analyzing and justifying, the tone of the novel is not bleak. A gentle humor and a mild satire find their way into the narrative. Society at large and the Norwegian-American society in particular both come in for adverse comment. Church people and

the Norwegian freethinkers are alike taken to task for their superficiality. Underlying the actions of all these is a basic hypocrisy that twists and corrupts them. Only in the prostitutes, criminals, a single Lutheran pastor, a Norwegian physician, saloonkeepers, the Salvation Army women, and journalists does Halvdan find genuine concern and sympathy.

For the newsmen the protagonist reserves his highest praise. Shortly after the two young men arrive in Chicago, their Norwegian benefactor, Ole Benson, introduces them to the members of the Story Club, a place for journalists and authors. Many of the scenes take place there, and there are descriptions of poker games and long discussions on a variety of topics. The most interesting person there for the young men is a popular fiction writer, Richard Otis. Strømme drew on his own experiences in the Chicago Press Club for much of his material, and the exchanges between the young Norwegians and Otis are most likely taken from Strømme's own friendship with Opie Read, for as one person has noted, ". . . when Strømme and Opie Read were both there, then there was a real celebration in the Club."¹⁵ What distinguishes the newsmen from most of the others the young men meet in Chicago is their humaneness, their genuineness, their tolerance of others, no matter how poor or depraved: "There was absolutely no sham or hypocrisy. All spoke right from the shoulder about anything imaginable and were natural and democratic. I had never before met up with such genuine friendliness. If the world had been full of people like these men, I could have decided to live forever."

But the possibilities of finding such persons in Chicago were rare. Death was preferable to suffering the indignities of Chicago. The key to the labyrinth was not to be found: death was the only release.

Strømme's novel captures for us the dominant image of Chicago that emerges from those Norwegian immigrant novels set in Chicago. Although his characters, quite untypical of the mass of immigrants in the city, are unlike those in any other novel, they speak for them all in their views of Chicago; for in all of them the city itself is an obstacle, a force, which the newcomers must take into account. For the protagonists of Saetre, Hagen, and Sether, Chicago is a fascinating place to encounter;

yet, because it is also frustrating and inimical, it is better to stay away from it. For the protagonists of Buslett, Foss, Kildahl, Stenholt, and Rygh, a way of life predominant in Chicago must be struggled against if the immigrant is to succeed in the new world. Their struggles are never very convincing, however, because the didacticism of the authors prevents the reader from experiencing city life along with the characters. The reasons for this are obvious—the novels are, as Strømme once remarked about Saetre's novel, "idiotic rubbish."¹⁶

Only Janson and Strømme managed to provide viable narratives which probed the immigrant experience in Chicago. In both, Chicago is the great monster which cannot be tamed. For Janson's heroine it is possible to live with the untamed beast by maintaining her ideals. The victory Janson envisioned, however, is more an intellectual and philosophical victory than a reform of the city itself. He argued for reform, but its possibility is not convincing. For Strømme there is no concern for reform: the city is all-powerful, and in the end it devours one and all—no one escapes. In that way Strømme's characters differ from the characters of all the other Chicago novels. They find their views of life reenforced by the atmosphere and physical presence of the city itself. It is, after all, the ideal location for Norway's decadents: at least they are never "bored to death." The ironies in that observation by the young immigrant in Strømme's novel encompass and incorporate the entire spectrum of the encounters with Chicago particularized in the Norwegian immigrant novels. In a very subtle way, then, Strømme's novel brings both the novel and the experience of the Norwegians in Chicago to their proper conclusion.

Saint Olaf College

NOTES

1. When Peter Daae published a book on Chicago in 1903, his sub-title was "America's Most American City and the Third Largest Norwegian City in the World."
2. O. E. Buslett, *Fram!* (Chicago, 1882).
3. Hans Anderson Foss, "Husmandsgutten," *Decorah-posten*, Dec. 3, 1884, to Apr. 22, 1885; *Husmandsgutten* (Decorah, Iowa, 1885); *The Cotter's Son*, Joel G. Winkjer, trans. (Alexandria, Minn., 1962). This novel went through several editions, in both the United States and Norway.

4. Kristofer Janson, *Sara* (Christiania og Kjøbenhavn, 1891). My translations.
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14. Alrik Gustafson, *Six Scandinavian Novelists* (Princeton, N. J., 1940), 105.
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CARL SANDBURG, LYRIC POET

JOHN T. FLANAGAN

Scant attention is paid today to the lyric verse of Carl Sandburg. His poems are still anthologized, to be sure, but books like *Chicago Poems* and *Smoke and Steel* excite few readers; and literary critics, exposed for years to erudite allusions and tangled personal symbolism, ignore Sandburg's simple imagery and frequently rough lines. Moreover, even in his own lifetime his reputation as a poet was eclipsed by his fame as historian and biographer. For many years audiences knew him as a folk singer, as a journalist, and perhaps even as a platform pundit. Subsequently he wrote autobiography, fiction, and a monumental six-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln. But it should not be forgotten that Sandburg began as a lyric poet, that his *Complete Poems* of 1950 numbered more than 800 items and was awarded a Pulitzer prize, and that his last book to appear during his lifetime, *Honey and Salt* in 1963, collected verse written largely in his declining years. Sandburg indeed may have been the victim of his own virtuosity. He did too many things too well and allowed himself to be distracted from what probably was his real metier.

There was also another factor at work here. Sandburg realized early that poetry was not notably profitable, however satisfactory he found it as a medium of expression for his own emotions. Eventually financial returns were probably commensurate with the energy and time expended in the writing of lyric verse, but in the meanwhile history and biography yielded more substantial income. To the last Sandburg remained a lyric poet. He continued to write brief lyrics, even when like Hokusai he became an octogenarian, and his prose has many superbly lyrical passages.

But much of his vitality was directed elsewhere so that his best lyrical verse was the product of his youth.

When Sandburg began to publish verse, imagism was new and fresh. Amy Lowell, H.D., John Gould Fletcher, Ezra Pound were names to conjure with. Rhyme was a fetter easily discarded. Long and loose lines, once almost patented by Walt Whitman, were utilized by many poets. Repetition and parallelism replaced precise metrical syntax. Cadences could be stertorous, cacophonous, or surprisingly faint. Vachel Lindsay, for example, could write not only "The Congo" but also "The Chinese Nightingale."

Sandburg found this new medium very much to his liking. In such quickly famous poems as "Lost" and "Fog" he could compress his images of a boat whistle resembling a lost child's cry or harbor mist moving on feline feet into a few short lines. In "Chicago" he could pile up epithets in the memorable opening lines and subsequently shift from single participles to long, dangling modifiers. And in his caustic attack on Billy Sunday, "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter," he could throw away all pretense of metrical lines and substitute straight declarative sentences paragraphed like verse in which blunt statements and colloquial diction replaced all acoustic effects.

In the March, 1923, issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* Sandburg printed 38 definitions of poetry, not a single one of which is either logical or analytical. Instead they are definitions by images, meanings suggested by connotations, metaphors depending entirely on the background and fancy of the reader. When Sandburg announced that "Poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner," or "Poetry is a sliver of the moon lost in the belly of a golden frog," he was writing as imaginatively as he ever would, and at the same time he was following Amy Lowell's dictum that an image should be firm and clear. The famous definitions are visual and perhaps aural; they appeal not to the mind but to the imagination. They are the truly fanciful speculations and comparisons of a lyric poet.

It should be emphasized that Sandburg always used images in his writing, not necessarily the hard and unexpected images of Pound and Eliot, perhaps more generally familiar and quotidian comparisons, but still metaphorical pictures or parallels from quite different sources. These images are collectively sensory

but generally visual. There is nothing in Sandburg to compare with Thoreau's chapter on "Sounds" in *Walden* and indeed little imagery which appeals primarily to the ear. Similarly Sandburg made virtually no use of the sensations of touch or smell, exceptions perhaps begin occasional allusions to food or autumnal harvests. But like Emerson he had a transparent eyeball.

His visual imagery is rich in color, shape, light, form, his eye roving and comprehensive. A native of Galesburg, Illinois, which in the year of his birth, 1878, was a small prairie community surrounded by cornfields and small farms, Sandburg felt close to seasonal changes, to grain fields rippled by prairie winds, in spectacular color changes in the vast horizons, to clouds and rain, blizzards and stars. In "Prairie," the poem which contains the challenging statement that "the past is a bucket of ashes," he writes a line which is assuredly autobiographical. A fireman on a passing locomotive waves his hand to a country school teacher on a bobsled, where there is also "A boy, yellow hair, red scarf and mittens, on the bobsled, in his lunch box a pork chop sandwich and a V of gooseberry pie." In "Haze" the soul of a woman "is a corn-tassel kissing a south-west wind." The stream in "River Moons" is "the upper twist of a written question mark." After dusk the trees assume different shapes and roles so that in "Prairie Waters by Night" the poet can claim that "the long willows drowse on the shoulders of the running water, and sleep from much music." The moon fascinated the prairie-born Sandburg long before the astronauts landed on that planet. In "Night Stuff" he adjures the reader: "Listen a while, the moon is a lovely woman, a lonely woman, lost in a silver dress, lost in a circus rider's silver dress." In "Moonset" another image struck his fancy: "Leaves of poplars pick Japanese prints against the west." And in "Under the Harvest Moon" he speaks of "Death, the gray mocker," which "Comes and whispers to you As a beautiful friend Who remembers."

Flowers and birds seem to have attracted Sandburg less than they did other nature poets such as Emerson and Whitman. It is true that he alludes to roses, cornflowers, larkspur, and pansies, and that he addresses poems to poppies and hydrangeas and lavender lilies. As a youth he was conscious of mocking birds and humming birds and in his Chicago days the gulls of Lake

Michigan fascinated him. "River Roads" includes the sounds of crows and red-headed woodpeckers and the cardinal streaks a line of vermilion against the green forest. Again in "Purple Martins" he calls the birds slingers and sliders, "tumbling over in the water mirrors" out of sheer delight. And in "Sandpipers" he observes the antics of marine birds with "the script of their feet . . . on the sea shingles." But it would seem that Sandburg was most sensitive to the larger aspects of nature, to wind, clouds, water, the moon, and even then the familiar image was seldom a bridge to further thought. Later in life when he came to the brink of the ocean and eventually journeyed to Sweden he assumed a wider perspective and in "North Atlantic" employed a striking metaphor, "the sea's wife, the wind." But obviously Sandburg was most at home on the cornfields of the Middle West. To quote again from "Prairie":

"I was born on the prairie and the milk of its wheat, the red of its clover, the eyes of its women, gave me a song and a slogan."

Sandburg was more than a nature poet, of course, and both *Chicago Poems* and *Smoke and Steel* reveal the urban impact upon his imagination. Visual imagery is prominent in these volumes, but it is notable that the proletarian and the sociological themes dominate the purely aesthetic. As a youth coming to the big city from the prairie like one of Theodore Dreiser's protagonists, Sandburg could hardly have missed the images supplied by Chicago's Loop. The city of the big shoulders also had its scenes of beauty, especially when the lake mists brought nocturnal magic and the skyscrapers caught men's eyes and tossed them upwards. In "The Harbor" a sudden glimpse of a "blue burst of lake" and "a fluttering storm of gulls" made the poet temporarily forget the women standing in doorways with their "hunger-deep eyes." No reader of the 1916 poem "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard" missed the striking image of the last line when moonlight and shadows combined to make "a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night." In "Bronze" Sandburg imagined that he could see General Grant astride his bronze horse in Lincoln Park attempt to ride his steed into the combers of a lake storm. In "Windy City" according to the poet

"The heave of the shore wind hunches the sand piles," while at the day's end, "Night gathers itself into a ball of dark yarn." Above all it was the skyscraper, in Sandburg's eyes the persistent symbol of Chicago, that fixed his vision. In "People Who Must" he becomes the painter looking down from the tower and seeing a traffic policeman who was merely "a spot of blue, a splinter of brass" about whom the black tides surged. He was more descriptive and prosaic in "Skyscraper" as he pictured the daily emptying of the huge building which eventually loomed in the smoke and the stars. But in the famous "Prayers of Steel" he strove to fantasize the durable metal which alone made the skyscraper possible: "Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars."

Conrad Aiken in a 1926 review accused Sandburg of being a sentimentalist about both nature and people and deemed his poems superficial because few of them could stand the test of rereading.¹ It is certainly true that as the people of Chicago, the clerks and stenographers and track layers and steel mill laborers and owl-car riders, won his sympathy, his verse became more conspicuously social protest and social satire. Harry Hansen was one of the first critics to point out that Sandburg displayed two moods in his poetry: the lyrical and the social.² If he had a genuine passion for the prairies of his youth and for the nooks of beauty and charm which he occasionally found in the big city, he had an even stronger devotion to the working classes and a life-long resentment of their exploitation by the affluent and the privileged. This sympathy for the underdog was of course a thoroughly natural attitude for the prairie poet to assume. Sandburg's father was an illiterate Swedish immigrant and a poorly paid railroad employee in Galesburg; the Sandburg family, although not poverty-stricken, certainly enjoyed few amenities. As a boy Sandburg held many jobs, knew harvest workers and hobos, rode the rods, washed dishes, delivered milk. Later as an organizer for the Socialist Party and as a working journalist he found an ideology to support his emotions, and his Chicago experiences produced the characters for his lyrics of protest and satire. His poems about the generally anonymous Loop workers, about factory employes and steel mill laborers—

what might be called proletarian humanity en masse—become the outlet for his vicariously expressed outrage.

For this social verse Sandburg found appropriate but different images. Thus the poem "They Will Say" criticizes his adopted city for permitting its workers "To eat dust in their throats and die empty-handed" after laboring for a pittance. The Maxwell Street Jew in "Fish Crier" had a voice "like a north wind blowing over corn stubble in January." The dago shovelman in "Child of the Romans" lunches on bread and bologna by the side of the railroad track while a Pullman diner passes with its occupants seated at tables "Alive with red roses and yellow jonquils." Working girls in the poem of that name travel to the Loop by the thousands "with little brick-shaped lunches wrapped in newspapers under their arms." In "Southern Pacific" Sandburg contrasts Huntington, the railroad tycoon, and Blithery, the track layer, each of whom now sleeps in a house six feet long. And in "Monosyllabic" the poet laments that yesterday he "loosed a snarl of words on a fool" so that today he will be monosyllabic, "a crony of old men who wash sunlight in their fingers and enjoy slow-pacing clocks." "Psalm of Those Who Go Forth Before Daylight" is devoted to the policemen, teamsters, and milkmen whose duties begin at dawn and to the rolling-mill men and the sheet-steel men who burn holes in the knees of their pants and emerge from their toil with smut covering their ears and necks because "they are brothers of cinders."

An excellent example of this social lyric is "The Mayor of Gary" though it is hardly one of Sandburg's better poems and Aiken probably would find no merit in rereading it. Sandburg claims here that he talked to the mayor of the steel mill town about the twelve-hour day and the seven day week at a time when the temperature measured 96 degrees and the mayor wore cool cream pants and white shoes. He was told that the workers idled in their plants and let machinery do most of the work. But as he left the interview he saw workmen wearing shoes pitted with holes made by molten steel and showing naked shoulders with bunches of muscles hard as pig iron. Sandburg draws no moral; the reader does not soon forget the two images.

As Sandburg became surer of his medium he roamed in time for subjects, became more allusive, more historical. A good

example is "Old Timers" with the "ancient reluctant conscript" who fought for Xerxes and Caesar and Charles XII and who eventually "trimmed the feet of a whitehorse Bonaparte swept the night stars with." The memorable "Grass" reminds the reader that given time enough the corpses at Austerlitz, Waterloo, and Verdun will disappear beneath the universal cover. "Cool Tombs" argues that Lincoln, Grant, and Pocahontas alike will remember little, "in the dust, in the cool tombs." "Killers" laments the sixteen million men of World War I, many of whom did not awake on the morrow, "Fixed in the drag of the world's heartbreak." And in *The People, Yes*, he defines man as Atlas, Thor, David and Goliath, Paul Bunyan, Lincoln, and Christ, "holding in easy reach the dogs of war and the doves of peace, the tigers of wrath and the horses of instruction."

Sandburg's images, his chief stock in trade as a lyric poet, are clear and accurate, perhaps more familiar than esoteric. Certainly it must be admitted that he wrote with such passionate conviction that the sincerity and force of his emotions charge the lines with an energy that the words themselves lack. In his later years he relied too much on language which he deemed intrinsically poetic either because it had a strong personal connotation or because to him it was the literary coin of the realm. Thus words like prairie, moon, mist, cloud, star, night, harvest, and wind appear too frequently. As many of the previous examples will confirm, Sandburg preferred metaphors to similes and he used epithets sparingly. Indeed in the preface to his *Collected Poems*, written when he was in his early seventies, he announced his distrust of adjectives and claimed that he was still fascinated by the function of verbs and how they connected nouns. Most readers of his verse have been annoyed by his limited and somewhat banal vocabulary, partly perhaps the result of his deliberate avoidance of qualifying terms or his preference for the colloquial. On the other hand, he freely incorporated into his verse the language of ethnic insult—wop, dago, bohunk, nigger, kike, mick, ofay—at a time when such terms seldom entered poetry; and in the 1920's he used gutter or street slang with surprising temerity—mazuma, hoosegow, galoot, bimbo, shebang, hokum, calaboose, mucker, phizzog, cahoots, dicks, harness bulls. T. K. Whipple, who wrote one of the best of the early appreciations of Sand-

burg, sensed the passion that often smouldered beneath superficially quiet lines and called attention to the poet's failure to discipline his emotions. He claimed that the final impression left on the reader of Sandburg's first four volumes was "one of much power ill controlled."³ But Whipple also admitted the rich sensuous experience which the verse revealed and insisted that the "poetry teems with concrete images of an unusual vividness."

These images then sustain Sandburg's claim to recognition as a lyric poet. And because they are compact and precise, in perfect conformity with the movement which Amy Lowell once spearheaded, they do much to compensate for the absence of obvious music and cadence in Sandburg's often shaggy lines. When he spoke his verse from the platform it had the immeasurable advantage of his booming voice and his dramatic personality. But bereft of these qualities on the printed page and frequently both careless and lacking in the artistry that a disciplined craftsman could provide, it is not only often prosaic but dull prose as well. The rhythm of Whitman's long lines is only occasionally present in Sandburg, and his habit of breaking up his poems into paragraphs makes for quicker readability but hardly improves the acoustic effect. Terminal rhyme of course he consistently avoided, but there are more examples of internal rhyme in his lines than might be expected.

One poetic device, onomatopoeia, he did not abandon. In "Just Before April Came" in describing the spring he could write "Frogs plutter and squdge"; and in "Smoke and Steel" he hears "Sparks cracking a harr-harr-huff from a solar-plexus of rock-ribs of the earth." In "Bird Talk" he is aware how birds seem to announce the coming of summer: "*Tee whee* and *tee whee* came on the breezes, and the grackles chuzzled their syllables." He distinguishes certain instruments in a night club band in "Honky Tonk in Cleveland, Ohio"; "The trombone pony neighs and the tuba jackass snorts." Particularly effective are certain lines in "Jazz Fantasia":

"Drum on your drums, batter on your banjoes,
sob on the long cool winding saxophones."

He urges the jazz men to

"Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy tin pans,

let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-hush with the slippery sand-paper."

For him the instruments can moan and bang and cry. Indeed it should be added that onomatopoeia for Sandburg often rests on single words, the careful selection of whisper, murmur, honk, buzz, cob, crash, sputter, and boom in special situations. He never attempts the accumulation of sound-suggesting words that Poe achieved in poems like "The Raven."

Alliteration is rarer in Sandburg than one might expect but it is not missing. It sometimes creeps in, compressed within a single line, as in "Follies"; "Roses rise with red rain-memories." In "The Windy City" Sandburg speaks of a boy and girl hunting the sun "With a sieve for sifting smoke," while the cowpunchers of "Moon Riders" begin their chores early, "Riding the roan mustangs of morning." On the contrary, sometimes Sandburg introduces alliteration almost as a comic device, as if to ridicule one of the classic conventions of poetry. In "The Windy City" he quotes the railroad guard who repeats monotonously "Watch your step" and adds, "write on a pocket pad what a pauper said To a patch of purple asters at the whitewashed wall." And in the initial poem of *Good Morning, America* he plays with the opening consonant:

"Facts are facts, nailed down, fastened to stay.
And facts are feathers, foam, flying phantoms."

With five books of verse behind him Sandburg published in 1936 one of his most unpoetic volumes, a book which hardly fits into any category of poetry, and yet it is one of the most significant and characteristic books that Sandburg ever wrote. "Good Morning, America" perhaps provided a preview for in that 1928 volume Sandburg had written: "A code arrives; language; lingo, slang; behold the proverbs of a people, a nation." Some three pages of examples quickly follow. But *The People, Yes*, 107 numbered sections, 286 pages in the first edition, is a miscellany, a hodgepodge, an omnium gatherum of anecdotes, quips, blunt statements, quotations from the famous and the obscure, maxims, proverbs, bon mots, miniature characterizations, folk speech, and folklore. Nothing like it had ever appeared in three centuries of American literature.

There are casual allusions to Thor and Atlas but also to Mike Fink and Andy Adams. The famous words of Thoreau, Frank Norris, Henry Ford, William Graham Sumner, and Hotspur are quoted but the names of the speakers are withheld. Paul Bunyan and Abraham Lincoln merit equal attention. Long strings of proverbs appear without transitions, some of them rewritten in the manner of Franklin, and there are successions of anecdotes without logic or coherence. Throughout the volume the reader is always conscious of a kind of echo or repetition of Sandburg's intention, of his optimism and faith:

"The people move
in a fine thin smoke,
the people, yes."

In his constant travels throughout the country Sandburg always held his ear to the ground, sensitive to tone and mood, to the idiom of popular speech. From literature, history, and newspapers he borrowed witticisms and apothegms but in the language of the people he heard the voice of the nation. *The People, Yes* is a kind of national lexicon, Populism with a glossary. Only in the closing sections does the poet speak in his own tongue and here again he resorts to images: the people is a polychrome, a console organ, a clavilux of color poems. Suddenly in a sanguine fury he finds the steel mill sky alive, "The fire breaks white and zigzag shot on a gun-metal gloaming." And he quotes once again a favorite Swedish proverb: "The fireborn are at home in fire."

Sandburg's early verse was not notable for its humor. His poems were earnest, often heavy handed, and the wit was awkwardly thrust in or transmuted into satire. In such a late poem as "The Abracadabra Boys" he speaks scornfully of contemporary poets who fill their lines with personal symbolism and private jargon, the result being what he calls "chow mein" poems. He had no sympathy for writers who paraded their erudition: "they know postures from impostures, pistils from pustules, to hear them tell it," they indulge in private pig Latin unknown to the mob. Some of this satirical quality is also evident in *The People, Yes* but the satire is more self-contained in the quotations, the concision and sprightliness of which provide their own com-

mentary. Sandburg almost seems to chuckle as he collects moron stories and wisecracks from the populace at large. Certainly he retains his contempt for demagogues and plutocrats, but he honors the idealists and the martyrs somewhat as Edgar Lee Masters did in the final portraits of the *Spoon River Anthology*.

In 1948 when Willard Thorp came to the end of his evaluation of Sandburg in the *Literary History of the United States* and attempted to judge *The People, Yes*, he could only admit his bewilderment. Sandburg's book simply defied classification.⁴ It was amorphous and perhaps more a compilation than an original work, yet it had a strength and power of its own. Thorp could find no appropriate name for what Sandburg had done but he was convinced that a foreigner would discover more of America in *The People, Yes* than in any other book available to him. Perhaps something of the same kind might be said about Sandburg as a lyric poet. His poems will continue to appear in anthologies for years to come even though few of them equal the best achievements of the American bard. In some elusive and memorable way this son of a Swedish immigrant successfully captured in verse much of the spirit and idiom of the American people.

During a lifetime of creative literary work Carl Sandburg won three Pulitzer prizes, for poetry and for history, but the Nobel Prize for literature escaped him. In retrospect he seems to have been at least as well qualified for this international accolade as either Pearl Buck or John Steinbeck, both of whom were selected by the Swedish jury. Perhaps the jurors were afraid of the charge of chauvinism and thrust Sandburg aside in favor of lesser luminaries. Perhaps Sandburg was simply too versatile and the jurors had as much difficulty in applying a label to his work as Willard Thorp did. At any rate readers who are deterred by the massiveness of the Lincoln biography, disappointed by his one novel, or disturbed by his failure to carry his autobiography, *Always the Young Strangers*, beyond the Galesburg years, can return to the early lyricism with pleasure. For there they will find the images of landscape and cityscape which linger in the mind's eye. Imagism alone was perhaps a sterile creed. But imagism as a medium for conveying a poet's emotions and convictions has durability.

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NOTES

1. Conrad Aiken, "Sentiment of the Quotidian," reprinted in *Collective Criticism*, ed. Rufus A. Blanchard (London, Oxford, New York, 1968), pp. 349-352.
2. Harry Hansen, *Midwest Portraits* (New York, 1923), p. 65.
3. T. K. Whipple, *Spokesmen* (New York and London, 1928), p. 161.
4. Willard Thorp, "The 'New' Poetry," *Literary History of the United States*, ed. Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, Henry Seidel Canby, (New York, 1953), pp. 1183-1184.

IN ANOTHER COUNTRY: THE REVOLT
FROM THE VILLAGE

BARRY GROSS

What has come to be called "the revolt from the village" has become so ingrained in our literary and cultural thinking that we accept it as fact, as an *ism* almost as important as Puritanism and Transcendentalism, as a migration almost equivalent to its corollary, the westward movement. We organize courses around it, we group writers under it, we explain an entire generation by it.

It is how we account for the enormous outpouring of literary talent during the years preceding and after World War I from a region that previously had produced nothing of significant literary value, not a renaissance but a naissance. That there was such an outpouring is not in dispute, as is borne out by any informal census of the major and minor literary lights of the period: Sherwood Anderson, Thomas Boyd, Hart Crane, and Louis Bromfield came from Ohio; Kay Boyle, Scott Fitzgerald, and Sinclair Lewis came from Minnesota; Willa Cather came from Nebraska; Floyd Dell, John Dos Passos, Ben Hecht, Ernest Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, V. L. Parrington, and Carl Sandburg came from Illinois; Theodore Dreiser came from Indiana; T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore came from Missouri; Robert McCalmon and Dorothy Canfield Fisher came from Kansas; Zona Gale and Glenway Wescott came from Wisconsin; Ruth Suckow came from Iowa.

It is an astonishing aggregation, surpassed only by the Easterners' domination of American literature until 1900, rivaled only by the twin dominations of Southerners and Jews since 1930. In effect, the history of American literature has been the

history of regions. To study American literature to 1900—the Puritans, Franklin, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Emerson, Dickinson, Whitman, Howells, James—is to study New England and New York. To study American literature since 1930 is to study the South and that not-quite geographical region Jews inhabit—in the former case, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Carson McCullers, Katherine Anne Porter, Truman Capote, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price; in the latter, Henry Roth, Michael Gold, Budd Schulberg, Meyer Levin, Norman Mailer, Irwin Shaw, Herman Wouk, Clifford Odets, Elmer Rice, Arthur Miller, J. D. Salinger, Allen Ginsburg, Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Herbert Gold, Joseph Heller.

In effect, these are, for those who are not native sons, foreign countries, and a traveller to a foreign country tends to look at things in certain ways and sees only certain things. He tends to perceive in broad outlines, missing subtleties and shadings and nuances. He tends to view things rather simply, missing complexities and contradictions. He tends to generalize, mistaking the forest for the trees, not seeing the trees at all.

The sophisticated traveller will be aware of his limitations and make allowances for them, but even the most sophisticated traveller will be reluctant to admit that this applies to his own country as well. Lulled into a false security by what is, after all, a common nationality and a common language, he is not willing to admit that there are foreign countries *within* America. No immigration officers, no customs agents, no currency exchanges warn him that he is crossing a border. Fooled, he rushes in where angels fear to tread, unaware, if he is a Northerner, that the South is another country, unaware, if he is gentile, that the cultural and psychological region where Jews live is another country, unaware, if he is an Easterner, that the Midwest is another country.

Philip Roth once entitled an essay about the years he spent in Iowa "A Very Far Country Indeed." Would that our cultural and literary historians had such humility! In the nineteen twen-

ties they read *Main Street* and *Winesburg, Ohio*, *One of Ours* and *The Great Gatsby*, and came to certain conclusions about the region those novels described. They mistook questioning and criticism for hatred and rebellion, they were appalled by a world into which they had not been born, in which they had not grown up, and about which they knew very little, a world they surely would have revolted from had it been theirs.

The phrase "revolt from the village" is attributed to Professor Carl van Doren of Columbia University who, in his *Contemporary American Novelists* published in 1922, took note of the many instances of "cramped spirits . . . repressed by village life." It was not a precedent; earlier, in 1919, the anonymous reviewer for *New Republic* saw in *Winesburg, Ohio* "the revolt of youth against custom-morality," a morality which, in the Midwest, derived from "a puritan inheritance." Ernest Boyd, an important critic of American literature in the twenties who was, however, born and raised in Ireland and had little first-hand knowledge of anything American west of the Hudson River, characterized the literature of the period as a "literature of revolt [against] the great illusions of American civilization." Ford Madox Ford, the English novelist and editor, upon discovering that most of the manuscripts that came his way from across the Atlantic had to do with life in the Midwest, coined the phrase "Middle Westishness," by which he meant "an enormous disillusionment . . . and an enormous awakening." But, more than any other figure of the period, it was H. L. Mencken, out of Baltimore, who made "the revolt from the village" a weapon in a war. For Mencken—and it is impossible to over-estimate his importance as *the* literary and cultural arbiter of the twenties—Middle West was synonymous with middle class and equally despicable. He greeted each new tome that came his way from that region with a hoot of derision, a war-whoop, a gleeful "I told you so!" and used it as a cudgel to beat on the bourgeoisie—the booboisie, he called them. He saw the Midwest as America writ large, as the spiritual seat of everything that was most repressive and conventional, most drab and debilitating in American life.

The tendency to see the Midwest as overriding metaphor for the reprehensible transcended the twenties. In *On Native*

Grounds, published in 1940 but still the best book on American literature in the twentieth century, Alfred Kazin begins his section on the Midwest writers by saying, "If they had revolted against their native village life in the Middle West, all village life in the Middle West now seemed a cesspool of bigotry and corruption and the very incarnation of joylessness," and singles out "two stories of the revolt against small-town life in the Middle West, *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson in 1919, *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis in 1920," as signalling "the revolt from the village." In *The Twenties*, the very best book on the period, Frederick Hoffman also takes special notice of *Winesburg*: "the hero whose mind awakens to the emptiness of his world is the scourge of the Midwestern locale; through him, its Puritan hypocrisies are uncomfortably divulged, its failure of manners and taste advertised. *Winesburg, Ohio* provides the myth from which the metaphor's most impressive definitions have been derived." It is a metaphor, Hoffman says, "of abuse; it was on the one hand a rural metaphor, of farms, villages, and small towns; on the other, a middle-class metaphor, of conventions, piety, and tastelessness, hypocrisy and spiritual poverty."

Support for these contentions rests on the conviction that, as Hoffman puts it, "evidence, large and small, of the strength of the metaphor abounds in the novels and the short stories" the Midwesterners wrote. It is certainly true that a number of the minor literary lights, especially Floyd Dell, Robert McCalmon, Ben Hecht, and Glenway Wescott, mocked the Midwest milieu, built their careers on vituperative attacks, becoming, as it were, professional scourges, though a few of them, most notably Wescott, recanted later on. It is, however, also true that an equal number of secondary luminaries—Louis Bromfield, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Zona Gale, Ruth Suckow—celebrated and extolled the Midwest. And in the works of major writers, those works most often cited as "evidence," abuse is balanced evenly with approbation, which even the most cursory glance at the more famous titles should prove.

Most readers of *Winesburg, Ohio* fail to realize that it is not a contemporary book; it was published in 1919, but it is not about 1919. Anderson wrote it when he was forty and he is

remembering the world he grew up in, a world which, in 1919, no longer exists. Thus, the book's controlling emotion is nostalgic, even elegiac, rather than angry or rebellious. It cannot even be said that *Winesburg, Ohio* presents a critical portrait of life in a small town before the turn of the century; sociologically, it is more akin to *Our Town* than to *Peyton Place*. Indeed, the book is a lament for what is gone, a complaint against the railroad and the factory which encroach upon the village and render it obsolete. The city as an alternative is not much in evidence in *Winesburg* but in the few instances in which it does appear it offers no alternative at all and most of those who leave *Winesburg* come back to it. George Willard leaves, but his departure is just that—a departure, not a revolt. His fellow townsmen come down to the station to see him off, the atmosphere is suffused with sweetness and affection. For George *Winesburg* becomes not a reference point for hate and distaste and bitterness but "a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood."

Most readers of *Main Street* fail to realize that the book is dominated by Carol's point of view and that Carol is an outsider and a snob. If, as Maxwell Geismar maintains, *Main Street* is "a remarkable diary of the middle-class mind in America," the most middle-class mind on display, in the pejorative sense, is Carol's. Sinclair Lewis devotes at least as much time and energy to ridiculing Carol as he does to ridiculing Gopher Prairie. The truth is, as Mark Schorer has pointed out, that Lewis was a divided man, that he sees much of the material in his novel as Carol sees it, "and all his life a good half of his nature was given to the same kind of romantic reverie that motivates Carol," but that "the other half of his nature was Will Kennicott's—downright, realistic, sensible, crude," and it is to Will that Lewis gives the novel's last word, which Schorer interprets as Lewis' assertion that "good sense rules at last, and in no way whatever has life in Gopher Prairie become 'more conscious'." This, the author seems to say in the end, is not only as things must be but even as things should be. This is the reality." It is no accident that Washington, D. C. does not prove to be a viable alternative for Carol, that it turns out to be a Gopher Prairie on a larger scale. Lewis would have it so, just as he reserves his most vituperative

satire for Gopher Prairie's attempts to citify; what Lewis thought of the city would, two years later, become the subject of *Babbitt*. It is this notion of the village as reality—not just the only reality but, even in the best of all possible worlds, perhaps the best reality—that a Carol Kennicott or an H. L. Mennken could not possibly accept. Then again, there is no reason why they should, for that is a reality they do not know. Lewis, however, does—not Sinclair Lewis, but good ole Harry Lewis, good ole "Red" Lewis, the doctor's son, Sauk Centre born and bred. *Main Street* may not be *Our Town*, but neither is it an American *Gulliver's Travels*.

The Great Gatsby is not a revolt-from-the-village book because its author grew up in St. Paul, but more than any other Midwesterner of his generation, Fitzgerald was dazzled by the East, in comparison with which the Midwest always seemed to him, from adolescence on, pale and provincial. At the beginning of *The Great Gatsby* Nick Carraway revolts from the Midwest which, after he returns from the war, seems to him "the ragged edge of the universe." He goes east, which is the direction everyone who is in search of fame and fortune, excitement and stimulation, seems to be going. What he finds is chaos and corruption and at the end of the novel he goes home. *The Great Gatsby* is not the pastorate some critics insist it is—Fitzgerald did not know the farms and villages and had the city-boy's aversion to them, he dismisses them all in one succinct phrase, "the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio"—and he does not sentimentalize the Midwest as morally superior to the east. But he does see it as safer and securer—when it was time for the Fitzgerald offspring to be born, Scott automatically took Zelda to St. Paul—especially for one like Nick Carraway who has grown up in the Carraway house in a town where houses are still known through the decades by a family's name. For Nick the East is a night-scene by El Greco, fantastic, phantasmagoric, frightening. In the East anything can happen, anything at all, but that is both promise and threat.

Of all the Midwest writers Willa Cather is the most complicated. Her earlier work—*O Pioneers*, *My Antonia*—deals with the Midwest as frontier, her later work—*The Song of the Lark*, *One of Ours*, *The Professor's House*—with the Midwest as bour-

geois. Cather's allegiances are clearly to the rural world and, unlike the other Midwest writers, she has a keen, almost mystic sense of the psychic pull of the landscape. Through it all Cather's respect for the farm and the village remains fixed. She sees the early struggles to tame the land and develop communities in heroic terms, as wars that were worth waging and which brought out the best in human nature. By the late teens those wars have been won; there is little left for the aspiring spirit to invest itself in except the making of money, the mastery of efficiency. Technology and industrialization come between the individual and the land. Her rebels are artists (Thea Kronstad in *Song of the Lark*, the sculptor in "The Sculptor's Funeral"), those with artistic temperaments (Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*), those with an abiding commitment to the past (the professor in *The Professor's House*). In every case the rebellion is not so much against the village or the farm but against their citification, not so much against the Midwest but against what the twentieth century has done to it. Cather's quarrel is with progress. There is no more characteristic moment in all her literature than when Claude Wheeler gazes at the statue of a pioneer family with envy and regret, angry that he was born too late to participate in that great adventure, angry that there is nothing comparable in his time and place in which he might invest his latent idealism and romanticism. Claude goes to France not so much in revolt from the village but in response to a call, a call, ironically enough, which he hears sounded on native ground but to which his present seems to offer no possibility of response.

George Willard leaves with everyone wishing him well, Carol Kennicott returns to the only reality that seems possible, Nick Carraway comes home, Claude Wheeler would have stayed if he could. The only real evidence of revolt from the village in the major works is to be found in *Sister Carrie* and *The Great Gatsby*. Carrie Meeber and Jimmy Gatz revolt because they have nothing to lose by leaving and nothing to gain by staying. Carrie leaves her village without regret and never gives it a backward glance; if it is anything like any one of the many Indiana mill towns in which Dreiser spent his childhood, the ease with which she makes the break is thoroughly understand-

able. Jimmy Gatz, who never even acknowledges his parents as his own, can walk away from the poor North Dakota farm and never give it a second thought.

Those who did revolt from the village—the Carrie Meebers, the Jimmy Gatzes—did not revolt against middle-class bourgeois values; on the contrary, they aspired to them. They are the have-nots whose aspiration is to have, to climb up the social ladder. In the literature these are in the minority. The majority of Midwest protagonists are the haves and for them the issue is more complicated because there is much more at stake—psychological and emotional commitments, ties that bind, things that might be worth holding on to. Their revolt is not from the village but from the citification of it, not from the Midwest, but from the progress that had robbed it of its romantic promise. Frequently they go east, that other country that beckons with romantic possibility.

Where, it should be noted, they find death or disillusion. If Philip Roth finds Iowa a very far country indeed, so do Carrie Meeber and Jay Gatsby, Carol Kennicott and Nick Carraway, Claude Wheeler and a number of the inhabitants of Winesburg find the East. Evidence indicates that the revolt from the village did not take place in 1920 and evidence indicates it has not taken place since.

When Senator Goldwater suggested in half-jest in 1964 that it might not be such a bad idea if the eastern seaboard were sawed off from the continent he spoke for many. An equal number of people might have been willing to let the San Andreas Fault take its natural course and eliminate San Francisco and Haight-Ashbury, Los Angeles and Hollywood. The suspicion persists that what goes on at either coast is the extreme, the perverse and bizarre, the grotesque and the Gothic, unreal and, worse, unAmerican. The belief persists that the middle represents the heart and the center, the norm against which the extreme East and the extreme West are measured as abnormal, aberrational. When Gerald Ford invokes the memories of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower he gives expression to a widespread feeling that the essential America, the real America, the best America, is the America of Independence, Missouri and Abilene, Kansas and Grand Rapids, Michigan, not the New York

of the patrician socialist Roosevelt or the Boston of the Irish Catholic Kennedy or the California of the enigmatic Nixon, accidental presidents all, diversions from the main road.

From the Midwest perspective the East, in particular, is synonymous with the city, especially *the* city, New York, which has always seemed an alien place. The current debate about the fate of New York clearly dramatizes those cultural, regional, and psychological antipathies. President Ford is not inclined to “bail” New York out, and neither, it would seem, are most Americans. There are many, in fact, who gloat over New York’s current crisis as the come-uppance it has long and richly deserved, proper punishment for its sophistication and snobbishness, on the one hand, and its historic role as cesspool of races and religions, colors and creeds, crime and corruption, on the other. It has come to symbolize all that is “wrong” with America, all that is worst in twentieth-century modernity.

Those who defend New York point out that it is the country’s cultural center, the country’s financial center, that the Statue of Liberty stands at the country’s gateway, that New York’s financial problems are the result of an historic generosity, a willingness to welcome the newcomer and to provide for his needs if he chooses to remain, that New York has spent itself on welfare, in the strictest sense of that term—transportation systems, sanitation systems, libraries, museums, hospitals, police and firemen, social workers, an education system that guarantees learning and training for every resident from kindergarten through college.

This does not cut much ice with those who feel threatened by the kind of culture New York has come to stand for, who are hostile to an economy based on industry and technology, who fear that those colors and creeds have polluted the mainstream, who take more pride in laissez-faire self-reliance than in community and social service. In a country that stretches three thousand miles east to west, it is well nigh impossible for those in the geographical center to see New York as the center, to sense any relationship to, responsibility for, or benefit from it. The country developed willy-nilly and accidentally; logically speaking, New York should be located in Missouri. The other great cities of the world are located at their countries’ centers,

and all roads, mental and physical, lead to them. Americans have never been able to feel what Frenchmen feel for Paris, what Englishmen feel for London, what Japanese feel for Tokyo.

Those who are in the business of gauging popular—that is, majority—taste have always known that from the point of view of the middle New York is a cancerous growth. It is inconceivable that a TV series about the Depression, for instance, could be set in New York, inconceivable, that is, if the goal is a national audience: life as it was or was not lived on Walton's Mountain is far more acceptably "real" to the majority of Americans than life as it was or was not lived in a city tenement. *Petrocelli* had a far better chance of winning a national audience than *Kate McShane* for *Petrocelli* left the city in disgust and, however much he insists on his ethnicity, he is ready and willing to adapt to his new environment, but *Kate McShane* was an unregenerate urbanite whose cases were city-related; *Petrocelli* confirms the prejudice that the city is the place to revolt from, *Kate McShane*, which was cancelled, did not. And even if *Beacon Hill* were not half so bad as it unfortunately was, the show could never have attracted the wide audience *Upstairs, Downstairs* did in England because most Americans do not see life as it is lived in cities as part of their history. It is acceptable as a source of comedy—*The Odd Couple*, *Rhoda*, *Chico and the Man*, *All in the Family*—but not as serious study. Most Americans persist in believing that life as it is lived in cities is antithetical to the way life has been, and is supposed to be, lived.

Had there really been a revolt from the village in 1920, attitudes might be different now, but, if anything, the revolt has been in the opposite direction, from the city to the village, where most Americans feel it is best to live, where most Americans feel America, the "real" America, in fact *does* live. The pretensions of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to statehood should not be taken lightly. In effect the residents of the Upper Peninsula are asking, "Why should we pay for Detroit? What relation do we have to it? What benefit do we derive from it?" It might as well be New York, an alien place filled with alien people who have alien problems. From that vantage point, it is irrelevant that other countries subsidize their cities, that, of course, London and Paris, Moscow and Tokyo do not pay their

own way. It is irrelevant because we have never believed that the city stands for the crown of civilization, we have always believed that the city stands for the evil of civilization.

We are, in short, profoundly divided, in some respects one people, in many respects not at all. We accept the notion of a nation of nations without realizing the extent to which that is literally true or the price, perhaps the toll, that condition has exacted. We do not see each other as we are, we see what we want to see, expect to see; we do not see what is, we see what our cultural and regional blinders tell us is there. There is no more classic statement of that phenomenon in all of American literature than what William Faulkner has happen at the end of *Absalom, Absalom* when Shreve, not just a Northerner but a Canadian to boot, concludes Quentin Compson's long tale about the South by asking "Why do you hate the South?" Shreve, the outsider, has found the South that has been described hateful and ascribes his own perceptions to Quentin, unaware that for the native son hate is only one of the emotions inspired by home and heritage; there is also love but the outsider cannot, apparently, know that.

A similar moment occurs at the beginning of *Main Street*. Carol Kennicott, just off the train from the city, walks down the main street of Gopher Prairie and is appalled by the dreariness and smallness and meanness of it all. Immediately afterwards Bea Sorenson, just off the train from the farm, walks down the main street of Gopher Prairie and is dazzled by the movie theater and bon-ton store. Sinclair Lewis is trying to tell us something in that juxtaposition: we see not according to where we are but where we are coming from.

We are all, in one way or another, Carol Kennicotts or Bea Sorensons, ineluctably conditioned and delimited by our own backgrounds, our own geographies which are internal as well as external. The city and the small town, the farm and the village, are regions of the mind as well as regions on a map. Our native ground is someone else's alien territory and we must be wary, native and traveller alike, of inferring too quickly, interpreting too hastily, judging too readily.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST IN THE HEARTLAND:

RAINTREE COUNTY REVISITED

JOEL M. JONES

Much care is taken to recreate the artifacts, tenor, and style of life in nineteenth century Indiana. These "antiquities" are evoked with deep feeling for that fading fabric of life. They delight, and are their own reason for being. And yet, for Lockridge this is hardly enough. He is bent on discovering the principles of American development, the foundation of American character.

(Gerald Nemanic, *MidAmerica II*, 1975)

In 1898, Harold Frederic chastized many of his fellow writers by stating that he had once felt a measure of respect for historical fiction, "in the days before the historical novel was a money-making business, and when an author expended all his learning and skill and strength on an historical work for his own credit rather than that of his banking account."¹ In 1900, William Dean Howells, who by both precept and practice gave some indication of the direction historical fiction had to take if it hoped to retain or reclaim any validity as an art form, also objected to the purely commercial nature of the historical romances which were then the craze. Contending that other literary genres had come to be "characterized by the instinct if not the reason of reality," he felt that from historical fiction "nothing of late has been heard but the din of arms, the horrid tumult of the swashbuckler swashing on his buckler." In trying to explain the popular demand for this type of pseudo-historical romance, he conjectured that the American populace at the zenith of the Gilded Age, "having more reason than ever to be

ashamed of itself for its lust of gold and blood," was overly "anxious to get away from itself"; therefore it welcomed "the tarradiddles of the historical romancers as a relief from the odious present." Then he added a most poignant and perceptive comment: that his was a country "which likes a good conscience so much that it prefers unconsciousness to a bad one."²

If then, at the turn of the century, most historical fiction was primarily intended and received as escape literature, a significant transformation in the writers' concept of their purpose must have occurred in order to allow Bernard DeVoto to say in 1937 that he and other historical novelists expected their work "to be realistic, to be psychologically valid, and to be socially aware."³ By the 1930's, then, it was apparent that the nation had a new genre of historical fiction, one of confrontation rather than escape, confrontation of both self and society, of both past and present. The pseudo-historical romance, though by no means extinct, was being countered in large numbers by the true historical novel. Significantly, it was Howells who first posited in 1900—and practiced later in his Midwestern historical novel, *The Leatherwood God* (1916)—several of those principles which would give birth to a form of historical fiction that could truly be called the American historical novel.

One should emphatically note here that not all practitioners of historical fiction turned to a confrontation of historical reality. Most assuredly the twentieth century has delivered its share of histrionic histories and hysterical novels posing as historical fiction; the type Howells objected to so vigorously has not died. But Howells would be pleased, I am sure, with the many works of historical fiction which came to possess inherent value as both literature and history.

Howells objected for several reasons to the historical romances that permeated the literary atmosphere around 1900. He contended that they were "untrue to the complexion of the past" and "to personality in any time," caused largely by the preoccupation of the authors with "bloodshed" and "butchery," and their corresponding inability and lack of desire either to portray character or to capture historical climate. Moreover, he criticized their preoccupation with characters, both fictional and historical, of "titles and ranks," a concern which bore "false witness . . .

against the American life of individual worth."⁴ Howells' advocacy of the democratization of historical fiction was to become a generally accepted principle among historical novelists several decades later. However, Howells' primary objection to these romances was his belief that "what is despicable, what is lamentable is to have hit the popular fancy and not done anything to change it, but everything to fix it; to flatter it with false dreams of splendor in the past."⁵ To Howells the public acceptance of such dreams is the way people come to live on easy terms with themselves. As a literary realist and a philosophical pragmatist, he would have the historical novelist shatter such "false dreams."

Those works of historical fiction of which Howells approved, particularly *War and Peace*, succeed, he says, because "a whole epoch lives again morally, politically, and socially, with such entirety and large inclusion that the reader himself becomes of it." It is by re-creating for us the "motives and feelings" of people in time past—and, therefore, of time present—it is *not* by "taking us out of ourselves, but by taking us into ourselves" that a work of art proves its worth. Acting on the belief of philosophical pragmatism in personal experience as the ultimate source of reality and truth, Howells contends that a novel "convinces us by entering into our experiences and making its events part of that."⁶

In one of his many flashbacks, the protagonist of Ross Lockridge's *Raintree County* (considered by some an American *War and Peace*), John Wickliff Shawnessy, recalls how, while listening to a Centennial Day speech on July 4, 1876, he had "tried to reconstruct the scene of the Founding Fathers founding and fathering the Republic. But it wouldn't come clear and have any meaning. Penetrating into the reality of the Past was an impossible undertaking," he reflects. Then Lockridge proffers the recognition which echoes Howells' prescription for successful historical fiction: "There was . . . only one reality—the reality of someone's experience. What people dealt with when they spoke of the Past was a world of convenient abstractions" (802).⁷ These convenient abstractions are the "conventional acceptations by which men live on easy terms with themselves" and which Howells would have the historical novelist disperse. Lockridge, like Howells, tries to go behind those convenient abstractions

and conventional acceptations, those illusions of the past, to see the past in terms of that one meaningful reality—the reality of someone's experience.

The particular "someone" in this case is the poet-teacher, John Shawnessy—through whose eyes and mind the reader experiences more than fifty years of life in "an adolescent republic that tried to dream itself to perfection by ignoring the realities of life's remorseless comedy" (162). Though at times Lockridge enters the mind of other characters, most of this massive narrative occurs as the thoughts of one man (Shawnessy) on one day (July 4, 1892) in one place (the imaginary town of Waycross, Raintree County, Indiana). Lockridge chooses for his historical subject matter both the way of life in a small Indiana town in 1892 and the manners and milieu of a larger county and much larger nation from 1839 to 1892.

Raintree County has been described as the most singular of all American historical novels. One should qualify this description by noting that in its singularity *Raintree County* is not simply a historical novel, as I have described that literary phenomenon. A strong case could be made for this work as an example of each one of Northrop Frye's five modes—from the mythical to the ironic. Frye says, for example, the myth "deals with gods," the romance "deals with heroes," and the novel "deals with men."⁸ *Raintree County* deals with all three, though significantly, one rarely loses sight of the "men." I think it can be shown that finally the low mimetic mode of literary realism is the controlling one—and though Howells would find it a long trip from Leatherwood Valley to Raintree County, he would find Lockridge's landscape and legends familiar territory. Lockridge's ultimate concern is with all human illusions, and his efforts are directed specifically both to an examination of the illusions of nineteenth-century America—the illusions it had of itself (of its past, present and future) and the illusions the present may have of it—and to a Howellsian revelation of the realities underlying those illusions.

Joseph L. Blotner, writing of *Raintree County* a decade after its appearance, feels this work to be possibly "one of the five or six most important novels of this era," and points out, as did most of the contemporary reviewers, that in both narrative

technique and structure "the influence of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is unmistakable."⁹ Like Joyce, Lockridge needed a method by which to control his materials at all levels; and as William York Tindall remarks, "Lockridge learned many tricks from Joyce."¹⁰ Less esoteric than Joyce, but, considering his intended audience, just as effective, Lockridge's use of the stream-of-consciousness technique dramatically portrays the specious present of a man in the past—and as that individual is a reflector of the social forces and attitudes endemic to his region and nation, his personal experience offers insights into the confluence of complexities and contradictions of the specious present of that historical period in general.

The reader learns at one point that Shawnessy's daughter, Eva, feels that "she, too, like the town of Waycross was a being filled with a becoming" (754). In like manner, the entire novel is filled with the "becoming" of a man and his milieu—and it is through this sense of becoming that the successful historical novelist renders his subject both historical and novel. That is, as Shawnessy, in fifty-two flashbacks, reveals the realities which have constituted a half-century of personal experience—as he attempts to reconstruct his life for himself—the reader also experiences those realities and becomes involved with the emerging of the man and his moment. Shawnessy, with all his dreams and disillusionments comes to life, and so does the nation with its dreams built on illusions. Underlying all the discussion and dramatization of dreams and illusions, though, one finds a never-ending flow of the realistic details necessary for any final understanding of the life of an individual, a region, or a nation.

A contemporary reviewer referred to the effect of Lockridge's technique as being comparable to that of a "time exposure" as opposed to a snapshot" (represented, he feels, by a work such as *Main Street*).¹¹ As with a time exposure, Lockridge's technique allows him to capture the transformations, sharp and subtle, which have marked this period in our history. As often happens in a time exposure, there are scenes which become blurred, the reader being unable to discern precisely the physical nature of the setting. One such scene is Johnny's stay in New York. The "city" represents to him obviously the new industrial America, juxtaposed to the rural, pastoral milieu from which he comes.

One learns through Johnny's thoughts that "The City was the meeting of the trains in marshalling yards" (817), that the "City was the Great American Newsstory" (818), and that "the City had an insatiable appetite for words and drugged itself with the thin music of a billion clichés" (820). The physical details, though, are missing; the reader gets a sense of the city, and that is all—but perhaps that was all one such as Shawnessy from heartland rural America would personally experience. At other times Lockridge does present the physical realities which are an integral part of the history in question; in his Civil War scenes, for example, one touches and tastes the everyday realities of those, as Johnny calls them, "anonymous architects of History" (601), the privates. The Civil War is just one of several national events which Lockridge transmutes from a conventional abstraction to an emerging reality by presenting it in terms of the personal experience of his protagonist.

Lockridge achieves, finally, what Charles Lee calls "a critical biography of America from the period of its agrarian innocence through the Civil War and into the era of . . . industrial expansion."¹² Shawnessy's biography becomes the region's and the nation's. His is the heart of the heartland. As Lee, Blotner, and Tindall have all pointed out, perhaps Lockridge's most impressive aesthetic achievement is the extensive temporal and structural parallels he establishes between the personal experiences of Shawnessy and public events in the national experience. For example, a long series of important events dealing with the outbreak of the Civil War parallel exactly, in terms of time, the disruptive occurrences in Shawnessy's first marriage. And most significantly, the parallel events on both levels always have the same causal and consequential relationships to preceding and following events. Blotner notes that this constitutes an artistic fusion of private and public levels of meaning accomplished with similar skill by very few historical novelists (or novelists), American or otherwise.¹³ The characters and events of *Raintree County* are invested with multiple meanings, and finally function on many levels: the personal and national, the narrative and symbolic, the mundane and mythical, the particular and universal, and the historical and ahistorical.¹⁴

Always, though, this novel remains the story of an American in Indiana in the nineteenth century; and on just this level, Lockridge renders insights into the American character of that period which later become the theses of scholarly studies. In *The American Adam* (1955) R. W. B. Lewis, in his chapter on Walt Whitman and "the New Adam," writes, "This new Adam is both maker and namer."¹⁵ In *Raintree County* Shawnessy had reflected that Americans "were the new Adams . . . poets of the open road . . . who brought the miracle of names" to the land (887). The thesis of Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964)¹⁶ is vividly dramatized in *Raintree County* where one learns that the "sound of this century . . . is the wail of a train whistle at the crossing. In this lone vowel . . . the Nineteenth Century has its perfect poem" (984). Those observations, though obviously the result of hindsight, do not strike the reader as intrusive because the characters personally experience the realities behind the theories. Lockridge has no desire to substitute one "convenient abstraction" for another. Regardless of whatever else Lockridge may have achieved in *Raintree County*, he definitely projects a sense of nineteenth-century America. As Gerald Nemanic points out in his recent perceptive critique (from which the epigraph for this essay comes) of *Raintree County*, Lockridge's projection of person and place is based on a careful familiarity with "the artifacts, tenor, and style of life in nineteenth century Indiana." The ultimate intent of these historical specifics is the discovery, as Nemanic puts it, of "the principles of American development, the foundation of American character."¹⁷ In the fictional mode, then, Lockridge has sought answers to the same questions as those which have motivated American Studies scholars such as Lewis, Smith, and Marx. I would agree with Nemanic that one might regard *Raintree County* as "The Final Experiment with the Great American Novel"—but I also would suggest that it is indubitably "The Great American Studies Novel."

One might even contend that many of the strengths and weaknesses of the novel result from its typically American nature—it is extensively eclectic and markedly experimental. Lockridge, at one time or another, borrows techniques or themes directly from Hawthorne, Tolstoy, Whitman, Twain, Joyce,

Dos Passos, Wolfe, and Faulkner. For example, the germ of the novel, if a single one can be identified, must have been Hawthorne's short story "The Great Stone Face"; and Lockridge impressively integrates this motif, as the society he depicts discloses its priorities and value system by hailing the politician, the businessman, and the military leader as its respective heroes—never, significantly, recognizing the poet and hometown philosopher, John Wickliff Shawnessy. His emulation of the Wolfean sprawl and echoing of several Wolfean themes, on the other hand, contributes very little. It is his adaptation of the Joycean stylistic and structural device of the stream of consciousness, of course, which finally enables him to succeed in his multifaceted endeavor. Also in a typically American fashion, he manages to use this traditionally esoteric literary technique in a manner which does not alienate the general reader. Tindall believes that Lockridge "succeeded in narrowing, if not entirely closing, the space that has separated the general reader from the many-leveled novel," doing so "without the loss of value that might be supposed." "Value," says Tindall, "depends not so much upon the amount of reality in a book as the amount of reality under control, and control is a matter of method."¹⁸ Lockridge manages to gain control over a large amount of the historical reality of his region and the nation—and I feel he succeeds in narrowing, if not entirely closing, the space that often separates the general reader from the multileveled reality of the American past.

John Shawnessy's quest for identity in *Raintree County* embodies the paradoxes and perversities to be experienced by anyone engaged in an authentic realization of what David Anderson calls the "psychological dimension" of a region.¹⁹ To travel to the heart of the heartland—rather with Walter Havighurst or William Gass (to pick two of its more astute contemporary interpreters) as one's guide, makes no difference—is to know the paradoxical symbiosis of the barren and the bountiful, the gray and the green, the oppressive and the liberating, or (to reinforce the metaphor of heart) the arteriosclerotic and aerobic. Ross Lockridge takes us on such a trip to the ever-emerging past of the heartland. His personal response to the psychological dimension of his place and time, suicide, does not preclude the

viability of the vision he shares with us in *Raintree County*. Only by returning in thought to the realities of his past does Lockridge's Shawnessy come to recognize that his identity will not be found finally in the simple illusions of innocence he has so long maintained. Only by realizing that "America is the image of human change" (769), that his world has been, is, and will continue to be one of continual change, does he come to know that his "victory is not in consummations but in quests (1059). So must it be for us. And our quest can be immeasurably furthered by the efforts of writers capable of giving to the past a new sense of presence—that sense by which one confronts and comprehends the changing realities of Leatherwood Valley and Raintree County, the sense by which the American past becomes both shadow and illumination, problematic and present.

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NOTES

1. Harold Frederic, "On Historical Novels Past and Present," *The Bookman*, 8 (December 1898), 333.
2. W. D. Howells, "The New Historical Romances," *North American Review*, 171 (December 1900), 936.
3. Bernard DeVoto, "Fiction Fights the Civil War," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 17 (December 18, 1937), 4.
4. Howells, pp. 939-941.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 943.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 946.
7. Ross Lockridge, Jr., *Raintree County* (Boston, 1948), p. 493. Hereafter the page numbers in parentheses refer to this edition.
8. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 306.
9. Joseph L. Blotner, "Raintree County Revisited," *The Western Humanities Review*, 10 (1956), 58. Also, see John Leggett, *Ross and Tom: Two American Tragedies* (New York, 1974), *passim*.
10. William York Tindall, "Many-Leveled Fiction: Virginia Woolf to Ross Lockridge," *College English*, 10 (November 1948), 70.
11. James Hilton, "Flashing Vision of America Lost and Found," *New York Herald-Tribune Books*, 24 (January 4, 1948), 1.
12. Charles Lee, "Encompassing the American Spirit," *New York Times Book Review*, January 4, 1948, p. 5.
13. Blotner, pp. 61-65.
14. See Blotner, p. 61, and Tindall p. 70.
15. R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1955), p. 51.
16. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 1964).

17. Gerald Nemanic, "Ross Lockridge, *Raintree County*, and the Epic of Irony," *MidAmerica II* (1975), p. 38.
18. Tindall, p. 71.
19. David D. Anderson, "The Dimensions of the Midwest," *MidAmerica I* (1974), p. 10.

THE AMERICAN DREAM: FROM F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
TO HERBERT GOLD

ELLEN SERLEN

The Great Gatsby is F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic account of America, its careless people, and its dreamers. Gatsby is "great," or, in Nick Carraway's term, "gorgeous," because he does possess the ability to dream. He is as wealthy or wealthier than the careless ones, but, unlike them, he does not believe that wealth is an end in itself. Rather, Gatsby's money is a prerequisite, an adjunct to the realization of his true dream, Daisy. It is for this reason alone that he becomes rich, and for this reason alone that he becomes "alive" for Nick, delivered "from the womb of his purposeless splendor" (p. 79).¹ Gatsby's remembered love for the Daisy of his past, however, is just that, remembered, illusory. It blinds him to her present reality; it does not allow him to see that she, too, is careless, or to hear, as Nick does, that her voice is "full of money." And he never does find out. Fitzgerald allows Gatsby to retain his gorgeousness, his "extraordinary gift for hope." Reality, presented ironically and symbolically in the form of a big, money-yellow car—Daisy and her world—ultimately kills both the man and his dream. But the dream itself, the abstraction, does not die: thirty-odd years after *Gatsby*, Herbert Gold, one of Fitzgerald's literary inheritors and a fellow Midwesterner, born in Lakewood, Ohio, in 1924, resurrects the American dream. But the content of the dream, and the form in which it is embodied are now, like America itself, less lyrical and no longer gorgeous. Gold's contemporary rendering shows the dream altered, embellished, and the worse for wear.

Gatsby had one dream and one desired end to the dream. Gold's heroes, together with their author, having inherited and

inhabiting a more complicated, post-depression America, weaned on the myths of Hollywood, and swaggering with possibility, are not content with only one dream. A gained desire to them merely serves as progenitor to another dream, and so on, Sisyphus-like. "Nothing is enough," says Sam Gold, the fictionalized version of the author's father, and these are emblematic words post-Gatsby. There is in the work of Herbert Gold a constant dissatisfaction with one's own attainments, and it is protean America which both feeds the dreams and creates the need for ever-new ones. The aim of the dream is, in fact, almost arbitrary—politics, love, money, all of these. But, in practice, to name the goal, direct the dream and, thus, shape the life, is necessary. The imposition of goal functions as a conscious superimposition of meaning, an answer to the old question of what there is to live for. Without this attempt, feeble though it might be, to articulate motive, the possessor of the dream would be confronted too blatantly with his/her own futile reality.

Gold's characters are moderns in the sense that they must direct their desires, but they are not moderns searching for identity. Far from it. They are well aware of who they are and where they belong. And that is precisely what creates all of their problems: awareness of this sort disallows true choice in that it implies as well a knowledge of and a desire to conform to others' expectations. The careless people of Fitzgerald's world knew, as Gold's careless also know, that it is the Joneses who control American tradition and who define American "success." In keeping with this theme, these characters are closely defined by Gold. They are all Americans, Midwesterners mostly, with fast cars from Detroit and picnic tables from Sears. They use other Americans in the fulfillment of their desires and they fight losing battles with their own dreams. In Herbert Gold's America, the dreamers have themselves become the careless ones.

Gold's understanding of the drive to attain the dream begins retrospectively, as it were, with his father, an adopted American. Sam Gold, the hero—and heroic he is—of *Fathers*, his son's autobiographical novel, is a Russian Jewish immigrant who arrives in New York to begin his manhood. He comes at the age of thirteen, immediately following his Bar Mitzvah. He takes the name of Gold in honor of the freedom which he believes it

signifies; it is a name which "cut to the heart of America" (p. 28), and a tool, his son tells us, allowing his father to carve "his will out of the dreadful void" (p. 207).² After a short time in New York, Sam makes his way westward, unknowingly following the advice of Horace Greeley and, by so doing, himself becoming part of the American myth. He travels as far as Cleveland and finally settles as a grocer in Lakewood, one of its affluent suburbs.

Cleveland was then somewhat of a mythic place in itself, one which indeed yielded what America promised. It embraced the poor and miraculously made them rich, as it had John D. Rockefeller, Mark Hanna, and others. All it took, again according to the myth, was a little push, a lot of common sense, and the initial loss of innocence. Sam overcomes all of the obstacles, losing his old-world innocence quickly when he confronts blatant anti-Semitism as well as extortion by Midwestern, immigrant Jewish racketeers—American Cossacks, an old problem with a new twist—who talk with the same accent he has and who are following their own, deviant path to the same dream. Sam Gold manages to conquer the Midwest, using, as that other produce merchant, Rockefeller, had used before him, fresh lettuce and, later, real estate, as his unlikely weapons.

But simple conquest resulting in money and a home in Lakewood is not the end of Sam's story and Sam's desires. He has become too much of an American to be satisfied so easily, the word "more" having taken its place as an integral part of his new English vocabulary and his new American consciousness. At the age of eighty, his son tells us in his "Preface" to the novel, his father still

enjoyed the sport of money as an artist enjoys the texture and potentialities of his medium. He liked to create something from nothing, but he did not rest on the seventh day . . . he was still building his myth for the future, and no money in the bank could do it for him. Like an artist, he was only as good as his last deal, and he knew it. He found new energy and redoubled his efforts, spending himself ferociously in buying property, remodeling, floating loans, floating mortgages, building additions, juggling the economics of stores, apartment buildings, land, offices, houses, in a varied, fluctuating, and treacherous market. He

dissected this fantasy of money like a schoolboy dissecting a worm. He seemed to find its nerve, for it wriggled as he wanted it to wriggle. His joy in the play of Cleveland negotiations was undiminished; the notion of security merely threatened him. (pp. 53-4)

Sam Gold's insecurity makes for constant awareness. An insecure man can never become so content as to lose sight of the enemy, for in America, too, danger is implicit. The immigrant, with a history of fear, is pursued by nightmares which threaten, and sometimes do burst violently into reality. One day in 1935, for instance, Sam is beaten up by a Commander of the Black Legion, headquartered then in a warehouse in Jackson, Michigan. He takes his revenge. He hires three thugs for \$50.00 to "march into the Rhineland and stop it good" by hurting, not killing his assailant. The \$50.00 Sam Gold philosophically chalks up to "the cost of living." Thus, he holds onto insecurity as to life and to freedom, with the result that even in the midst of relative wealth he remains an immigrant. But this is admirable, heroic. There is a certain stolid nobility in Sam Gold's insecurity, an insecurity whose recognition and acceptance, paradoxically, becomes more necessary with every new success. Fulfillment of the American dream, that is, can create additional vulnerability by making comfort too attractive. He refuses to be tempted by comfort, tantamount in his personal ethics to suicide.

But the next generation, that of Sam Gold's son, brought up with middle-class wealth and comfort, is not wary of insecurity, nor is it noble; it is just American. Burr Fuller, titular character of *The Optimist*, is one of Herbert Gold's representative American boys. Born in Detroit, reared according to the authoritative philosophy of *Good Housekeeping* and *Parents' Magazine*, he is educated at the University of Michigan and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the latter courtesy of the American Army. Burr marries his beautiful college sweetheart—Laura, the one who would not let him touch her, not Lucille, the townie he was sleeping with—and has two sons, an extra-marital affair, and enters politics as a candidate for Congress. His wife, a pure and lovely American princess, is a product of the same society and the same forces as Burr. After their marriage, she divides her days envying her husband's love for their sons, whom she wishes

were daughters, worrying about incipient wrinkles, having her own affair with Mike, Burr's best friend, visiting her psychiatrist, and suffering for the failure of her love and her life. Burr Fuller's story, in its simple framework, the part the Joneses see, is the American success story. In its actual content it is another, related American story. It is a tale of the failure of human relationships, caused in great part by the compulsion to fulfill the American dream.

Burr plans for the future from the age of seventeen, when we first meet him. He draws up a list of ten points as ways to perfection, much as Benjamin Franklin, that American success, had done two hundred years earlier, or as James Gatz, on the flyleaf of yet another success story, *Hopalong Cassidy*, had done more recently. Burr, with the certainty of youth, "saw no reason why he shouldn't get everything he wanted if he rinsed out his own socks and obeyed his own dreams" (p. 4). And he knows what he wants:

As a child in Detroit, Burr Fuller had never quietly browsed at the old story that any wholesome American lad could save his dimes from his allowance and aspire to power in the nation. The nation was like the playground, and special bristly qualities of desire were needed, and very few boys had them, and only one had them as he did. That was Burr himself. (p. 11)

Burr continues to know what he wants. At college, he joins a fraternity because "Belonging is the way to success in America" (p. 7). Later, in training camp, he knows that "The accepted way to get through an Army is to behave with cunning and be dazed" (p. 112). During the rest of his life his path to success is as carefully calculated and as carefully based on those dreams and those illusions in which America has taught him to believe.

From the beginning, Burr's desires were formed of Saturday fantasies at the movies. He would marry a Laura who resembled "lovely Who-was-it in that smooth and dreamy movie" and they would eat "neat American movie meals" surrounded by loving children and furniture which they both "officially admired." He himself would be "as silent and shy and commanding as Gary Cooper" in this "superior fantasy" of a life. Even later, in

training camp, he dreams of himself as "Monsieur l'Americain," romantically parachuting over occupied France and making love in high-school French. Meanwhile, he is also in Italy, fighting the Fascists, "those underpaid Hollywood extras," and watching them swelter in hot tanks while he and his "democratic American starlet buddies" take it easy in the mud. And later still, when he enters politics, he sees himself, mixing his media this time, in "the *Life Magazine* 'Young Burr Fuller Runs for Congress' layout, made into a movie with Jimmy Stewart shaved at the sideburns and made up to look like thirty-three" (p. 181). And so on. As Burr Fuller would say of his life, "I see it like a movie, flickwise" (p. 219).

Fuller's self exists most commandingly when he looks into the mirror and sees Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper staring back at him. Moreover, the nature of American competitiveness removes him yet another step from reality in that he tends to gauge his success less on any real accomplishments of his own than on the failures and weaknesses of others. He lives and advances by contrast. By contrast, for instance, with Cal Janus, an Army buddy at Fort Bragg. Cal would enjoy nothing. He would not allow himself the peacetime luxuries of beer, women, food, movies, when, each day, thousands of people were dying in the war. He suffers and mourns, Christ-like, for the sins of humanity, and he mourns generally. He is, we are told, "moral with a bewildering twist—*absolutely* moral" (p. 115). Cal also chooses not to dream, knowing that even bad dreams suggest the possibility of pleasure, and does not write to his wife precisely because he does take such pleasure in hearing from her. He will not be happy. Burr, on the other hand, approaches the problem of war quite differently, emphasizing what he believes in his belief in life: "You have to pleasure yourself in it to have strength for the struggle and sorrow" is his philosophy. He opposes Cal's unspoken notion that the ugliness, the immorality of war and death are the responsibilities of each individual. Then Cal, as if in frustrated recognition of his own impotence, finally dies of a brain tumor. Or of idealism. "Does it necessarily kill a man?" Burr asks, out of fear, perhaps, that his own, more "acceptable" type of idealism might, ultimately, be as fatal.

Although part of Burr admires Cal and knows that he is right, the example of Cal also proves that morality of this sort leads to self-destruction. Cal Janus' death makes Burr, by contrast, a winner. He, after all, remains alive and free to pursue his dreams. He does not give in to conscience. Nor does he give in to weakness, like Private Melvin Weinstein, who, goaded and taunted by his sergeant, "gives up" and hangs himself most ignobly from a beam in the latrine. Burr, again in contrast, cannot even commit the "tiny, practical suicide" of burning his hand to get out of KP duty, unfairly imposed by the same Sergeant Stamp. His unwillingness to mutilate himself Burr reads as strength; he will not, that is, allow himself to accept Stamp's judgment of him as Weinstein had done. He will accept nobody's judgment. Instead, he will live according to his own, personal version of free will: "A storm may dash you to death on the rocks . . . but a man should try to grow wings anyway and flap like hell. That's free will, I think. . . ." (p. 109).

Burr does not realize, however, that freely flapping wings must inevitably make contact with other wings. He demands the whole sky and refuses to see that closing off his air to others also constitutes a type of self-destructiveness, albeit more subtle than those practiced by Cal Janus and Melvin Weinstein. When Burr's political "fantasy" begins to take wing he becomes so concerned with his public image that he forgets his private one. He neglects the needs of his wife, Laura, and seeks to regain her lost love through someone else. Laura, on her side, a woman of the 1940's, has only a private image, a lovely college girl image to maintain. She lightens her hair to match her old shade, worries about the disintegration of her body, her dry lips, her lengthening nose, her aging, and refuses the solace of knowing, as Burr tells her in a clumsy attempt at kindness, that Marilyn Monroe looks prettier now that she's older than she ever has. Instead, Laura seeks solace in a psychiatrist's tranquilizers and then in Mike. But no good. "Nothing had been as she dreamed it" as a romantic girl:

Someday everyone—so she had predicted at seventeen—would listen to classical music and records and live beautifully and never die. Now we have long-play discs and dis-

count houses and antibiotics, and no more virtue than before, though sonatas by Bach & Sons ring out in the night of selected suburbs. And die. And still die, poisoned by age. (p. 234)

Her life, a product of the female version of American fantasy, as Burr's is of the male, has not worked. At last she is "drained by her unrealizable dreams."

The real American wish underlying the apparent American dream is a wish, simply, for happiness—"the dreamwork and event mere mask for the wish" (*Bold*, p. 171). The wish takes external and substantial forms because the possessor of the wish believes that these forms will lead to happiness. Love, "fantastic ideal love," and money and power are the forms. The irony is that the concerted effort to gain the forms—and then to realize and wish to go beyond the limitations which are necessarily imposed by them—must corrupt the possessor and, thus, destroy the real essence of the dream. Burr, that is, wants the happiness that love can give but, at the same time, he plays it safe by refusing to connect himself "with the privacy and fantasy of others, and run the risk of the general madness" (*Will*, p. 3). And so he cannot obtain the happiness from Laura, his aging movie queen, or from Mike, his too judgmental friend. He then seeks it in Barbara, "the girl of the youth he had not yet finished." Failing here as well, he will settle for the love, impersonalized though it be, of the American public. As congressman he will finally be loved. The political life he is forced to lead then destroys any possibility for real, personal happiness. Or, for that matter, even any possibility for simple contentment. What is left is only self-pity.

The Optimist is about the American dream and its disintegration. As it regresses steadily downward into unrealizability in the second half of the novel, Burr advances steadily upward in politics, two divergent, yet parallel movements. The feeling is that political success will mean, paradoxically, the total destruction of the dream. It is fitting, in this context, that Burr's dream is given political form, "fitting" because the government of America itself partakes of fantasy, the type created by the advertising media: politics became, according to Burr, ". . . a pleasant American game, like baseball, just when the questions were

mortal. In time of hydrogen warfare, he had to sell himself as if he were a slightly different brand of soap" (p. 235). The dream of politics, however, is fitting in other ways as well: in a nation of wealth it is perhaps the only goal which constitutes power beyond wealth. And this is why it is fitting, finally, in an ironic sense. Although it is in itself an end of abstract desire, this end is given apparent substance in what is essentially only another abstraction. Burr desires to rule the nation ("Why only a congressman?" he asks), the nation which refuses to grant him contentment, and he then attempts to gain the contentment by controlling the very means that can create it. As such, his goal is self-defeating. At least it is so in the important, private sense. He may win the election, but that does not signify, which is why, perhaps, we are never shown the outcome of his campaign. Whatever its result, he will still lose the dream.

But there are other ways by which Herbert Gold's "heroes" try to attain their dreams, and not all of his people are personal losers. Bud Williams, for one, of *The Wild Life* (original, and much better title: *The Man Who Was Not With It*), tries by entering the world of the carnival—"that absolute future, that American place which, descended from Rome and the gypsies, was the footloose moving image of the get-rich-quick, get-love-quick, get-ahead-quick of America" (p. 111). It is a world of artifice, ritual, peripatetic. It is a dream in itself, but one whose kinetic and, therefore, American mode of being denies the very dream for which it stands. The carnival, conceived in fantasy, is dedicated, with sharply incisive irony on Gold's part, to the American propositions of hustling and con-artistry. Bud's salvation, however, is that he is not "with it," in carnie lingo. He is alien to that world. He learns eventually that "there's a good and with it way to be not with it, too." The good way is to return to the stability of a present America, to leave the dream world in order to live his own dream. He returns to Pittsburgh, the place of his youth, with his wife, Joy, daughter of the carnival's "gypsy" fortune-teller.

Salt, Gold's New York novel, is more ambitious, and yet another variation on the theme of the American dream. We are presented here with three major characters, Peter Hatten, Dan Shaper—who are the focus of the action—and Barbara, the

woman whom both love in their separate fashions. In the fifties, "a time," according to Dan, "which avoids the prime questions of life on earth," they seek "to find the meaning of life in love. Religions, war and brave jousting seem impossible" (p. 212). Therefore, they depend much on love to ease pain and to order their lives in a disordered world. Peter, however, a character who closely resembles the earlier Burr Fuller, wants both "freedom and control" in life. He does not recognize that the terms are mutually exclusive and that the responsibility for another which love implies necessitates yielding a certain degree of freedom. Thus, the woman he likes best is married and, as he points out, leaves him "lots of room." But, fearing even that tiny loss of freedom that comes of human connection, he leaves her. Unable, therefore, to be satisfied with the realization of his own dream which Barbara most significantly promises, he juggles. Literally. He artificially orders—and controls—his universe by the manipulation of little objects, ones that fit neatly in the palms of his hands. He lets them go and they return of their own volition, governed by intellectually comprehensible physical laws. It is his ritual, his carnival, but, like the other carnival, ultimately unsatisfying because unreal. He cannot juggle Barbara and must give her up to Dan.

Dan Shaper, like Peter, realizes the possible destructive aspect of loving—he is divorced. But he also sees its potential power to save. He comes East to New York from Cleveland following his divorce, and allows Peter to introduce him to the "with it" way to survive in Manhattan. Peter's idea is to use women, lots of women, in order, perhaps, to maintain a sense of his own significance while giving up no part of himself. Dan cannot do this. So he begins, too soon, to become involved with Barbara. They fall in love. She throws a party which turns out to be, unknown to him, a celebration of their engagement. Dan is furious at what he believes to be Barbara's deceit. When he finally understands the real reason for the party, in his words,

I grew mighty in wrath. I scowled. I was filled with indignation. I was cold as ice. I arose, majestic and blind. I may even have lifted a finger in the air, the index finger, indicting her for callous manipulation of a tender new bachelor orphan.

You know? She did not answer at all.
I helped her pile the dishes in the sink for the cleaning woman the next day. Then I bid her adew. (p. 202)

This passage is important because the style in which Dan chooses to acknowledge his feelings is so telling of his retrospective understanding of those feelings. The mock heroism of his description undercuts and denies the very anger which he believes he is experiencing. He does love Barbara and knows he needs her, but must first disengage himself from Peter's influence before he can accept his own knowledge. He must find out that he cannot and should not learn to juggle and, thus, to "put the universe to rest in perfect circular motion, perfect balance, perfect stillness" (p. 203). And he does learn. At the close of the novel Dan returns to Barbara. He goes to Virginia, Barbara's home, the place to which she has run. Peter is left, still lonely, still juggling, still discontent in his imposed order and still hoping to find, again like Burr Fuller, that "something 'else,'" whatever it is.

By the time we get to the contemporary scene of *The Great American Jackpot*, the tone and values of America have undergone yet another radical change. The texture of society, as mirrored in style, is a crazy quilt of fast words, jumpy, fevered, phantasmagoric. The people themselves are aimless in a land without causes to believe in and to fight for. Al Dooley, the major character in the novel, is a "clever-to-very-clever grade sociology student" who is searching, as Gold's other characters have searched in their earlier Americas, for "a fantastic and possible life to replace his real and impossible one." But where to find this at the beginning of the 1970's? He is not Jewish, so he cannot fight in Israel, assuming there were a war there; he is not Black, so Panther membership is out,

And anyway, the State (see C. Wright Mills and Herbert Marcuse) was in the hands of the Right; the liberals and the conservatives and the Maoists and the Guevaraists were moiling about in disarray; the action fronts were reduced to coffeehouse caucuses again. The student leaders of a few years ago had heroic memories, but no skills. Mario Savio worked as a bartender and took care of his son. "Daddy, tell me about the Free Speech Movement." (p. 12)

America—San Francisco the microcosm here, the westernmost frontier—is no longer a place for dreaming. The dream has been replaced by a new, acquisitive reality, defined by Dooley's friend and academic mentor, black Professor Jarod Howe, as "all the power and dominion you can get in conquering bodies and souls and the folks that put a fellow down" (p. 24). It is not a world in which love, the old means of salvation, is possible either, Dooley believes. But he is still determined to make his mark—hit the jackpot. The only thing left to do in modern America where there is nothing of real value left to do, is to commit a crime. Rob the Crocker-Anglo Bank. And he does just that, but the irony is that this mad act, when carried out, simply becomes a part of the general madness. It is extraordinary only in its futility, and that is no longer extraordinary.

Even in this aimless world, however, Gold must allow a touch of optimism. At the end of the novel he has Al Dooley leave with Sue Cody (the name also of Gatsby's "savior," and perhaps the irony is intentional). She is a girl he had met earlier by chance at a Fillmore rock concert. We are not told their destination. But, if there is any love to be had, Gold implies here, Al will find it. Given an America which does not seem to allow dreams, we must try even harder to create them.

The major tension, here and elsewhere in Gold's novels, is, on the personal level, between innocence and the ways in which experience, both good and bad, plays on that innocence. On the impersonal level, the level on which America plays the role of protagonist, the tension is between America as Paradise and as potential destroyer—as Gatsby's world modernized to the extent that it disallows a God even of the stature of Dr. Eckleburg. It is Gatsby's wasteland writ larger than ever. And this is where Gold's so precise sense of locale becomes important. In young America, Paradise used to be the place where dreams could be fulfilled. It was once actual, physical, and it changed location as the frontier moved westward. To overcome the barrier was to gain Paradise and fulfill the American dream. Now, too, we try to light out for new territories, but find that the only frontiers are those we build, the urban and psychological ones. Gold, raised in the Midwest, begins his fictional (and real) odyssey in Cleveland, moves, in *The Optimist*, to Detroit, still remaining

close to home. From Detroit he travels to the generality of America, as symbolized by the carnival, and then to New York and San Francisco.

The settings are not arbitrarily chosen. They are, first of all, urban. Modern pastoralism in an age of mobility, tension, and pollution has become a contradiction in terms. The machine has completely taken over the old garden and the most prominent of new American machines and the one greatly responsible for the mobility and the pollution and, thus, the destruction of the pastoral ideal is, of course, the automobile. (It is no wonder that Jay Gatsby was, in essence, killed by a car, or that, much later, Burr Fuller is shown to enjoy the "Detroit power surge" of his car on the highway, or that his first love scene with Barbara, the woman who is to become his mistress, also takes place in his car, surrounded by tall, gray buildings.) Detroit, then, is not only the Midwest, the actual heart of America, but it is also the seat—"sedes," Thoreau would say—of American power, political, social, economic. But Detroit, when we meet it in Gold's 1959 novel, is already decayed. It is played out, spent. Having completed its role in the creation and destruction of modern America, Detroit is now, we are told, "a city made for passage," and, thus, a place from which to begin. Burr Fuller makes the mistake of staying and trying to succeed in the enervated city. His path to "success" follows the development of Detroit. Power has corrupted it and drained it of emotion and of humanness. Detroit is now only a facade, a backdrop to doomed action. As Burr's attempt at political fame takes place against this bleak facade, so his success, if achieved, will be a facade as well, an external image of a drained life. The political move to power is the human move to destruction as the industrial move to power is the urban move to destruction.

New York, the next stop on this literary trek, seems to be different, not yet past its prime, and still possessed of the old promise it once held for the arriving immigrant of Sam Gold's generation. It is an exciting place, full of museums, movies, theaters, a highly populous place and, therefore, a city in which life can be lived and desire can be fulfilled. Surely, it says, modifying Emma Lazarus and with an eye to newer concerns, surely there is someone for everyone in those hurrying masses.

Love's potential is everywhere; one, as Dan Shaper illustrates, can press against bodies in a crowded IRT subway train and imagine that this human contact is love, or, at another time, can imagine falling in love with a nameless beauty in a supermarket on the upper West side of Manhattan. But these are indeed imaginings, fantasies. In reality, the subway passengers cringe at contact, and the lovely shopper will remain nameless and unknown because New York does not fulfill its promises. Its facade is, perhaps, more appealing, more titillating than that of Detroit, its beckoning more meretricious. It is a fertile place for fantasy, not, as it seems to suggest, for the reification of fantasy. Underneath its lively trappings New York is a walled fortress, protecting itself against and fearing its own promises. It is as impenetrable to human feeling as, much earlier, Melville's *Bartleby* had known it to be. In order to love, Dan Shaper of *Salt* now discovers, he must leave New York. Love itself is still possible, but it must be sought elsewhere.

In contrast to both New York and Detroit, the San Francisco of *The Great American Jackpot* is a relatively new American city, clean, beautiful, and free, its bridges open, leading to wherever the traveller chooses. Strangely, and it may be a result of these very qualities, San Francisco itself retains a kind of innocence in the novel; it has almost a stand-offish or passive quality. Unlike New York and Detroit, it seems uninvolved, removed from its inhabitants, as befitting, perhaps, a last bastion of American purity. It is a city which does not act in the novel, but, rather, is acted upon, used at whim. It is the people here who define the place and not the other way around. The people divide themselves into "Polk Street Slickers," "Haight Street Hippies," and Fillmore radicals. The areas take on meaning because meaning has been imposed on them by their inhabitants. And these people speak in modern tongues, in jive talk and sentence fragments, and all to a staccato beat. Their language, their drugs and loud music all function in San Francisco as huge buildings do in the other two cities, to block human communication. Again, although the results are similar, in one case the people impose their own barriers on an open city, and in the other cases, the two cities impose barriers on their people. The human implications, then, of *The Great American Jackpot* might

be most serious of all: since the characters themselves are solely responsible for their own actions and for the results of those actions, their own boredom and lack of satisfaction, Gold is saying, lead them to invent "solutions" which so block their senses that they become more destructive than the original problems. It is San Francisco which wins in this book; it remains clean and lovely. It is the people of San Francisco who lose.

The movement of these Herbert Gold novels, then, both emblematically and physically, covers all of the United States, East to West. The books, taken as a continuum, constitute a large-scale picaresque and the heroes are picaros of many faces, and a single face. Each searches for a new frontier in which the old American dream, given novelty only by the new time, may be realized. Thus, in the same way that Jay Gatsby, formerly James Gatz, is lured eastward by his dream, so Al Dooley, formerly Burr Fuller, Peter Hatten and, perhaps, Herbert Gold, move eastward and then westward. Gatsby is destroyed, finally, by the false promise of the East, and Al discovers that the last frontier, California, has no promise either. There are no more frontiers and no more dreams. Yet, this is not the end. Herbert Gold believes that, despite all, we still search and we still keep wanting:

We want more. We desire that which we cannot define. . . . How easy if it could be reduced to lust, power, riches, fame. Gatsby looking out toward the blank gray horizon of Long Island Sound tells us as well as any protagonist what he and the rest of us are looking for. For the we-know-not-what. For structure against chaos. For warmth against the chill. For a way to join our each and lonely mortalities with something complete and permanent. (*Will*, p. 94)

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NOTES

1. *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner's, 1925).
2. The books referred to, here and subsequently in this paper, are the following, all by Herbert Gold (where two dates appear in the references, the second is the original date of publication): *The Wild Life* (Orig. title: *The Man Who Was Not With It*; New York: Pocket Books, 1957, 1956); *The Optimist* (New York: Pocket Books, 1965, 1959); *Therefore Be Bold* (New York: Dial Press, 1960); *Salt* (New York: Avon Books, 1971, 1963); *Fathers* (New York: Faw-

cett, 1968, 1967); *The Great American Jackpot* (New York: Random House, 1971); *The Magic Will: Stories and Essays of a Decade* (New York: Random House, 1973). Where my context makes reference to a work other than the one under discussion, I have indicated this by abbreviating the title in parentheses following the quotation.

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