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The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature

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MidAmerica, a peer-reviewed journal of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, is published annually. We welcome scholarly contributions from our members on any aspect of Midwestern literature and culture. Except for winners of our annual poetry and prose contests, we do not publish poems, short stories, or creative nonfiction. If you would like to submit a scholarly essay of not more than 15 pages or 3,750 words to be considered for publication in *MidAmerica*, please send a hard copy of your essay to Marcia Noe, 1012 Forest Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37405 and an electronic copy to marcia-noe@utc.edu Please follow the most recent edition of the MLA *Handbook;* in documenting sources, use parenthetical citations within your essay with a list of works cited. If you include discursive notes, they should be endnotes that use Arabic, not Roman, numerals. Use no headers, footers, or page numbers. Do not put your name on your essay. Include your contact information in your cover letter to Marcia. Be sure to give your institutional affiliation.

In Honor of
Robert Dunne

PREFACE

On May 8, 2014, the members of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its forty-fourth annual meeting. Highlights included a roundtable, "Reconsidering the Revolt from the Village"; a staged reading of "Black for Dinner," a one-act play by Sandra Seaton; and a showing of the film *Star by Star: Naomi Long Madgett, Poet & Publisher* by David Shock. At the awards luncheon on May 9, Mary Catherine Harper received the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize, Rachael Price was the winner of the David Diamond Student Writing Prize, and Patricia Oman won the David D. Anderson Prize for Literary Criticism. Naomi Long Madgett was the 2014 winner of the Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature, and Robert Dunne won the 2014 MidAmerica Award for distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern literature.

SSML is currently operating at a loss due to increased expenses in publishing its journals and convening its annual symposium. Major gifts from the late Jane S. Bakerman, David Diamond, and David D. Anderson have enabled us to continue our work while we seek to establish a more stable financial footing for the work ahead. SSML is also grateful to the following members and friends who have made contributions in addition to their dues. As more such contributions are received, and earlier ones are discovered in searching the archives, we will add more names to this Honor Roll: Walter Adams, Robert Beasecker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ray B. Browne, Mary Ellen Caldwell, Louis J. Cantoni, G.B. Crump, Bernard F. Engel, Kenneth B. Grant, Philip. A. Greasley, Theodore Haddin, Donald Hassler, Janet Ruth Heller, Ted Kennedy, Jean Laming, Barbara Lindquist, Larry Lockridge, Loren Logsdon, Bud Narveson, Marcia Noe, Mary Obuchowski, Tom Page, E. Elizabeth Raymond, Herbert K. Russell, James Seaton, Guy Szuberla, Doug Wixson, Melody Zajdel, and the family and friends of Paul Somers.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

David D. Anderson, one of the founders of Midwestern literary studies, was an active scholar for nearly fifty years. For a special issue of *Midwestern Miscellany*, the Society is planning a commemorative issue dedicated to Dave's wide-ranging influence on his and subsequent generations of scholars of the Midwest. Submissions will invariably be personal in nature, but the purpose of the issue will not be nostalgic but a considered reflection of one major scholar's impact on a large area of study. Just as F.O. Matthiessen could be discussed as one who defined and exerted a powerful influence on scholars of the American Renaissance, what have Dave's influence and legacy been for today's scholars of the Midwest? Has there been a Midwestern anxiety of influence? Did he establish a groundwork for Midwestern studies that has evolved into new areas? We are looking for two types of contributions on the subject of Dave's influence: extended essays that explore his works or impact in a contemporary context, and shorter (1-2 pp.) reflections that offer a Whitmanesque snippet of Dave's imprint on a scholar's life. For more information, or to submit an essay, contact Robert Dunne at dunne@ccsu.edu. Deadline for submissions will be July 1, 2015. Note: there will also be a special panel on this topic organized for the 2015 SSML Symposium, May 31-June 2, 2015.

CALL FOR PAPERS

For a panel on Midwestern drama at the 45th annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature (May 31-June 2, 2015), and in honor of long-time SSML member Arvid "Gus" Sponberg, please submit paper proposals on plays by Midwestern writers or set in the Middle West by January 30, 2015 to Scott Emmert at scott.emmert@uwc.edu

The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
congratulates

Nancy Bunge

Winner of the 2015 MidAmerica Award for
distinguished contributions to the
study of Midwestern literature

and

Philip Levine

Winner of the 2015 Mark Twain Award for
distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature

These awards will be presented at noon on June 1, 2015,
at the Society's 45th annual meeting, Kellogg Center, Michigan
State University, East Lansing, Michigan, May 31-June 2, 2015

For registration information, go to the
"annual symposium" link at ssml.org

Send your proposal for a paper, panel, roundtable or reading of
creative work with a Midwestern emphasis for the 2015
annual symposium to Dr. Scott Emmert, SSML Program Chair,
at scott.emmert@uwc.edu by January 30, 2015.
Papers related to the work of 2015 Mark Twain Award winner
Philip Levine are especially encouraged.

SOCIAL REGARD

QIANA TOWNS

We dug cubby holes in dirt mounds
left from expansion on the car plant
next to the tenement where
redlightgreenlight1-2-3 and down
down baby kept our bellies filled with laughs.

We constructed cardboard palaces complete
with hidden passages near the top of dirt
piles, laid our cribs out with shaggy rugs
and chiffon treatments hung to hide
squares cut for windows, spliced with filaments
from a stranger's garage.

And we I-spied the mamas tethered
to rotting wood porches talkin' 'bout
a white man makin' a movie about *us,* 'bout
how the company next door made off
with the life of our town, 'bout how they
didn't want no talk 'bout the white horse
destroying our community in the man's movie.

And we named ourselves dirt dobbles,
never intending to stay in the gutters
where we were born, never intending
to ride that white horse. Each day we watched
the car plant's entrance from our earth
houses, waited for the pity christ
to show up with a camera and a gaffer
boy to record the jagged edges
of our lives, make us as famous,
or at least offer a dime for our troubles.

Davenport University

DESIGNED TO AMUSE: HEMINGWAY'S *THE TORRENTS OF SPRING* AND INTERTEXTUAL COMEDY

ROSS TANGEDAL

"So that's that."
—Ernest Hemingway[1]

Ernest Hemingway's *The Torrents of Spring* is a strange book. Published in 1926 prior to the appearance of his career-defining novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, *Torrents* takes as its subjects Midwesterners of Michigan, men and women searching for connections and meaning. In popular Hemingway culture, the novel operates on a variety of planes. This oft-forgotten satiric novel, composed during Thanksgiving week, November 1925,[2] separates the composition and publication of the author's first major novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Written to satirize[3] the works of Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein, as well as the publishing industry itself, *Torrents* utilizes several intertextual devices, labeled "Author's Notes" or "Notes to the Reader" throughout. The major function of the text, according to Michael S. Reynolds,[4] may have been to force the severing of Hemingway's contract with his first publisher, Boni & Liveright, so that he could join Charles Scribner's Sons. Hemingway's contract stipulated that he would produce three books for Boni & Liveright; however, if the house rejected any of the three for publication, the author would be free to take his work elsewhere. Robert W. Trogdon notes that Hemingway, "made no attempt to deny the true nature of the work, making sure that Liveright knew exactly why he should reject *The Torrents of Spring*," thereby freeing him from the contract (22).

This question has become a source of wide speculation in Hemingway studies. Though Hemingway insisted that he did not write *Torrents* for such a purpose,[5] feeling that the novel could stand on its own, the circumstances surrounding its inception and publica-

tion have led many scholars to question the author's veracity. Recognizing the novel's dual function allows for a better understanding of Hemingway's textual comedy; as both satire and contract-breaker, the work stands as a Hemingway time capsule, representing an important early moment in an author's burgeoning career.

The novel carries little weight in the academy; only a handful of articles discuss the work at length, with most recognizing function over aesthetics. Scott Donaldson notes that "whatever the intentions, Hemingway had the knack for getting himself and his work talked about," with F. Scott Fitzgerald and editor Max Perkins doing most of the talking (694). Similarly, Carlos Baker separates "the great business" of composing *The Sun Also Rises* from "the funny business" of writing *The Torrents of Spring*, with the latter representing "the first public notice that Hemingway was on his own," the means by which he became artistically independent (*Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* 37). More critically, Daniel Pollack-Pelzner concludes, "without a sense of Anderson's signature faux primitivism, stilted inner monologues, and narrative meanderings, *The Torrents of Spring* just reads like bad Hemingway" (70). However, Robert Coltrane reads the novel differently; citing Hemingway's reading of both *Dark Laughter* and Ivan Turgenev's *Torrents of Spring* concurrently in pre-composition, he asserts that "where Turgenev used a precise choice of words that involve the reader in the scene while also advancing the plot with economy—a technique Hemingway sought to emulate—Anderson's attempts as impressionism and stream-of-consciousness produced monotonous repetition, awkward fragments, and a ponderously slow pace" (152). Coltrane's recognition of the dual influence echoes the dual function of the published book, with the intertextual materials asserting much of Hemingway's authorial frustrations.[6] Though the satire proves primary to the work, the novel "shows us a Hemingway we would not see again" (159), as Hemingway effectively shed his influences to get on with the rewriting of *The Sun Also Rises* (159). Easily the least-mentioned (and read) of Hemingway's works (proven by its lack of critical attention), *Torrents'* neglect promotes rereading, if only for the pleasure of witnessing the author's performance. However, the intertextual portions of the narrative in the form of embedded author's notes guide readers to a more fully aware Hemingway who offers critiques of composition, authorship, printing and the publishing industry as components of the satire.

Though many of Hemingway's works maintain a near timeless quality, the exercises wrought in *Torrents* date the work. At that time Anderson was widely read and his style was easily recognizable. Today, that type of direct satire requires initial attention to Anderson as much as it requires understanding Hemingway's techniques. Considering that the majority of Anderson's fiction has lost favor with the academy and readers, this work puzzles Hemingway's staunchest supporters. Though written in a style similar to that of his early short stories, with short, terse sentences and attention to detail, *The Torrents of Spring* breaks from convention in several moments, specifically concerning its intertextual play. I contend that Hemingway's novel deserves a re-evaluation based in part on his experimentation with intertextual materials, specifically his author's notes to the reader. Because this novel was written early in his career and prior to his first mainstream success, Hemingway eschewed the well-worn aesthetic that would drive most of his fiction in favor of a slight, witty, tongue-in-cheek parody of one of his early mentors. Before Hemingway could become the author of *The Sun Also Rises*, he had to play with authorship in *The Torrents of Spring*, cementing the acute sense of timing, style and economy he saw lacking in other prominent authors. Once finished with the satire, he could point readers away from such pretention in favor of a new style: his own.

Writing Horace Liveright on 7 December 1925, Hemingway defended his methods, explaining, "I do not think that anybody with any stuff can be hurt by satire" (*Letters* 434). Though the references to Anderson are too many to count, Hemingway insisted, "This one has the advantage of starting with all the people who have read Black [sic] Laughter to sell to first and when it gets started it will be awfully hard to stop. It does not depend on Anderson for its appeal, but it has that to start with" (435-36). Hemingway was quite aware of Liveright's possible reaction, since Anderson was a key success in the Boni & Liveright house. Whether his novel's intentions married with his results or not, the work was rejected by Liveright due to its depiction of Anderson's fiction. Hemingway wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald on 1 January 1926 that "I have known all along that they could not and would not be able to publish it as it makes a bum out of their present ace and best seller Anderson. Now in 10th printing" (459). Once published by Scribners, the novel did not sell well, though critics picked up on the author's wit and comedic styling, as well as his intertextual author's notes. Contextually, part of this com-

edy originated in an unpublished "Author's Preface," in which Hemingway indirectly outlines his intention to break from Anderson's influence.

The idea of the novel is completely encapsulated within the preface, as Hemingway briefly outlines the entirety of his satire in one paragraph. He begins with an explanation of how critics felt *In Our Time* "resembled the excellencies" of Anderson, and how he now wishes to actually write like Anderson ("Author's Preface" 62). The following cements his feelings given critics'connections:

> Having just read a novel by Mr. Anderson which was called, I believe, Dark Laughter and which is, I believe, generally acknowledged to be a masterpiece and being exceedingly impressed by what these critics had written I resolved to write henceforth exclusively in the manner of Mr. Anderson. The careful reader will see that in my attempt to write as Mr. Anderson writes I have failed most signally. It is therefore to his indulgence that I commend myself most diffidently. (62)[7]

The tone mocking, the sarcasm thick, Hemingway takes his cue from Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, a send-up of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.[8] The publication of *Dark Laughter* gave Anderson continued critical success, and Hemingway recognized the critical community's penchant for Anderson's fiction. Furthermore, Hemingway took aim at Stein, calling his last chapter "The Passing of a Great Race and the Making and Marring of Americans," a play on Stein's *The Making of Americans*. With his dual satire, the repetitive and indirect nature of his preface ably introduces his finished work. The digressions and repetitions ("I believe"; "Mr. Anderson"; slant rhyming "exceedingly" and "exclusively" as well as "most signally" with "most diffidently") call attention to his textual work within the novel. For instance, beginning with chapter thirteen, Hemingway brings in Stein and Anderson stylistically:

> Yogi Johnson walking down the silent street with his arm around the little Indian's shoulder. The big Indian walking along beside them. The cold night. The shuttered houses of the town. The little Indian, who has lost his artificial arm. The big Indian, who was also in the war. Yogi Johnson, who was in the war too. The three of them walking, walking, walking. Where were they going? Where could they go? What was there left? (*Torrents* 73)

Fragmentary glimpses of Stein followed by the incessant questioning of Anderson, coupled with the meandering thoughts and actions of thinly sketched characters, provide the work with an ample satiric quality, something explained in his preface.

Hemingway's elimination of his preface, then, proves important. It is surprising that Hemingway cut anything from this text, as Reynolds concludes that "ten days after it was begun, the book was finished: unplanned and unedited, *The Torrents of Spring* was ready for the typist" (334). However, Hemingway eventually wrote on the typescript of the preface, "I will probably cut this out" and put a large "x" through the entire text ("Author's Preface" 62). Why Hemingway cut it is unknown. If he was worried that he had gone too far with a preface to his satire, his final text proper shows no such worry. Littered with section epigraphs (from Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*), tongue-in-cheek section titles (Part One: "Red and Black Laughter" [*Torrents* 1]), overt digressions from author to reader, and easily discernible stylistic machinations mimicking Anderson and Stein, *The Torrents of Spring* is replete with elements that mark the work as anything but restrained. Though Hemingway skewers his satiric subjects, he never mentions why or how he is doing it, something a published preface would have possibly clarified. To get at the truth behind his satire Hemingway had to trust his readers' abilities to recognize the style and laugh at the punch lines. Had he given them the punch in a preface, the work might have lost some of its humor. His choice to cut the preface asserts his willingness to remove unessential pieces already submerged into other textual components, allowing his embedded author's notes to the reader more room to maneuver.

These notes feed off the many repetitive Anderson notions (especially characters "wondering") littered throughout the text;[9] for instance, early on Yogi Johnson looks out a window: "Yogi Johnson stood looking out of the window of a big pump-factory in Michigan. Spring would soon be here. Could it be that what this writing fellow Hutchinson had said, 'If winter comes can spring be far behind?' would be true again this year? Yogi Johnson wondered" (*Torrents* 3). Scripps O'Neil, once finding his way to the pump factory, "knew it was the factory. They weren't going to fool him on that. He walked up to the door. There was a sign on it: KEEP OUT. THIS MEANS YOU. Can that mean me? Scripps wondered. He knocked on the door and went in" (28). Later another character, Diana, having just mar-

ried Scripps O'Neil, effectively becoming his second wife, is described as follows:

> She had a man now. A man of her own. For her own. Could she keep him? Could she hold him for her own? She wondered. Mrs. Scripps, formerly an elderly waitress, now the wife of Scripps O'Neil. With a good job in the pump-factory. Diana Scripps. Diana was her own name. It had been her mother's, too. Diana Scripps looking into the mirror and wondering could she hold him . . . Diana looked into the mirror. Could she hold him? Could she hold him? That thought never left her now. (43)

These wonderings and repetitions call directly to readers familiar with Anderson's *Dark Laughter* as well as the work of Gertrude Stein and others. The questioning done by the characters fractures the narrative flow of sentences, with Hemingway deconstructing style and work on a sentence-by-sentence basis. Thank goodness the novel is short, for the exercise grows increasingly tiresome, another intended effect of Hemingway's satire.

While much has been done to connect the obvious satirical elements directed at Sherwood Anderson and his work, little has been done to understand the many author's notes that appear throughout the text. Granted, they are smarmy, tongue-in-cheek, and off topic. But if the effect of satire is to clarify and critique a social or cultural situation through carefully structured comedy, the notes perform their duty well. Appearing at various points within the text proper, these notes take a sharp detour from the flow of the novel and directly address readers, covering a variety of topics from editing and composition to structural integrity and fluidity and purporting to assist readers. The first appears a little over halfway through the novel, with Hemingway asking the printer to disregard the note. It's for the reader, not the printer. He takes a swing at printers, writing, "what difference does it make to the printer? Who is the printer, anyway? Gutenberg. The Gutenberg Bible" (46). Taking this buffoonish authority toward his readers, Hemingway placates them: "In case the reader is becoming confused, we are now up to where the story opened with Yogi Johnson and Scripps O'Neil in the pump-factory itself, with the Chinook wind blowing . . . the story will move a little faster from now on, in case any of the readers are tiring" (46-7). Keeping with the critique of repetition, he reminds readers again that "at any rate, we will now go on with Yogi Johnson. Yogi Johnson, the

reader may remember, is the chap who was in the war. As the story opens, he is just coming out of the pump-factory. (See page three.)" (47). Such placating not only disrupts the narrative with its self-referencing and arrogance, but also makes the reader feel rightfully annoyed to be condescended to. This effect adds invariably to the satire Hemingway set out to write, for he is able to reinforce the haughty and brooding nature of the school he critiques while posing as a member of that company.

His next note comes after a direct reference to *Dark Laughter*, in which Hemingway describes two black figures looking through the slit in the roof of an Indian club to which Yogi has been brought by two large Indians: "Above him a slit came in the roof. Then it was blocked by two black figures, there was the sound of a kick, a blow, a series of thuds, some dull, some sharp, and two human forms came crashing down the ladder. From above floated the dark, haunting sound of black Negro laughter" (67). Earlier Johnson questions his surroundings: "Where had he been? Had he been in an Indian club? What was it all about? Was this the end?" (66). Once seeing and hearing the laughter, Johnson leaves the club with the Indians, as Hemingway reminds readers that "[f]rom above them, out of the window of the club came the haunting sound of a Negro laughing" (67). Ending the chapter on a fitting note of tension, confusion and anxiety for the characters is obstructed by Hemingway's next note, in which he boasts, "In case it may have any historical value, I am glad to state that I wrote the foregoing chapter in two hours directly on the typewriter, and then went out to lunch with John Dos Passos, whom I consider a very forceful writer" (67-8). Noting his ease in writing the chapter puts Hemingway's previous chapter, with its tense ending, at odds with the laborious writer persona. Though he brings this persona in later on, his reference to Dos Passos also plays into the pose his author adopts. Positioning writers of great worth around him inevitably results in great writing, as far as the notes are concerned. Early on Hemingway drops the names of Booth Tarkington, H.G. Wells, Ford Madox Ford (whom he disparages), H.L. Mencken, Dos Passos, Anderson himself and eventually F. Scott Fitzgerald. This listing of forces continually pummels the reader with a "look who I know" pose, an arrogance created to repel readers and therefore make them laugh. Fitfully, Hemingway concludes, "I would like the reader to particularly remark the way the complicated threads of the lives of the various characters in the book are gathered together, and then held

there in that memorable scene in the beanery. It was when I read this chapter aloud to him that Mr. Dos Passos exclaimed, 'Hemingway, you have wrought a masterpiece'" (68). Since this note concerns an episode readers have yet to encounter, Hemingway's mock arrogance regarding Dos Passos's review only adds to the humor once the episode appears. Introducing the episode by proclaiming its necessity, excellence and masterful qualities results in the threads fraying, leaving a void. It is this void that Hemingway has been alluding to all along, the void inherent in works like *Dark Laughter*.

Authoritative and overbearing, Hemingway offers a "P.S." section, tutoring readers with "it is meant in the best spirit of friendship when I say that you have no idea, reader, what a hard chapter this is going to be to write. As a matter of fact, and I try to be frank about these things, we will not even try and write it until tomorrow" (69). Hemingway bookends his note with anecdotes regarding how easy it is to write and how difficult it is to write, two sides of the same persona. Flashing brilliance through both genius (writing naturally) and craft (writing deliberately) actually structures the modern author. However, he makes these statements in order to remind readers what lurks behind written texts: work. These notes put readers in a position of questioning authority by boasting openly about it. Whether that work results in a true representation of humanity remains the readers' responsibility to determine.

Following soon after is a preemptive note to chapter fourteen, where everyone is "Inside the beanery. They are all inside the beanery. Some do not see the others. Each are intent on themselves" (78). Hemingway mentions an episode where F. Scott Fitzgerald came over prior to the writing of the following chapter, got drunk and sat in the fireplace, informing readers, "I know, reader, that these things sometimes do not show in a story, but, just the same, they are happening, and think what they mean to chaps like you and me in the literary game. If you should think this part of the story is not as good as it might have been remember, reader, that day in and day out all over the world things like this are happening" (76). Apologizing for the material written, Hemingway assures readers, as he did earlier, that the work "doesn't seem so bad," hoping that readers like it, and if they do, "will you tell your friends about it, and try and get them to buy the book just as you have done? I only get twenty cents on each book that is sold, and while twenty cents is not much nowadays still it will mount up to a lot if two or three hundred thousand copies

of the book are sold" (77). This ridiculous in-text plea for readers to help him sell the book offers a sterling critique of the publishing industry, as certain books (including *In Our Time*, published one year prior) suffer from lack of appropriate advertising and coverage, as well as marketing. Hemingway sees this as an opportunity to situate authorship between editing and advertising as much as between writing and revising. With authority dependent upon reviews and reader response, Hemingway concludes his penultimate note accordingly: "At least, [the chapter] will be just as good as I can write it. We both know how good that can be, if we read the blurbs, eh, reader?" (77). This note is a sly reference to the dust jacket (of which Hemingway disapproved) for the first edition of *In Our Time,* published by Boni & Liveright, that featured several blurbs promoting Hemingway's prose, thus exposing the rupture between artist and public.[10] Since authorship is a public creation rather than a private one, Hemingway's deft understanding and treatment of that authority pushes his own critique of publishing as much as his lack of regard for Anderson's methods.

His final note to the reader contains an explanation of a mysterious episode left hanging early in the novel. In explaining the story's background and history, Hemingway puts the final nail in the coffin, assuring readers that he is just clearing things up. He writes, "Anyway, reader, as a secret history it always seemed to me like an awfully good story, and I know you would rather me explain it here than drag an explanation into the novel, where really, after all, it has no place" (90). Of course, if the episode's background had no place, then the episode itself has no place in the novel either, a point Hemingway subtly implies. If the novel is wrought with such infelicities and unexplained fractures, he placates his reader one last time, writing "I just felt I owed it to you, reader, to give some explanation" (90). Since the Hemingway style is predicated on exactness and directness, his referral here to an "explanation" brims with arrogance. That present-day readers would recognize this conceit more clearly (since his style had not completely pervaded the reading market as it has today) makes the joke even clearer. Hemingway always felt that he achieved his style by stripping away the unimportant material in favor of the absolute truth, the thing which matters most. His authorial pose concedes defeat in his final note, for if this story requires explanation in order to be effective, how many other parts of the story require such treatment? The satire reaches a high point here, for

Hemingway does not personally operate on the level that his *Torrents* persona does. He trusts his readers will separate the real Hemingway from this one, and reviews proclaimed the novel's satire effective thanks in large part to the author's notes. With these notes, Hemingway was able to construct an authorial persona akin to Anderson's, while simultaneously critiquing that very persona for readers. At times maddening and hilarious, these notes add comedic ruptures to Hemingway's novel, coming at just the right times, and with the just the right amount of punch.

Because of the novel's unique structural elements, many of the contemporary reviews cited Hemingway's author's notes as crucial to the satire. The *Boston Transcript* characterized Hemingway as willing and eager to "sign-board his way with explicit direction." These directions poke fun at process and product, as Hemingway sees fit to present readers with a relentless onslaught of paratextual and intertextual materials alongside his text proper. Lawrence Morris, writing for the *New Republican*, considered them "a healthy laugh at the over-solemnity of modern fiction. Hemingway supplies the grain of salt." The notes achieve a level of fun, as the reviewer for the *Oakland Tribune* wrote: "Indeed, the enthusiasms of the author leap out of the printed page, or spill over into the margins, where he addresses the reader in confidence, takes him into more secrets" (*Oakland*). The *Detroit News* correctly reads the inclusion of the notes as a chaotic harbinger, declaring, "These notes add not a whit to the coherence of the story. In fact, you are not supposed to know what the story is all about, and you never will." On the other hand, the *Louisville Herald Post* misses the joke, writing "books with their tongues in their cheeks affect us unpleasantly. When we find that, after the End, there's a smart Aleck problem for the Reader, we grow rebellious." The rebellion is the point for Hemingway, as his authorial persona relies on readers being both amused and frustrated by the exercise, thereby placing added animosity upon Anderson's fiction. That is exactly the reaction the satire is supposed to elicit, as Richard West for the *Tennessean* noted "a desire for a little more ingenuity and a little less sameness in the plots of Mr. Anderson can be detected . . . I think we may say the book expresses what most of us have felt at one time or another." Whether timely or not, Hemingway's short novel made a small dent in the literary landscape once published. Though he made more than a dent with *The Sun Also Rises* some months later, his use of author's notes in *The Torrents of Spring* points

to a writer willing to experiment with intertextual elements in order to critique multiple publishing functions along with his earliest champions. Recognizing the former strengthens our reading of early Hemingway as he sought to evolve into the writer he would eventually become.

Kent State University

NOTES

The research required for this article was supported by the Ernest Hemingway Foundation & Society (Smith-Reynolds Founders Fellowship) and by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation (Hemingway Research Grant), both awarded in 2014.

[1]Hemingway's conclusion after explaining the rejection of *Torrents* to F. Scott Fitzgerald in a 31 December/1 January 1925 letter (Letters 460).

[2]See Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (159).

[3]Hemingway wrote Ezra Pound on 30 November 1925, "Wrote [*Torrents*] to destroy Sherwood and various others. It does all right. It's first really adult thing have ever done. Jesus Christ it is funny" (*Letters* 422).

[4]Reynolds refers to the novel as a "literary foul to force Liveright to break their contract" (332).

[5]The main source of this insistence comes, of course, from the author's correspondence with his first publisher Horace Liveright. Trusting the author's overtures proves questionable at best.

[6]Coltrane concludes, "[Hemingway] would not again resort to the use of an extended satire as a means of relieving personal and professional frustrations" (159).

[7]Hemingway's combative relationship with critics would be more evident in his 1935 nonfiction *Green Hills of Africa*, in which he explains how critics are "angleworms in a bottle" who make good writers "impotent" (*Green Hills of Africa* 21, 24). The beginnings of that sentiment are found in this preface.

[8]Hemingway included part of Fielding's preface to *Joseph Andrews* as the epigraph to *The Torrents of Spring*. It reads: "And perhaps there is one reason why a comic writer should of all others be at least excused for deviating from nature, since it may not be always so easy for a serious poet to meet with the great and admirable; but life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous" (iii).

[9]In his review of *Torrents,* Harry Hansen of the *New York World* characterized Anderson's fiction as "easy to parody. He is always repeating himself, both in his words and in his attitudes. He shows no change, no many-sidedness. He is always the dreamy, searching groper, watching the commonplace facts of life with a sort of boyish amazement on his face. His prose is slow and simple . . . His thoughts mature as slowly on paper as they mature slowly in the mind of the average plodding man."

[10] In his 7 December 1925 letter to Liveright, Hemingway added: "the massing of all those burbs on the cover, each one of which would have made, used singly, a valuable piece of publicity but which, grouped together as they were simply put the reader on the defensive" (*Letters* 435).

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HEMINGWAY'S NEGLECTED MASTERPIECE: "CROSS-COUNTRY SNOW"

DONALD A. DAIKER

Of Hemingway's seven Nick Adams stories in *In Our Time*, none has been so widely ignored as "Cross-Country Snow," the story of Nick's skiing in the Alps with his friend George and their discussing the pregnancy of Nick's partner Helen during a break at a Swiss inn. "Cross-Country Snow" has been so slighted that it is not the focus of a single essay in Jackson J. Benson's *New Critical Approaches to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (1990), although twenty-seven other stories are named by title in its table of contents. Nor did it qualify for inclusion in Susan F. Beegel's *Hemingway's Neglected Short Ficton: New Perspectives* (1989). Except for Joseph M. Flora, whose three excellent books on Hemingway's short stories constitute required reading, most commentators have accepted the verdict of Paul Smith that the story is "trivial," in part because it seems to Smith "manifestly offhand" and "hastily written" (84).

The critics who follow Smith tend to dismiss "Cross-Country Snow" with little more than a mention of its autobiographical associations and its connection to Hemingway's series of "marriage tales," his stories of conflicts between married or almost-married couples. In this essay I move beyond the story's biographical associations to offer a close reading of "Cross-Country Snow" in the context both of its unpublished manuscripts and of the collection *In Our Time*. My goal is to show that the story is an undisputed masterpiece—fully unified, brilliantly structured, highly significant, and one of Hemingway's best.

As in most Nick Adams stories, the first and last sentences of "Cross-Country Snow" are exceptionally important. Here is its beginning: "The funicular car bucked once more and then stopped" (143)[1]. It is instructive that the story many critics mistakenly believe to be about freedom[2] opens with its opposite: restriction. This initial

sense of restriction is reinforced through repetition in the story's second sentence: "It could not go further, the snow drifted solidly across the track." The third sentence underscores the reason the funicular car can go no further: "The gale scouring the exposed surface of the mountain had swept the snow surface into a wind-board crust." It is only after the story's first three sentences establish the conditions of restraint, the limitations upon freedom and choice, that Hemingway introduces Nick, who is "waxing his skis in the baggage car."

Although it is not clear at this point why we find Nick in the baggage car rather than a passenger car, we can infer that Nick is busy waxing his skis and then putting them on in anticipation that the funicular, which had bucked earlier, might soon come to a full, final stop. When it does, Nick is prepared for immediate action: "He jumped from the car sideways onto the hard wind-board, made a jump turn and crouching and trailing his sticks slipped in a rush down the slope" (143). Nick's skiing prowess here—the jump turn, the crouching posture, the trailing sticks—demonstrates that he is a competent professional. But what is equally important is what Nick does *not* do: he does not moan or complain or lament his bad luck in not reaching the top of the slope. He gets on with it.

Once on the slope, Nick sees his friend George skiing ahead of him. The two have evidently not exchanged a word—George seems not to have been in the baggage car with Nick—but the two friends apparently know each other so well that they anticipate each other's moves: George has jumped off the stopped funicular moments before Nick. In his opening five sentences Hemingway has subtly suggested several of the story's most important themes: the need to act in positive ways in the face of life's inevitable limitations, the necessity of professionalism, and the value of friendship. There follows one of the richest and most remarkable passages in all of Hemingway:

> The rush and the sudden swoop as he dropped down a steep undulation in the mountain side plucked Nick's mind out and left him only the wonderful flying, dropping sensation in his body. He rose to a slight up-run and then the snow seemed to drop out from under him as he went down, down, faster and faster in a rush down the last, long steep slope. Crouching so he was almost sitting back on his skis, trying to keep the center of gravity low, the snow driving like a sandstorm, he knew the pace was too much. But he held it. He would not let go and spill. Then a patch of soft snow, left in a hollow by the wind, spilled him and he went over and over in a clashing of skis,

> feeling like a shot rabbit, then stuck, his legs crossed, his skis sticking straight up and his nose and ears jammed full of snow. (143)

The passage begins with a moment of exhilaration, physical ecstasy, as Nick—his mind "plucked . . . out"—becomes pure body, pure sensation. Hemingway's description invites us to experience vicariously the wonderfully intense, if necessarily short-lived, pleasure of the downhill run; perhaps we have had a comparably ecstatic physical experience in white-water rafting, hang gliding, parasailing, sky-diving, mountain climbing, roller-coaster riding, or—even—orgasmic sex. Hemingway later in the story invites us to embrace Nick's statement that "[t]here's nothing really can touch skiing . . . . The way it feels when you first drop off on a long run." George agrees: "It's too swell to talk about" (145). Nick is echoing words Hemingway himself had earlier written for the *Toronto Star Weekly*: there is "no sensation in the world that can compare" with the "long, dropping, swooping, heart-plucking rush" down an Alpine slope (*Dateline* 422). The sheer unmitigated pleasure of skiing stands as an ultimate value in the story, and nothing that occurs later qualifies that pleasure or diminishes its value.

Like most activities that produce exhilarating moments, downhill skiing involves risks. For Nick and George it is particularly risky—and even dangerous—because the "wind-board" they encounter, as Hemingway wrote in a *Toronto Star Weekly* column, "is treacherous stuff to ski on. It is a hard layer of snow that lies precariously on the main field" (*Dateline* 453). But downhill skiing is always risky because you are not in full control of what happens; when Nick jumped from the funicular, he immediately "slipped" down the slope. As he gains more and more speed, suggested by the repetition of "down" and "faster" and by the series of free modifiers, two participles followed by an absolute, control becomes increasingly harder to maintain. "But he held it." This short simple sentence, the shortest thus far in the story, shows Nick's determination not to lose control. "He would not let go and spill." Nick does not let go, but he spills anyway—a sure sign that external forces sometimes triumph over even strong will. Nick spills not because he lacks determination or knowledge or skill but because of chance: he hits "a patch of soft snow, left in a hollow by the wind." The paragraph's closing cluster of free modifiers, two participles and three absolutes again points to the absence of full control.

But it is not Nick's fall but his reaction to it that tells us most about Nick—and about Hemingway's values. The carefully selected details of Nick's spill—the tumbling "over and over," the clashing of skis, the comparison to a shot rabbit, the snow jamming his nose and ears—all tell us that Nick's fall has been excruciatingly painful. But Nick, now fully in control, does not allow himself to register the pain. Like his older self in "Big Two-Hearted River," he is able to "choke" (169) his mind to prevent it from dwelling on the pain he has suffered. Nor does he bemoan his bad luck in encountering the patch of soft snow. Even while lying flat on his back, he dismisses the painful fall by looking ahead: "What's it like over the khud?" he asks George.

As Nick stands up and skis past George toward the final slope, Hemingway refers to him for the first and only time in the story by his full name: "Nick Adams." In both the story's typescript manuscript (#344) and its second typescript (#346), Hemingway had three times earlier called the story's protagonist by his last name only—"Adams." But perhaps realizing the greater appropriateness of first names in a story focusing on friendship and relationships—we never know George's last name—Hemingway changed all three of these early references from "Adams" to "Nick." By the same token, Hemingway substitutes the warmer and more personal George "called to Nick" for the more distant and impersonal George "called at Adams" (344,1). The significance of the full "Nick Adams" is that by this point in the story Hemingway has already firmly established Nick's identity: he is an accomplished skier, a competent professional, a good friend, and a man who accepts with grace and without complaint the natural conditions and restraints—the wind-board crust and the soft snow along with the accompanying risks and pains—of life's endeavors in order to experience its most intense pleasures.

"Cross-Country Snow" makes clear that another keen source of pleasure for Nick is his mutual and noncompetitive friendship with George. Once they arrive at an inn, Nick dominates, but on the slopes Nick follows George's lead. It is George who comments on the soft snow and who suggests that Nick go first down the next hill. George knows more about skiing in the Alps, so he advises Nick to "keep to your left. It's a good fast drop with a Christy at the bottom on account of a fence" (143). Nick closely follows George's sound advice, holding to his left and then executing a Christy that brings him parallel to

the fence. Nick's descent of the first hill is exhilarating, but George's descent of the second is a thing of heart-thumping beauty:

> He looked up the hill. George was coming down in telemark position, kneeling; one leg forward and bent, the other trailing; his sticks hanging like some insect's thin legs, kicking up puffs of snow as they touched the surface and finally the whole kneeling, trailing figure coming around in a beautiful right curve, crouching, the legs shot forward and back, the body leaning out against the swing, the sticks accenting the curve like points of light, all in a wild cloud of snow. (144)

Exhilaration, excitement, and beauty, all creating "points of light": this is what Nick and George experience together.

Unlike the adolescent boastfulness and competitiveness of Nick and Bill in "The Three-Day Blow," George and Nick relate to each other comfortably and noncompetitively. George compliments Nick—"You made a beauty"—and Nick acknowledges that he cannot do what George did: "I can't telemark with my leg." Later, they "slapped the snow off each other's trousers" (144). The downhill-skiing segment of the story ends with another clear sign of the mutuality of their friendship: "Nick held down the top strand of the wire fence with his ski and George slid over" (144). With this third reference to a "fence," the segment also ends on the same note it began: the presence of limitations and restraints. Even on the slopes, boundaries must be acknowledged and observed. Alpine skiing is not the place of unbridled freedom and irresponsibility, nor, as some commentators would have it, is "Cross-Country Snow" a celebration or condemnation of youthful freedom.

As Nick follows George in cross-country skiing to a Swiss inn, it becomes clear—although no commentator I've read has mentioned this—that Nick and George have been the only two skiers on the slopes. No one else is there. Unlike the "seemingly endless stream" of skiers that dot the same hills in Hemingway's 1923 *Toronto Star* Weekly article, "Christmas on the Roof of the World" (*Dateline* 422), Nick and George are alone and by themselves. Now we understand why Nick had earlier been sitting in the baggage car: with no skiers on the funicular except George and Nick, and therefore no skis to hold, the baggage car is empty and thus available for Nick's waxing his skis and readying himself to jump off at a moment's notice.

Why are the slopes deserted? Apparently because of the severe weather. Not only is it "very cold" (147) but there is a "gale scouring" the mountain with the snow "driving like a sand-storm" (143). It is what Hemingway, looking back on a like occasion, called a "Gawd awful storm and blizzard" (*Selected Letters* 84). Evidently the cold and the wind and the driving snow have deterred all other would-be skiers. So it is a sign of their hardiness and courage and resolve that George and Nick chose to hit the slopes when others shied away. Their skiing under such adverse conditions makes it less like the relaxed fishing of Jake and Bill on the Irati River in *The Sun Also Rises* and more like the challenges Nick faces in "Big Two-Hearted River." When Nick and George begin their cross-country trek to the inn, Hemingway pays them the supreme compliment of referring to them as "the skiers" (144), his first use of a plural personal noun in the story. Just as Nick Adams has earned his full name, just as Nick's father in "Indian Camp" earns the title of "the doctor" only after he has prepared himself to perform "a Caesarian with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered gut leaders" (69), so George and Nick earn the title of "the skiers" because of their professional skills, courage, and resilient attitude: their ability to slough off disappointment and pain.

As Nick and George ski cross-country from the slopes to the inn, they encounter the first sign of the presence of others: "The road became polished ice, stained orange and a tobacco yellow from the teams hauling logs" (144). At the inn they see some of the Swiss workers who produce and transport those logs, "a gang of woodcutters" who drink wine, smoke, and rest quietly—and who offer a sharp contrast to Nick and George. Whereas Nick and George arrive by ski, the workers come by "wood sledges" pulled by teams of horses. Whereas Nick and George drink wine by the bottle, the workers get theirs by the liter. Whereas Nick and George talk with each other, the workers sit quietly at their tables. And whereas Nick and George can stay almost as long as they please, the workers are reminded that they must return to work by the "occasional sharp jangle of bells" as the horses outside toss their heads.

It is a mistake to think that these contrasts are meant to criticize Nick and George, that the presence of the Swiss woodcutters somehow constitutes an indictment of George and Nick for enjoying what Richard Hovey mislabels "the irresponsible happiness of a skiing holiday" (14). Instead, the Swiss woodcutters "symbolize the world

of work and responsibility" (Flora, *Study,* 43) that Nick and George recognize and acknowledge, the world to which, following this final day of skiing, both men will immediately return—George back to school and Nick back to the United States with Helen. Nick and George are acutely aware of this practical world of duty and responsibility, honoring it through their careful attention to detail when the woodcutters enter the inn, "stamping their boots and steaming in the room" and then sitting "smoking and quiet, with their hats off." It is at this precise moment that Hemingway tells us that "George and Nick were happy. They were fond of each other. They knew they had the run back home ahead of them" (145). Their happiness comes from enjoying each other's company and anticipating the cross-country skiing to come even as they acknowledge, through their continuing attention to the woodcutters—they know exactly when the woodcutters "got up and paid and went out"—that their skiing trip will end soon. The jangling bells and tossing heads of the horses outside the inn call both the woodcutters and the skiers back to the world of responsibility and work.

Soon after their arrival at the inn, Hemingway, who had once earlier called Nick and George "[t]he skiers," refers to them, again just once, as "[t]he boys" (144), prompting several critics to suggest that the term implies not only their youth but their immaturity. "The description of the Alpine skiing enjoyed by Nick and George is boyish in its delight; and the dialogues with its 'Gee's' is kiddish," Hovey writes (14). But like his predecssors Mark Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Sherwood Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio*, especially in "Sophistication," Hemingway believed that the youthful perspective need not imply naïveté or immaturity. "Gee" was one of the young Hemingway's favorite expressions, almost always evincing happiness or excited anticipation. "Gee I wish I were with you" (SL 73), Hemingway wrote to his wife Hadley in Paris when he was on assignment in Lausanne, Switzerland. Nick and George each say "Gee" only once, and it is when they excitedly imagine traveling throughout Europe together.

Hemingway's revisions of his earliest draft of "Cross-Country Snow" follow a clear pattern in relation to dialogue: he makes George's speech less boyish and more adult. He does so by eliminating several instances of George's profanity. The "damn" soft snow becomes the "lousy" soft snow (#344, 1), the "damn sharp Christy" becomes simply the "Christy" (#344, 2), and "goddamn" is softened

to "damn" (#344, 5). Hemingway also replaces three instances of slang with more formal and conventional language. George's "you've gotta keep to your left" is replaced by "got to," and "Gotta get educated" becomes "I got to get educated." Hemingway systematically revised George's utterances by inserting a subject when one was missing. Thus "Got to get the ten-forty from Montreux" becomes "I've got to" (#344, 5), and "Might as well carry 'em up here" is changed to "We might as well carry them up here" (#344, 2, 3). The change from "'em" to "them" in this last example typifies Hemingway's efforts to make George sound less juvenile and more adult. He does the same for Nick at one point as well, replacing the slangy "Yeah" with "Yes" (#344, 5). Hemingway tries to make sure that his readers do not dismiss either George or Nick as immature.

But their maturity is most persuasively demonstrated at the inn through what they do—especially in the quality of their friendship. As George assumed leadership on the slopes—jumping first from the funicular, leading the way down the first hill, advising Nick how to take the second hill, requesting that Nick go first, and then showing him the way to the inn—so Nick quietly takes charge once they arrive there. It is Nick who orders Sion wine after first checking with George, and it is Nick who helps when the waitress has trouble with the cork. Nick now becomes the teacher that George had been on the slopes: "Those specks of cork in it don't matter," Nick tells him (145). Of course it doesn't take a wine connoisseur to know that specks of cork do in fact matter: they discolor the wine and they impair its taste. Nick's point to George is that you cannot permit the cork specks to matter; you cannot allow them to diminish your enjoyment, especially since there's nothing to be done about them. Bemoaning their presence makes no more sense than getting upset about soft snow or a stalled funicular. Perhaps Nick had learned this lesson from his father, Dr. Adams, in "Indian Camp," the first Nick Adams story in *In Our Time*. When young Nick asks his father to administer anesthesia to a woman screaming in labor, Dr. Adams replies that he has no anesthetic but that "her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important" (68). The doctor cannot allow himself to "hear" her screams—he cannot let them "matter"—because to do so might distract his attention, unsteady his hands, botch the operation, and further endanger the woman's life.

The maturity of Nick and George, as well as the quality of their friendship, is again illustrated when Nick asks, "Should we have

another bottle?" of wine and George declines (146). Then after a silent moment, George asks Nick if Helen is going to have a baby. But that's not the way it happens in a three-page manuscript fragment that Hemingway considered adding to his story and then rejected (#345). In the rejected fragment, Nick does not simply ask George if they should order a second bottle of wine. He pushes it: "Let's have another bottle." When George demurs with "I don't know," Nick responds with a superior, belittling "Come on. It won't hurt you" (#345, 6). Nick's condescending tone recalls his competitive relationship to Bill in "The Three-Day Blow," where Nick resolves "Bill was not going to get him drunk before he himself was drunk" (89). That Hemingway chose not to incorporate the manuscript fragment into his story may be a sign that he did not want to undermine the mutuality he had established between the friends nor did he want to suggest, through Nick's juvenile comment or George's eventual acquiescense, the immaturity of either.

Perhaps because Nick and George had earlier shared dreams of skiing other Alpine slopes and traveling through "swell places" (145) like the Schwartzwald and perhaps even more because Nick does not insist that George join him for a second bottle of wine, George now feels equal to asking Nick a series of very personal questions:

> "Is Helen going to have a baby?" George said, coming down to the table from the wall.
> "Yes."
> "When?"
> "Late next summer."
> "Are you glad?"
> "Yes. Now."
> "Will you go back to the States?"
> "I guess so."
> "Do you want to?"
> "No."
> "Does Helen?"
> "No." (146)

This conversation between these two good friends is one of the most frank and open in all of Hemingway. To understand its openness and the quality of friendship it bespeaks we need only compare it with similar instances in "The Three-Day Blow," written a month earlier.

When Bill raises the issue of Nick's having broken up with Marjorie—significantly not by asking questions like George but by making assertions—Nick responds, not as he does to George with candor and honesty, but first by saying "nothing" and then "nothing" and then by nodding and then by sitting quietly and then again by saying "nothing" until he surrenders with "Let's have another drink" and then "Let's get drunk" (90-91). Nick is both more comfortable and more forthcoming in answering George's questions; the period in "Yes. Now" frankly acknowledges that it had taken Nick some time to accept his partner's pregnancy. Nick is completely honest with George, helping him understand the edge to Nick's earlier comment about the pregnant waitress, "Hell, no girls get married around here till they're knocked up" (145).

Nick's revelations, especially the news that neither he nor Helen want to leave Europe, touch George deeply:

> George sat silent. He looked at the empty bottle and the empty glasses.
>
> "It's hell, isn't it?" he said.
>
> "No. Not exactly," Nick said.
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "I don't know," Nick said. (146)

Empathizing with his friend, George takes the "empty" bottle and glasses as a sign that Nick's future life will be one of deprivation, even a "hell." But Nick kindly, gently, yet firmly dispels that notion: "No. Not exactly." In saying "I don't know" and then repeating that exact phrase two sentences later, Nick distances himself from Hemingway people, often juveniles, whose certainties mark them as dead wrong. No one is more certain and few are more mistaken than Bill in "The Three-Day Blow," who believes that "Once a man's married he's absolutely bitched. . . . He hasn't got anything more. Nothing. Not a damn thing. He's done for" (90). The same certainty—and wild exaggeration—characterizes Luz in "A Very Short Story" who "expected, absolutely unexpectedly" to be married to an Italian major in the spring but never marries him at all (108). Here is still another lesson Nick has apparently learned from his father, who tells his son in "Indian Camp," "I don't know, Nick" (69) and then offers tentative, conditional answers to Nick's ensuing questions. As Flora has observed, Nick "is learning to accept the uncertainties" of life (*Nick Adams* 196).

Nick and George have also learned that the world sometimes frustrates our hopes and disappoints our expectations. Both men agree that the mountains in the United States are too rocky, too timbered, and too distant for good skiing:

> "Yes," said George, "that's the way it is in California."
>
> "Yes," Nick said, "that's the way it is everywhere I've ever been."
>
> "Yes," said George, "that's the way it is."
>
> The Swiss got up and paid and went out.
>
> "I wish we were Swiss," George said.
>
> "They've all got goiter," said Nick.
>
> "I don't believe it," George said.
>
> "Neither do I," said Nick.
>
> They laughed. (146)

The three consecutive utterances beginning with "Yes" make clear that Nick and George share essentially the same philosophy of life: this world is not designed to accommodate human wishes or to effect human happiness, a philosophy which means that it makes little sense to turn bitter or resentful in the face of specks of cork, soft snow, a bucking funicular, or an unexpected pregnancy. It also means that the rare moments of unmitigated pleasure out on the slopes or inside with friends are to be savored and cherished. When the Swiss woodcutters that Nick and George have been closely observing get up and leave, George momentarily indulges in fantasy—"I wish we were Swiss"—a statement that lends credence to George's being younger than Nick and casts Nick once again in the role of George's teacher. Nick punctures George's fantasy not through direct refutation but through a statement that matches George's in its unreality: "They've all got goiter." Although the Swiss were known for their susceptibility to goiter, Nick knows, and George recognizes, that his blanket statement including "all" Swiss is foolish, intentionally comical. "They laughed" is one of the most important paragraphs in the story: after

a frank discussion of sensitive issues Nick and George come together in shared laughter.

Their warm friendship prompts George to become a little sentimental: "Maybe we'll never go skiing again, Nick" (146). When Nick responds twice with a positive "We've got to," George makes his third and final wish of the story: "I wish we could make a promise about it" (147). Like his earlier wishes that he and Nick "could just bum together" and that he and Nick "were Swiss," George's third wish is unrealistic—and Nick knows it. But Nick does not immediately challenge George. First he "stood up"—exactly as he "stood up" (143) when he had spilled on the slopes—then he buckled his jacket, picked up his ski poles, and stuck one pole into the floor to punctuate the story's final spoken words, a lucid statement of Nick's—and Hemingway's—mature philosophy: "There isn't any good in promising." Nick has learned from experiencing falls on and off the slopes that life is unpredictable: babies are not born as they should, some fathers commit suicide and others cannot answer your questions, love sometimes just goes "to hell inside" (81) you, a "friendly" brakeman tosses you off a moving train (97), a "friendly" ex-boxer threatens you with "a beating" (102), you get shot in the spine during a military offensive that is "going well" (105), and the woman you love and plan to marry sleeps with an Italian major and tells you that yours "had been only a boy and girl affair" (108). In the face of life's uncertainties and unpredictabilities, there can hardly be any "good" in promising.

As the skiers leave the inn, George assumes the lead as he had earlier on the slopes: "George was already started up the road, his skis on his shoulder" (147). The story's final line is its most important: "Now they would have the run home together." In this culminating sentence, which remained unchanged from typescript/manuscript (#344) through typescript (#346) to publication, Hemingway unites the central themes of his story. Its emphasis, as it should be, is on the present, the "Now." George may have to "get the ten-forty from Montreux" (144) to return to school and Nick may have to return to the States with Helen, but these future responsibilities will not be allowed to interfere with the pleasures of the moment. Appropriately, a story that celebrates friendship through the warm and affectionate relationship between Nick and George, two men who are "fond of each other" (145), ends with the word "together."

But the word "home" may be equally significant, as it is throughout *In Our Time*, especially in "Big Two-Hearted River," the final and climactic Nick Adams story in that volume. The key passage occurs after Nick has hiked through "burned-over country" (163) to his camp site and erected a tent:

> Inside the tent the light came through the brown canvas. It smelled pleasantly of canvas. Already there was something mysterious and homelike. Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day. This was different though. Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it. Now he was hungry. (167)

Home for Nick is the "good place." It's where you can be "settled." It's where you can be "happy." That's why "Now they would have the run *home* (my italic) together" is so important to "Cross-Country Snow." Wherever Nick and George are skiing together at the end of the story, to a Swiss pension or chalet or even hotel, it is the "home" that they have "made," however temporary that home may be. For Nick and Hemingway, then, home is not necessarily a stable location; it may not even be a place at all. It is an enclave, an oasis protected from the things that can "touch" you, what Hemingway almost ten years later would call "A Clean Well-Lighted Place." Thus "Cross-Country Snow" and "Big Two-Hearted River," the final two Nick Adams stories in *In Our Time*, each end on a note of optimism and affirmation as Nick looks ahead excitedly: he has the run home together with George in the first story and "plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (180) in the second.

As "Cross-Country Snow" concludes, we are now better able to appreciate the significance of the story's opening sentence: "The funicular car bucked once more and then stopped" (143). Hemingway himself had ridden on a funicular at least once, and he obviously knew something about its workings. Unlike a simple ski lift, a funicular—also known as an incline or funicular railway—operates on the principle of counterweight or counterbalance. Using cables and pulleys, two cars are attached to each other so that as one car goes down an incline, it helps pull the other car up a second, parallel set of tracks. That is, the descending and ascending vehicles are

complementary: they counterbalance each other. The car descending the slope minimizes the energy needed to lift the ascending car. It is this principle of the counterbalancing of opposites that, as Barbara Sanders has observed, helps structure "Cross-Country Snow." The counterbalancing forces within the story are the excitement of alpine and cross-country skiing and the social pleasures of drinking and eating on the one hand and the responsibilities and obligations of parenthood and schooling on the other. What makes the funicular the perfect metaphor for the competing claims of pleasure and responsibility is that the funicular cars are *attached together* by a cable. Thus there is of necessity a give-and-take, a reciprocating relationship between the opposing forces. The story suggests, then, that it is the looming obligations of parenthood—necessitating Nick's and Helen's return from Europe to the States—which enhance and perhaps even make possible the intense pleasures of the slopes and the inn. Moreover, the funicular cars are *permanently* attached to each other, suggesting that the competing yet reciprocating claims of excitement and pleasure versus responsibility and duty may be ongoing throughout a lifetime, each enabling and enriching the other.

When in the final sentence of the story Nick looks forward to the "run home together," Hemingway brilliantly merges the complementary opposites. The cross-country skiing with his good friend George resumes the physical and emotional pleasures the two men had enjoyed first on two slopes and then in their earlier "run" to the inn. But the word "home" evokes the responsibilities of parenthood because Helen, who is expecting their first child "[l]ate next summer," will apparently be waiting when Nick and George arrive at their pension. Just as Hadley Hemingway had accompanied her husband to Chamby sur Montreux the winter before the couple flew from Paris to Toronto to take advantage of superior North American medical facilities, so Helen, too, is in Europe with Nick and, like him, would rather not leave. Thus "the run home together" unites the pleasures of skiing with the responsibilities of parenthood.

Sherwood Anderson's "Sophistication," the wistful climactic chapter of *Winesburg, Ohio*, involves another "Helen," another "George," and another slope. Here is its wonderful final paragraph:

> It was so they went down the hill. In the darkness they played like two splendid young things in a young world. Once, running swiftly forward,Helen tripped George and he fell. He squirmed and shouted.

> Shaking with laughter, he rolled down the hill. Helen ran after him. For just a moment she stopped in the darkness. There was no way of knowing what woman's thoughts went through her mind but, when the bottom of the hill was reached and she came up to the boy, she took his arm and walked beside him in dignified silence. For some reason they could not have explained they had both got from their silent evening together the thing needed. Man or boy, woman or girl, they had for a moment taken hold of the thing that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible. (242-243)

In "Sophistication," as in "Cross-Country Snow," growth and maturity depend upon our capacity to play, to get excited, to laugh, to get tripped up and fall and then get up again, to reach out and take hold of others, to delight in physical and even childlike pleasures—to become like Nick and George alone on the whitened wind-swept Alpine slopes "splendid young things in a young world." By the end of "Cross-Country Snow" Nick has achieved what Flora calls his "new maturity" (*Nick Adams* 198), and together with his young friend George he is happily and responsibly headed homeward.

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NOTES

[1]All page references to "Cross-Country Snow" and to Hemingway's other published short stories are to *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* and are included parenthetically.

[2]Stephen Cooper writes that the "ski run that opens this story epitomizes the exhilaration of freedom" (25). But Flora recognizes that the skiing represents other than freedom, serving Hemingway "in a complex way," including as "a tremendous challenge" (*Nick Adams* 191).

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"IT'S NOT POLITE TO TALK ABOUT YOURSELF": REGIONAL IDENTITY AND ERASURE IN THE MIDWEST FROM F. SCOTT FITZGERALD TO *MAD MEN*

OWEN CANTRELL

In the season four premiere of *Mad Men*, ad executive Don Draper is being interviewed by *Advertising Age* for a feature story ("Public Relations"). The interviewer begins by asking Don the ominous question, "Who is Don Draper?" Long-time viewers of the show know this question is more complicated than it seems, since much of Don's past has been shrouded in secrecy. He attempts to avoid the direct question by responding, "What do men say when you ask that?" The interviewer summarizes the mixture of false humility and bravado with which interviewees conventionally reply. In response, Don states, "I'm from the Midwest. We were taught it's not polite to talk about yourself."

While this scene is part of the central drama of the show on Don's past, his attempt at obfuscation by proclaiming his Midwestern heritage speaks to larger cultural connotations of the Midwest as a real and imagined space. In this essay, I will take this scene as representative of the duality of popular depictions of Midwestern identity. While on the one hand the Midwest is seen as the location of definitive American identity (as Don's all-American humility is meant to convey to the interviewer), the region is characterized by erasure, or cipher, which invites national affiliation at the expense of individual or regional identity. Additionally, the inhabitants of the Midwest are complicit in their own erasure since the ambitious creation of the self often involves disavowal of Midwestern origins. Because of this erasure of (regional) identity, the Midwest is a representative rather than a distinctive region in popular imagination. In asserting the duality of Midwestern identity, I will discuss F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Gatsby cluster" from 1922-1926, as well as *The Great Gatsby* as representative of the erasure and ambition that make up the representation of

Midwest. Furthermore, I will analyze the more recent depiction of the Midwest in the character of Don Draper in *Mad Men* as an extension of the character of Jay Gatsby taken to its logical conclusion.

I argue that analyses of these specific instances of Midwestern representation and erasure can help generate a theory of distinctive Midwestern literature and culture that accounts for popular representations of the Midwest as *both stereotypical and integral* to the creation of Midwestern culture. While some critics and historians such as Jon Lauck argue that stereotypical depictions of the Midwest should be set aside in a favor of the real history of the region, I believe that stereotypical depictions of the Midwest are essential to understanding the cultural power that they have both within the region and throughout the nation. To create a theory of Midwestern literature and culture is not just to uncover the historical truth beyond stereotypical representation; it is rather to understand that stereotypical representation is essential to the way in which historical truth is shaped within cultural depictions of the region. This essay will move through three primary sections in making the case for a theory of Midwestern culture. First, I will discuss some of the historical and cultural reasons for the contradiction between representations of regional identity and erasure in the Midwest. This contradiction is due in part to the lack of nationally formative events in Midwestern history, as well the affiliation between region and nation in depictions of the Midwest. Second, I describe the characters of Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway, as well as their ancestors Dexter Green from "Winter Dreams" and Rudolph Miller from "Absolution," as representatives of the desire to locate ambition and success within the Midwest while also representing the region as incapable of realizing that ambition. Finally, I read Don Draper's tortuous concealments in *Mad Men* as an extension of the contradictions that shape Jay Gatsby, especially regarding the central absence that makes up his character and the manipulation of cultural desire to fill in that absence. While this discussion will be by no means exhaustive in scope, it introduces the contradictions of Midwestern identity that point towards a theory of regional identity that is at once distinctive and contingent upon the cultural history of representation of the Midwest.

"A STORY OF THE WEST, AFTER ALL": THE MIDWEST IN THE CULTURAL IMAGINATION

In its true historical outlines, the American Midwest has largely remained an unexamined region of the country in the popular imagination. Despite the importance of the Northwest Territory in early debates on slavery, as well as the centrality of the region during the War of 1812, the Midwest has largely been a representative rather than a distinctive region. Midwest historian Andrew L. Cayton writes that the popular narratives of the Midwest are "the image of the Midwest as a land of normalcy and niceness" (141), coupled with the supposed lack of "consciously examined lives" of most Midwesterners" (143). The Midwest is also thought to be the home of "real America," of conservative cultural and social values, and the reified importance of family, God, and country. While this conception is largely fictional, the myth of the idealized Midwest remains operational within American culture. For many historians, including Jon Lauck, the corrective to the popular image of the idealized Midwest is to focus on the historical importance of events in the region. He calls for an end to the neglect of Midwestern history as a mode of recovering this undiscovered land. For other critics, including Mark Bueschel, the key to recovering the cultural location of the Midwest, is to focus on the regional engagement with the pastoral landscape of the Midwest since, as James Shortridge argues, the Midwestern ideal has been personified by a "close and continuing association between Middle-western identity and the concept of pastoralism" (1). This pastoral fantasy extends from its landscape to its inhabitants, who are often depicted as ideal American types because of the close identification of region and nation in the Midwest. Cayton argues that during the nineteenth century the Midwest was seen "as an exemplar of an emerging national culture, as a place committed to progress, education, and pietistic morality, as a society defined by the exclusion of Indians and African Americans, established churches and chattel slavery" (157). The association of the Midwest with national culture became the identity that people both inside and outside of the Midwest took as the reality of the region. This conflation of regional with national identity also led Midwesterners themselves to think of the region as representative rather than distinctive. As opposed to conceptions of distinctiveness in other defined regions of the United States (West, South, and East),

the Midwest was unable to "take pride in being the particular rather than the universal" (Cayton 158). In other words, since the Midwest was the shining example of representational national virtue, instead of regional distinctiveness, Midwestern uniqueness was flattened underneath national affiliation.

With the advent of modernism, the Midwest came to the forefront of national literary culture. American authors, starting with Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* in 1871, began to talk about the Midwest as a place and an idea. Many prominent authors in American letters, such as Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, were originally from the region. Ford Madox Ford, for example, felt that "Middle Westishness" "governed much of the writing of the time" (Kosiba 11). In fiction about the Midwest during this time, the affiliation of nation and region increasingly became a central conceit. Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* was a prime example.

Main Street appeared to be a social satire targeting the provincial attitudes of the Midwestern town of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, which was guilty of the Midwestern regional sins of "materialism, provincialism, spiritual poverty, and hypocrisy" (Vasta 50). However, contrasting reactions to *Main Street* indicate contradictory positions over the national meaning of the Midwest. While H.L. Mencken thought the novel a great critique of Midwestern boosterism, Kansas newspaper editor William Allen White thought the novel a paean to "small-town America" and "thanked Lewis for the characters of Sam Cark and Will Kennicott, whom he called the 'Gold Dust Twin of common sense'" (qtd in Bruccoli *Main Street* vi). Critic Carl Van Doren took the novel as an example of the "revolt from the village" literature, which rejected the limited social norms of small-town American life, as part of the modernist project of decentralizing formally hegemonic institutions (Tilley 44). While both realist and satiric impulses were reasons for the popularity of the novel, the larger national implications and critiques of the novel were overlooked; what Lewis was critiquing about the Midwest remained in the Midwest (Cohen 6). In popular representations of the Midwest, it was easy for Americans to see themselves, but only in those values they favored. The provincial nature of the Midwest was unique to the region; consequently, Lewis's critique of Gopher Prairie did not translate into a national critique.

While many Americans could see themselves in nationalized depictions of the region while rejecting Midwestern provincialism, for Midwesterners themselves, the only way to deal with the alienation that came with the criticisms of modernism was to turn inward, since the region was defined (and defined itself) as being representational of national values. In the Midwest, "residents can find no one to blame for their happiness and unhappiness but themselves . . . the most important 'other' in their lives is themselves" (Cayton 158). Any virtues of the Midwest are affiliated with national virtues; any vices of the Midwest are uniquely regional failings. This is particularly evident in the lives of the citizens of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Their quiet lost lives are largely a battle against internal social norms. Cayton offers that this "internalization of conflict" or perhaps the "repression of identity" may be at the heart of Midwestern culture (158). Additionally, this internalization of conflict is coupled with the "conspicuous efforts of many of its white, middle-class citizens to render themselves inconspicuous" (Cayton 159). The willful desire to erase oneself from discourse, coupled with the internalization of the dissonance between individual desires, regional possibilities, and national affiliation, creates the gap in the Midwestern identity that perpetuates the idealization of the Midwest as a distinct region and the erasure of the region as a real, unique place in the American imagination. Unlike the regional pride associated with the East, the West, or the South, the Midwestern subject represses and erases regional and individual distinctiveness from speech; thus, the story of the Midwest is also largely a story of silence. Investigating what that silence means and conceals is one of the biggest problems facing scholars of Midwestern literature and culture. This erasure and concealment of regional identity are essential to F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Gatsby cluster," as well as to the novel itself. In the case of the Midwestern characters of Gatsby and Carraway, this erasure is also constitutive of their identities; without the erasure and repression of the regional self, *The Great Gatsby*, the perennial candidate for Great American Novel, would hardly be possible.

"MY MIDDLE WEST": THE TWO MIDWESTS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Barry Gross argues that, for Fitzgerald, "there were two Midwests—the secure and stable country of Basil Duke Lee and Nick Carraway and Amory Blaine, [and] the narrow and constricted coun-

try of Rudolph Miller and Dexter Green and Jimmy Gatz" (126). These two visions of the Midwest are brought together in *The Great Gatsby*, despite taking place in New York. Furthermore, Ronald Berman argues that Fitzgerald's stories are often placed within the quadrants of North, South, East and West (111). The hustling, bustling East is contrasted to the more conventionally paced West; the industrious North is contrasted to the rural South. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald asserts that this tale of New York City is also, at heart, "a story of the West" (184). This tale, even though nominally taking place in the East, is best interpreted through the Midwestern character of its primary protagonists, Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway. In the character of Gatsby, Fitzgerald brings together two principal representations of the region: the striving, ambitious man of the Midwest, and the erasure of regional and individual identity to achieve this ambition: the man without a past. Furthermore, as Nick points out, it is his and Gatsby's Western nature that makes them unable to adapt to life in the East. Fitzgerald's novel offers an illustrative example of the duality of Midwestern identity in detailing the erasure of distinctiveness, national ambition, regional failings, and pastoral fantasy pervasive in Midwestern cultural representations.

While *The Great Gatsby* has conventionally been the focal point for Fitzgerald criticism (Breyer 213), recent work has refocused attention on his previously neglected short stories (Mangum 67). Despite Fitzgerald's claims of the inferiority of his short stories, recent scholarship has engaged with the stories as a mode of testing the dominant themes of his novels (67). When writing the initial drafts of *The Great Gatsby*, which included a plan for a novel set in the Midwest in the nineteenth century, Fitzgerald produced a number of short stories now known as the "Gatsby cluster": "Winter Dreams," "Absolution," "The Rich Boy," and "The Sensible Thing" (Bruccoli *Epic Grandeur* 185). While these stories provided a testing ground for the eventual evolution of shared themes in *The Great Gatsby*, they also stand as exemplary artistic creations in their own right. Two of the tales, "Absolution" and "Winter Dreams," dramatize the Midwestern origins of the eventual character of Gatsby. However, while the evolution of Gatsby as traced throughout these tales is important in its own right, the centrality of the Midwest in the stories gives us a fuller portrait of what constituted Fitzgerald's Midwest.

Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1896, but the years he spent in the Midwest were relatively few: seven years before the

age of twenty-six and only two years as an adult (Gross 113). Thus, most of his stories that take place in the physical Midwest are tales of childhood that emphasize the impact of a Midwestern boyhood on its main characters. His own Midwestern boyhood was spent as "a (relatively) poor boy in a rich boy's world" (Hampl xvi). Despite attending the prestigious St. Paul Academy, Fitzgerald felt the injuries of class while living in Minnesota. He found the inherited wealth of his classmates the cause of their great complacency. Upon selling *This Side of Paradise* in 1922, which gave him the money to marry Zelda, Fitzgerald believed in some sense that "the claws of class don't clutch him anymore" (Hampl xv). His early success inspired his own dreams, of which "getting out (and of course up) is perhaps the deepest of all midwestern dreams" (xix). "Absolution," and "Winter Dreams" draw together the themes of complacency of the region, coupled with the ambitious young man on the make. The loss that comes with the ambitious young man's rejection of the region, as Fitzgerald did in characterizing St. Paul as "all ice and insult," is one felt strongly by Dexter Green in "Winter Dreams" (Hampl ix). In "Absolution," however, Midwestern boyhood remains stifling in its utter familiarity and complacency.

"Absolution" was written in June of 1923 and has a clear evolutionary relationship to the character of Gatsby. In fact, Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins that the story "was to have been the prologue of the novel, but it interfered with the neatness of the plan" (qtd. in Bruccoli "Absolution" 259). The story focuses on Rudolph Miller, a young boy of Ludwig, North Dakota, who arrives to confess his sins to Father Schwartz, a priest with "cold, watery eyes [who was] unable to attain a complete mystical union with our Lord" (259). Rudolph is an ambitious young boy; he tells Father Schwartz of his sin of pride since he thought he was "too good to be the son" of his parents (262). Furthermore, in contrast to his humble circumstances, Rudolph creates an alter ego, Blatchford Sarnemington, who "lived in great sweeping triumphs" (263). He experiences great exhilaration and personal dominance as Blatchford and feels a "suave nobility flowed from him" (263). However, he is also concerned with the ever-present eye of God and feels the "horror of his lie," namely the horror of his pride (263). Although Rudolph keeps a "corner of his mind where he was safe from God, where he prepared the subterfuges with which he often tricked God," he is also fearful that his sin of pride will be noticed and anger God (264). His ambition to strive

beyond the confines of his lineage and of his God drives Rudolph to confess his sins to Father Schwartz, since he hopes to maintain the hidden corner of his mind while still maintaining outward faith and allegiance to God as an authority.

Carl Miller, Rudolph's father, is an intensely religious man of two faiths: "the Roman Catholic Church and his mystical worship of the empire builder, James J. Hill" (264). Hill, railroad executive to the Upper Midwest, symbolizes the drive to succeed and to have control of one's life, as opposed to Carl Miller, who "had never in his life felt the balance of any single thing in his hands" (264). Miller observes his son's religious failures and attempts to instill the boy with materialist faith through Rudolph's "Alger books" (265). After he disappoints his father with his irreligious behavior, Rudolph goes to Father Schwartz, expecting a fitting denunciation of his heathen behavior. Instead, he finds Schwartz in ecstasy over the material world. Schwartz tells Rudolph that, "my theory is that when a whole lot of people get together in the best places things go glimmering all the time" (270). Rudolph, both terrified and enraptured, finds "his own inner convictions were confirmed. There was something ineffably gorgeous somewhere that had nothing to do with God" (271). The faith of his father had been confirmed as well: not his Catholic faith, but his faith in men like James J. Hill and in the potentially limitless possibilities of life. However, Schwartz warns him to look at the spectacle of life from a distance because "if you do [get close] you'll only feel the heat and the sweat and the life" (271). The dinginess of North Dakota and the "blonde Northern girls and the tall young men from the farms lying out beside the wheat, under the moon" lack the gorgeousness of the possibilities elsewhere, possibilities that have "nothing to do with God" (272). Only a vague glimpse at this other, better, richer life will show the possibilities of life. To look too closely will show the brute physical reality of this vision. Rudolph presumably goes out into the night with a warning about the dangers of a close analysis of this mirage of possibilities; however, his likely evolution into Gatsby questions whether or not he heeds Schwartz's warning.

"Winter Dreams" tells the story of another poor Midwestern boy, Dexter Green, from Black Bear Village, Minnesota. An ambitious caddy at the Sherry Island Golf Club, Dexter is consumed by his "winter dreams" and "wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves"

(39). Dexter becomes rich running a series of successful laundries; however, he remains uncomfortable with his wealth. When he returns to the Sherry Island Golf Club as a patron, Dexter "did not consider it necessary to remark that he had once carried Mr. Hart's bag over this same links" but he still watches the caddies, "trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past" (40). Even when courting Judy Jones, Dexter observes the difference between himself and Judy's other suitors. He recognizes he is "newer and stronger" than them, but hoped his children could grow up to be like them, since "he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang" (44). Dexter's continual striving after Judy Jones is symptomatic of his desire to own the "glittering things themselves"; Judy is beautiful and rich, but hopelessly unavailable. Years later, after abandoning his quest after Judy and becoming phenomenally rich in New York, he again encounters her spectre. Devlin, one of Dexter's business associates, has recently returned from Minnesota, where he found Judy Jones Simms, a faded version of her former self, now married to a drunkard. Dexter sees his winter dreams gone, "left behind in the country of illusions, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished" (59). Dexter ultimately achieves the dreams Judy symbolizes, namely the endless possibilities of life, but he fails to realize that concentrating his dreams on a single person limits them. Dexter has erased all affiliation with the past in order to achieve the "glittering things," as embodied by Judy Jones. The utter erasure of his Midwestern boyhood is complete, since, as Devlin comments wryly, "So you're from the Middle West . . . That's funny—I thought men like you were probably born and raised on Wall Street" (56). Dexter has finally escaped the burdens and boundaries of his poor and provincial past, but in that escape he has also lost the dreams of possibility of his Midwestern youth. His desire to find himself in the caddies of the Sherry Island Golf Club is a desire to remember the striving, ambitious, and hungry self who still believes in the winter dreams of his youth. Dexter cannot achieve his dreams in the Midwest; it is uncertain if he can achieve them anywhere. However, while the origin of those dreams in the Midwest makes his boyhood essential to his formation as successful businessman, he must also forget and erase this origin in order to succeed. Dexter's character is thoroughly shaped and located in the Midwest, yet it is the one place he can never truly stay.

"Absolution" and "Winter Dreams" outline the evolution of the themes of erasure of regional distinctiveness in favor of individual ambition that Fitzgerald takes up at greater length in *The Great Gatsby*. For Rudolph Miller, the Midwest is associated with the small, provincial nature of God, his father, and the limitations of region; in other words, the possibilities of the world remain elsewhere. For Dexter Green, the Midwest remains the location of his winter dreams and the possibilities of life now lost forever. The Midwest is central for both characters as the site of origin for their ambition, but the region must be erased from their past in order to achieve success. Rudolph's self-creation and renaming, as well as the loss of the religious faith of his father, mean that the past must be forgotten to look toward the future. Dexter's humble beginnings shape his ambitious character, but those beginnings, in a town that is "inconveniently in sight" of the bigger towns, must also be forgotten (45). That which drives the Midwestern characters of Rudolph Miller and Dexter Green is also that which cannot be realized in those regions; it is a point of origin that must be erased as an origin at all. Dexter Green appears to his business associate Devlin as having no existence apart from his presence on Wall Street. Rudolph Miller, as he wanders off dreaming into the night, has latched onto the infinite possibilities of life as the model for his future. Once Father Schwartz has confirmed his deepest suspicions, Rudolph Miller is gone; only Blatchford Sarnemington remains.

The Midwest as a location of dreams and ambition contrasts with the seemingly critical vision of the Midwest in "The Ice Palace." Sally Carrol Happer from Tarleton, Georgia, plans to marry a Yankee from an unspecified Northern town. When Clark, one of the local Tarleton boys, questions her about why she is marrying a Northerner, Sally replies, "I want to go places and see people. I want my mind to grow, I want to live where things happen on a big scale" (51). She goes to visit Harry Bellamy, her Northern beau, in March. However, instead of seeing things happen on a big scale, Sally encounters the provinciality of small-town life in the Midwest. Harry explains to her that "this is a three-generation town" in contrast to the rich family histories of the South. Family histories are forgotten because "a lot of them [the founders of the town] had to take some pretty queer jobs when they were doing the founding" (57). Just like Dexter Green, the founders of the town were made to forget their humble beginnings due to internal pressure to achieve social status. The citizens of the

town are anxious for Sally to believe that everyone is a "pretty good-looking bunch" (57). Their anxiety over the classless nature of their society seems excessive to Sally. In her conversation with Patton, the literature professor, Sally finds most of the townspeople "canine," what Patton interprets as "a certain conscious masculinity as opposed to subtlety" (59). This perception is linked to Harry's warning that "you'll notice a lot of things that'll seem to you sort of a vulgar display at first" (57). The lack of subtlety, especially about social status and distinction, strikes Sally as odd in comparison to her native South. Patton's theory on these frigid Midwesterners is that, like Ibsen's characters, "they're righteous, narrow, and cheerless, without infinite possibilities for great sorrow or joy" (60). The tragic nature of the colder climates is that "they don't indulge in the cheering luxury of tears" (60). When Sally visits the newly built Ice Palace, she gets lost in the maze of coldness and ice. This structure, cavernous and lifeless, mirrors the trap of life for her in this foreign land. In the Midwest, Sally feels "she couldn't be left here to wander forever—to be frozen, heart, body, and soul" (68). She returns to the South to live the life of emotions she finds impossible in the frigid North. Ultimately, Sally chooses the "feline" subtlety of the South over the self-conscious creation and internalization prevalent in the colder climates.

"The Ice Palace" focuses on the lack of emotional possibilities due to social and status anxiety in the narrow confines of the Midwest. For Dexter Green and presumably Rudolph Miller, it is also important to leave the Midwest in order to discover the hidden possibilities of the world. However, the emotional reserve of the townspeople in "The Ice Palace" is also a part of the characters of Dexter Green and Father Schwartz. Father Schwartz, unable to contain the mysterious fancies of the carnival, has a manic disposition when thinking about the outside world. Dexter Green realizes his emotional bankruptcy once it is evident that his winter dreams are gone forever. The Midwesterners in these stories live a reserved emotional life indicative of the repression of the region, or what Andrew Cayton calls the "internalization of conflict" and "repression of identity" (158). Emotional reserve and concealment of interiority are essential to the erasure of identity due to the representative nature of the Midwest. In the case of ambitious characters such as Dexter and Rudolph, ambition stands in contrast to the continual desire to conform to and remember the past. In Rudolph's case, he feels guilt at

the abandonment of his father's religion, even while retaining one of his essential faiths, the value and importance of material and social success. For Dexter, his ambition leads him to completely erase his origin, namely his social class and regional identity. Despite his desire to see himself in the caddies, Dexter finds the disjunction between his life and theirs to be too much to overcome. By the time he is wealthy in New York, Dexter is no longer recognizable as a Middle Westerner at all; he appears to be forged on Wall Street itself. Dexter has been born through his worldly success, not the formative experiences in his youth. As with Rudolph's secret identity of Blatchford Sarnemington, success is incompatible with the past. The past holds the secret to some degree of original fulfillment for these characters since it was the origin of the dreams of their youth, but it has to be forgotten to climb the ladder of social and material success. To retain the materialist faith of Rudolph Miller's father means to forget the history of the "three-generation" towns. That the Midwest is a site where ambition and desire are born but can never be realized is part of the region's dual nature in these stories. The erasure of the past, despite the past's seminal role as the site of original ambition, causes a divisive attitude towards the past as both constant longing and a demand to forget. This orientation towards the past, which is in many ways the subject of *The Great Gatsby,* is thoroughly Midwestern in the duality it embodies.

Throughout the critical history of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's most widely studied work, a number of scholars have focused on the Midwestern foundations of the novel. After all, some of the most poetic passages of the novel come from Nick Carraway's reveries about the Midwest. Erik S. Lunde, in focusing on the importance of the Midwestern perspective to Carraway's narration, argues that this perspective "gives Nick the detachment necessary to make judgments on the activities of Eastern compatriots" (15). While I certainly agree that the Midwestern perspective is essential to the narration, as well as to the novel as a whole, Lunde's article is also informative for demonstrating the popular conflation of the Midwest and the nation. Lunde states that Nick's return to the Midwest acts as an "affirmation of America" (16) and that in the novel, the "American dream clearly has its heart in the Middle West" (16). Therefore, Lunde argues, Carraway's return to the Midwest at the end of the novel is part of his desire to return to his origins and thus return to the innocent American Dream there, rather than in the ambitious

East. This geography of affect (the East as corrupt, the Midwest as pure) is certainly encouraged by the novel, but I believe it oversimplifies the Midwest as a site of origin while not recognizing the essential erasure and inability for fulfillment essential to the characters. By conflating the national and regional affiliations of the Midwest, Lunde does not account for the duality of the Midwestern identity. It is difficult to think of Nick's return to the Midwest as anything less than an escape; after all, Nick's command that the world stand "at a sort of moral attention forever" as he retreats to the Midwest is also part of his desire to no longer experience "privileged glimpses into the human heart" (6).

Tim Sherer, on the other hand, focuses on the Midwestern characteristics of Jay Gatsby and their influence, arguing that Gatsby's failings in the novel were also because of his Western heritage. Sherer is also occasionally guilty of attributing to the Midwest the essentializing virtues of "individuality," "stubbornness," and "perseverance," which he views as leading to Gatsby's downfall in the East (12-13). Sherer argues that Fitzgerald believed the Midwest to be a "place of strong family ties, simple virtues, and continuing traditions," which explains the Midwestern influence in the novel as being the counterpoint to Eastern corruption (19). However, the novel does not entirely bear out this description of the Midwest. Neither Nick nor Gatsby is seen as particularly close to his parents or any family members. The virtues of the characters are far from simple and at best compromised, in the case of Gatsby, or ineffectual, in the case of Nick. Finally, the traditions of the Midwest are ones that both Gatsby and Nick desire to escape and actively flee. It is difficult, if not impossible, to view the Midwest as an Edenic land in reading the complex motivations of the novel's central Midwestern characters.

In contrast, I argue that Fitzgerald brings the two sides of his Midwest together in the characters of Gatsby and Carraway. Both characters are obsessed with reinvention and the past. Both characters are ambitious and find ambition at odds with their dreams of infinite possibilities. However, they are from two different social classes, a fact which appears to dictate the responses to their common experiences as Midwesterners. Gatsby is a poor boy from North Dakota, whereas Carraway comes from a well-off family from a Middle Western city. Their versions of the Midwest are separated not only by class, but also by relationship to the land itself. Carraway views his Midwest through rose-colored glasses, stating his Middle West was

"not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow" (177). This echoes Basil Duke Lee's Midwest, which is a refuge for Basil after a difficult year in the East. In "He Thinks He's Wonderful," Basil finds his arrival in his Midwestern hometown is "the first time in his life that he had ever felt the need of tranquility, but now he took long breaths of it" (77). The Midwest eventually comes to symbolize escape for Carraway, as he runs away from the grotesque world of the East and back into the "warm centre of the world" (3). For Gatsby, the Midwest is a place of origin, but not a site of values or comfort. Upon Gatsby's death, Nick asks Jay's father if he would like to take the body back home; his father says, "Jimmy always liked it better down East. He earned his position in the East" (169). In contrast to Dexter Green, and perhaps Nick Carraway, Gatsby has not yet realized the death of his winter dreams so that he would take respite in the childhood innocence the Midwest symbolizes. By evaluating Carraway and Gatsby as two sides of the novel, we can determine what the Midwest means for these characters as a site of identity, erasure, ambition, and reinvention.

Nick Carraway begins his narration of *The Great Gatsby* by espousing his ability to withhold judgment, a characteristic that Fitzgerald warns against in "The Rich Boy." Fitzgerald writes, "when I hear a man proclaiming himself an "average, honest, open fellow", I feel pretty sure that he has some definite and perhaps terrible abnormality which he has agreed to conceal—and his protestation of being average and honest and open is his way of reminding himself of his misprision" (318). Nick, in his professed objectivity as a narrator, is attempting like a good Midwesterner to erase himself from the novel; he is merely the chronicler of Gatsby's tale. Nick appears to be the ideal narrator, since he is in the habit of "reserving judgment [which] is a matter of infinite hope" (1). Nevertheless, Carraway spends most of his narration judging characters; he determines just a page later that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" but it was "what preyed on Gatsby" that was the real problem (2). He comes to New York in an effort to escape the Midwest, which "instead of being the warm centre of the world . . . now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe" (3). Carraway appears to be running from a broken engagement as well, perhaps as an effort to escape the ties that the past and the Midwest represent. His experience of life on the East Coast is like

Father Schwartz's carnival fantasies of life elsewhere. The patrons of Gatsby's parties "conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks" (41). However, Carraway is enchanted by Gatsby and his "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" (2). In his own attempts to revitalize himself on the East Coast, Carraway finds in Gatsby the thrilling promise of possibility. Despite Gatsby's obsessive focus on his lost love, Carraway remains on Gatsby's side because of their mutual placeless longing, seeing the possibilities Gatsby represents and feels his own yearning for infinite possibility. His disgust with the Buchannans and the crowd at Gatsby's parties only comes when it is evident that they do not share his and Gatsby's longing. When the party is over, all of Gatsby's friends are gone; Nick finds himself "on Gatsby's side and alone" (165). Gatsby's faith is what inspires Nick, who has lost his own faith in the possibilities of life. His time with Gatsby revived his faith, but only for a brief moment. At the end of the novel, Nick retreats to the Midwest, but his Midwest is often a stereotypical landscape, more of a pastoral fantasy than a lived reality. In contrast to the East, which he sees "as a night scene by El Greco" "where no one knows . . . and no one cares," the Midwest is largely a land of railroads and holidays (178). Nick's images of the Midwest are all liminal and transitory; the railroad is a place to come to or go from, but never to stay; holidays are a time of year, but not an ever-present state. The Midwest for Nick functions as a site of safety, but also largely of fantasy. He calls it the "warm center of the world," but it is a center where one cannot stay and that cannot hold. However, Nick's feelings for his imagined Midwest, unsurprisingly, are significantly less conflicted than those of Gatsby or his predecessors, Rudolph Miller and Dexter Green.

Gatsby, like Miller and Green, comes from a humble Midwestern background. After meeting rich prospector Dan Cody, James Gatz recreates himself as Jay Gatsby, who, Nick tells us, "sprang from his [Gatsby's] Platonic conception of himself" (99). His experiences with Cody leave him with "his singularly appropriate education: the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man" (102). This "Platonic conception" of Gatsby is torn from generalized ambition and wed to Daisy, who becomes the locus of Gatsby's ambition. This ambition leads him to erase his origins as a poor Midwestern boy and recreate himself as an Oxford man from a fabulously wealthy family. Thus, his Midwestern past is largely one

of erasure of his real origins. He is, as his father said, thoroughly a creature of the East, reminding us of Dexter Green, who was suspected of being born on Wall Street. Gatsby's formative experiences with his shiftless parents and with Dan Cody remind us of Fitzgerald's earlier Midwestern characters. Henry Gatz compares Gatsby's potential to that of James J. Hill, reminiscent of the aspiration that Carl Miller had for his own son. Gatz, a character who also lacks control over his own fate, respects men who wield power easily. He is intensely proud of his son's possessions and prestige despite Gatsby's death. His desire for his son to succeed and his pride in his achievements are linked to Carl Miller's ideas of success.

Like Rudolph, Gatsby's success had to take place elsewhere and could not be achieved within the Midwestern landscape. Dan Cody reminds us of Dexter Green's conception of himself as the "rough stuff" from which prep school boys came. Nick characterizes Cody as "the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon" (101). The roughness and violence of Cody give Gatsby a new origin as well as an education in re-invention. Gatsby learns from Cody the ideal nature of himself, the oversocialized aristocrat, through his discovery that "people liked him when he smiled" (101). However, the violence and roughness that underlay Cody's success, as well as Gatsby's past, lie buried beneath the surface. As opposed to Carraway's revisiting his imagined Midwest as an avenue of escape, Gatsby never recovers or returns to the Midwest, mentally or physically. The past cannot be repeated for Gatsby because he cannot return to his poor childhood, his shiftless family, and his violent and rough mentor Dan Cody. The platonic conception of Jay Gatsby remains first and foremost in his mind because he must erase his past in order to strive towards his dreams. He meets Daisy as Jay Gatsby, but he is not yet the ideal version of himself. When he meets Daisy again as the ideal Gatsby, it is no longer possible to access his past. Because of that disconnect, Gatsby cannot fulfill his dreams of possibility. James Gatz, like the dreams of Dexter Green, is lost and gone forever. This loss, as well as the loss of the past for Gatsby, creates a void that cannot be filled by all the wealth and parties that Gatsby can buy.

"WE ALL WISH WE WERE FROM SOMEPLACE ELSE": IMAGINED NOSTALGIA AND DISLOCATED DESIRE IN *MAD MEN*

While modernism was perhaps the high point for popular fictional engagement with the Midwest, the region has continued to be important in literary and popular culture. The AMC series *Mad Men* (2007-present) focuses on advertising executive Don Draper, whose roots are in Illinois and Pennsylvania. Don's real name is Dick Whitman and he was born to a twenty-two-year-old prostitute who died during childbirth and Archibald Whitman, a married farmer ("Gypsy and the Hobo"). Raised by Archie and his wife Abigail, Dick was a second-class citizen in his own home; when his younger half-brother Adam was born, his name was pointedly a reference to the "first man," since Dick was clearly a child that didn't count ("Babylon"). When a hobo visits the Whitman farm, young Dick confesses to the hobo that he is a "whore child" as an indication of his fundamental guilt ("The Hobo Code"). In contrast, the hobo offers his transitory nature as a mode of escape by stating that while his previous life of a family, wife, and mortgage was stifling for him, now he "sleeps like a stone." When Dick asserts that this life of travel is "sad," the hobo counters by asking, "What's at home?" Since Dick's life at present is so miserable, a life free of the encumbrances of home seems appealing. The hobo recognizes Dick's longing in noting that "we all wish we were from someplace else."

Dick goes on to escape the farm by volunteering for the Korean War ("Nixon v. Kennedy"). Upon the accidental death of his commanding officer, Dick takes on his identity to escape the abusive and poverty-stricken Midwestern past. Newly christened Don Draper, Dick travels with his "body" back home via train; when he refuses to see the grieving family, he is told by a woman on the train to "forget that boy in the box" ("Nixon v. Kennedy"). The identity of Don Draper becomes a chance for Dick Whitman to start over and create himself free of the burdens of his troubled past. However, like many popular depictions of Midwesterners, the erasure of that past is not easily achieved. The direct predecessor for Don, as Melanie Hernandez and David Thomas Holmberg have argued, is Jay Gatsby (24). However, while Gatsby is determined from a young age to remake himself, Don's path to reinvention is less carefully plotted; his accidental act of renaming seems more of a fresh start than a self-creation. When confronted by his wife Betty regarding his stolen

identity, Don admits "it was easier to be him [Don Draper] than to start over" ("The Gypsy and the Hobo"). In contrast to Gatsby, Don does not have a platonic conception of himself from which to proceed; furthermore, unlike Dexter Green or Rudolph Miller, Don's youth is not fired with ambition. Instead, he appears to be a boy utterly without a place in the world. Without a platonic conception of Don Draper to adhere, much of Don's professional life is consumed with depicting the idealized Midwestern childhood that he never had. In the season one finale "The Wheel," Draper crafts his pitch for the new Kodak projector around the concept of nostalgia, which he incorrectly defines as "the pain from an old wound." The Kodak projector, he argues, is a "time machine" that can "take us to a place where we ache to go again," which is "home" and "a place where we are loved." The pitch appeals to the deep sense of longing at the heart of the childhood dreams of Dick Whitman to be loved and to have a place to go. Don's attempts to break from his childhood are incomplete because the continual return of the past can only be used to manipulate eager consumers.

Don's continual insistence on renewal through material consumption is important because "the external reforging is in a way an internal rebirth, a way of allowing both Jay and Don . . . to re-see themselves and their potential" (Hernandez and Holmberg 24). As in "The Wheel," Don's assertion of an idealized home life reflects his own troubled childhood as an effort to attempt to rewrite his own history. The rewriting of his history is reminiscent of Gatsby's extravagant lies regarding his own origins: an Oxford education, inherited wealth, and war medals. At first Nick cannot believe the ridiculousness of Gatsby's professed history, writing, "it was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines" (71). However, like Don's manipulation of his audience, Gatsby gradually wins over Nick through the supposed authenticity of his collection of material artifacts (medal, photograph). Don, like Gatsby, is selling belief and faith in the product that is an idealized image of himself and his imaginary past. Only an audience that is willing to suspend disbelief in favor of returning "to a place where we are loved" or a place of infinite possibilities is willing to buy the product of packaged domesticity.

However, Don, like Gatsby, is deeply alien to the world he inhabits. He compensates for his not belonging in the world of "money, women, and excess" through the "backward move toward oversocialization" (Hernandez and Holdberg 23, 25). In the conformist

world where Don lives, he maintains the outward signs of success. As opposed to Gatsby, he has married his Daisy—Betty—and has achieved the picket fence success indicative of a man who has made it in the early 1960s. Nevertheless, we see the cracks in Don's façade. Once Betty discovers Don's past, it becomes clear how the image of Don Draper was never quite complete; there was something fundamentally lacking in his self-presentation. Once she discovers his past, Betty states that "[a]ll this time I thought you were some football hero who hated his father. I knew you were poor. I knew you were ashamed of it. I see how you are with money. You don't understand it" ("The Gypsy and the Hobo"). Despite his best efforts, Don's class background is evident. Betty's comment that Don doesn't understand money echoes the garish nature of Gatsby's own consumption. From his pink suit to his yellow car to his lavish parties, Gatsby's consumption offends the old-money sensibilities of Tom, who finds the parties vulgar in their conspicuous display.

Because they disavow any connection to their past, Don and Gatsby are travelers in the alien worlds they inhabit and do not truly belong in their surroundings. For Don, the broken past continues to erupt into his successful present. While he is able to manipulate idealized images of Midwestern childhood in "The Wheel," in the season six finale, "In Care Of," Don can no longer fully contain his past from erupting into his present. In an exploratory meeting with Hershey's Chocolate, Don pitches that the Hershey bar is the "currency of love" and the "childhood symbol of affection" ("In Care Of"). His fictional childhood memory of his father bringing him to a drugstore after he mowed the lawn and allowing him to pick anything he wanted from the store acts as a stand-in for the mythic image of Midwestern childhood. The mystery of the Hershey bar is that "the wrapper looked like what was inside," demonstrating an imaginary identity between what something appears to be and what it is. In this moment, Don feels the weight of the contradiction between his own self-presentation and "what was inside." For the first time during his idyllic pitches, Don confesses the truth of his childhood and growing up in a whorehouse where his only experiences with a Hershey bar were when a prostitute would buy him one if we "collected more than a dollar" from the john. The Hershey bar, which said "'sweet' on the package," contrasted with the pain and misery of his actual childhood. He advises Hershey's never to advertise, as the perfect congruency of the inside and outside of the package can never be fully commu-

nicated, especially to a boy who experienced a childhood of deprivation.

Because of his broken Midwestern past, Don "instinctively knows that most people live their lives in quiet, lonely desperation struggling to achieve and maintain the traditional family and a satisfied personal identity" (Pierson 91). His inner conflict is due to his achieving the idealized image of what he wanted as a small boy in a broken home without knowing how to maintain that image as not just an image, but an actual family. However, this is also Don's strength, as he has commodified his knowledge into a successful career as an ad man. Whereas Gatsby's past experiences render him incompatible with life in the East, Don's broken Midwestern roots give him insight into the national malaise of misplaced and commodified desire throughout the 1960s. While Don's personal life remains one of "quiet, lonely desperation," it is his use of the disparity between personal and professional personae that enables him to excel as an advertiser selling nostalgia for an imaginary, forgotten past. In his pitch to Hershey's in "In Care Of," the possibility of Don's incorporating his broken past into a more unified sense of self is held out as a potential hope for his character. While Gatsby's absence at the heart of his persona was filled in by his dream of Daisy, this also meant that his ambition became dominated by and yoked to that dream. Thus, he was never fully capable of incorporating his ambitious Midwestern roots as part of his personality. Though Nick senses that Gatsby was "worth the whole damn bunch put together," the absence at the heart of Gatsby's sense of self-identity remains too tied up with Daisy to be fully realized (162). Fitzgerald left "Absolution" out of *Gatsby* because it would have ruined the plan of the novel, as well as revealed too much about the mystery of Gatsby's origins; however, it would have also demonstrated Gatsby's childhood ambitions as not always being yoked to the personage of Daisy. If that ambition had a life separate from Daisy, it would more fully demonstrate Gatsby's failure to realize his ambitions, and the love story would not have been as much of a central focus in the novel. At the heart of his ambition is the absent Midwestern landscape that was "commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (189). His failure to realize this commensurability through remembering that absent origin is the failure of Jay Gatsby, but perhaps remains the best and only shining hope for Don.

The Midwest as an imaginary cultural location remains central to regional and national self-conception. The predominant myths of the

Midwest, especially essentialized notions of the Midwestern character, continue to have cultural power. These myths are perpetuated by the desire of inhabitants to erase themselves as sites of individual and regional identity. It is important for scholars of the Midwest and Midwestern literature to begin deconstructing the myths of the Midwest as a region in order to reassert its place within American cultural history. However, it is also important to realize the power of these myths as also essential to shaping the cultural imagination of the region. Since the Midwest has consistently been affiliated with national values, a closer look at the Midwest may lay bare many assumptions about the American character, including the evident contradictions that run through varying conceptions. As the South gradually became the psychological location of the negative values of racism, violent authority, and anti-intellectualism, values that are American as well, the Midwest stored the positive characteristics of family values, hard work, and ambition. At the same time, erasure of regional distinctiveness also became an equally important Midwestern inheritance.

Deconstructing this regional identity, as well as finding its operational value within the larger American culture, is a fruitful and productive activity for scholars of the Midwest. Fitzgerald offers one avenue of research through his use of Midwestern characters both in and out of the geographical location of the Midwest. The Midwestern dominance of modernism through authors such as Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Anderson, Eliot, and Sinclair Lewis offers the opportunity for viewing modernist literature through a Midwestern lens. Some of the alienation felt by modernist American writers may be just as much a part of the Midwest, as it is an essential cultural locale in the United States of the early twentieth century. The continued cultural relevance of the Midwest in shows such as *Mad Men* demonstrates that the Midwest is a region alive and well in the popular imagination. Through engagement with the Midwest, both as a real and imagined place, scholars can learn more about the relationship between region, nation, and values that attempts to erase the difficulties and uniqueness of the Midwest. To paraphrase Nick Carraway, these stories of the (mid)West, may in fact be a national story, after all.

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PHILIP LEVINE IS AN EXTREME VISIONARY: "FIST," "COMING HOME, DETROIT, 1968," AND "ASK FOR NOTHING"

RUSSELL BRICKEY

In a 1995 interview, fellow poet Paul Mariani posed an observation to Philip Levine: "In your poetry I find not so much a religious but a spiritual dimension, at moments almost a mystical experience, a way of seeing things the way God or one of Rilke's angels might see them . . . Do you feel this in your poetry?"

Levine responded frankly, "No, I don't think I'm seeing things the way an angel or a god might see them . . . . I wouldn't know how." He was glad that his poetry had this depth but, Levine explained, this was essentially accidental, an effect of his writing process. He writes, he told Mariani, out of "a sort of glow and a patina" in the mind's eye; people and places are "plucked" as if "out of a great painting" made from memory and into the present of his poetry (124).

Such a response is not particularly surprising for a poet as concerned with, as David St. John puts it, "narratives of human struggle" (176). Conversely, as Paula Finn writes, one can also find poems about the "marvel of working class persistence" (131). These two poles—struggle and perseverance—thematically dominate Levine's oeuvre, and a poet as politically minded as Levine makes little room for incorporeal metaphysics and Platonic realms. Yet there is that sense of the mystical in his poetry. Levine writes with a depth of perception, image, experience, and other-worldly unveiling that forms a canon of mysticism within his canon of protest—in fact, the language of an angel is a prominent expression, and Levine is often a visionary of extreme tropes and allusions whether he means to be or not.

To an extent, this vision contradicts what readers expect. Levine is famously associated with the practical concerns of Midwestern working-class everymen and everywomen. He writes from the perspective of the day laborer, with an eye and ear to the issues of

exploited, overlooked, and abandoned workers stranded in a landscape of economic collapse. He is, again in St. John's words, "angry," a worker who sees the "used and abused" city beyond the museums and restaurants (181). In this respect, Levine is a fairly rare artist of the proletariat, a writer whom Kate Daniels calls "the great workhorse of contemporary American poetry" and "a worker among workers," an attitude which, she suggests, might explain Levine's extraordinary long and productive career (191). A child of Detroit, Levine lost his father at age five, took his first job at age thirteen, and then worked in a series of automotive factories and grease shops throughout high school and college. These experiences as a member of Detroit's working class offered Levine a number of characters who, if not quite Dickensian in depth of presentation, nevertheless personify the literal and psychic dangers of capitalism. He is not a propagandist in any sense but a memoirist; he is empathetic if unstinting in his view of his people, personalizing, criticizing and tacitly celebrating their working lifestyle. But Levine's poetry is also an extended treatise on defeat—and it is interesting to remember that he was a child of the Depression and the home front during wartime. In fact, Levine says of the blue-collar poets in his literary coterie:

> [W]e come out of the mental age that uses the Depression and World War II as an historical springboard—I say the Depression because we felt it at our backs, saw how the Depression had eaten into our families. We were brought up in homes that were scarred by the Depression. Then the war came; all the changes there. Then the extraordinary optimism of the immediate post-war period. (Norman 18)

"You Can Have It" (*7 Years from Somewhere; New Selected Poems [NSP]* 196) is perhaps the most overt statement of this sentiment. One of Levine's most famous lyrics, the poem recalls, thirty years after the fact, his elder brother (a repeated character) returning exhausted to the bedroom they shared after "All night at the ice plant" where "he had fed / the chute its silvery blocks." As if continuing his employment as a conveyor of cold, disposable, impermanent products, his elder brother drops his shoes to the floor, drops his body to the bed and into the metaphorical clarity of moonlight—a symbol for Levine of human struggle—which highlights the exhaustion of his "unshaven face." His one bit of dialogue provides the catch phrase for the title, another of Levine's ironies for a young man who cannot, in fact, relinquish the world he inhabits. "You Can Have It" is a poem

of defeat, despair even, in Detroit, 1948, founded "by de la Mothe Cadillac for the distant purposes / of Henry Ford," where "no one wakened or died" because even these basic possibilities are denied to a city founded on the principles of furnaces, not people. The poem ends on an imperative and a lament for a second chance:

> Give me back my young brother, hard
> and furious, with wide shoulders and a curse
> for God and burning eyes that look upon
> all creation and say, You can have it.

Levine, as Daniels understands him, counteracts Whitman's democratic acceptance[1] of the working class (194), and Ron McFarland places Levine among the handful of poets (David Wagoner, B.H. Fairchild, Tess Gallagher, and Gary Soto) who explicitly redefine the portrait of labor in verse. These blue-collar poets look back on their childhoods of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s without the democratizing impulse infused into capitalistic idealism (324). Levine's language reflects this hard-nosed worldliness, and his purpose appears to be polemical, to force the reader into reevaluation. For protest poetry to be effective, it must be accessible, and this approach drives the rhetoric and image palette of much of Levine's verse. Creating this world must, at least to an extent, require a familiar voice to express a conflicted economic environment: on one hand, an environment full of people proud of their labor, and on the other, a landscape of struggle—economically, ecologically, spiritually—and resistance without a clear rallying cry. For his part, looking back with both bitterness and affection, Levine implicitly argues for the reinstatement of humanity in a world dominated by industrialization. He is an editorialist, a tacit legislator for the underbelly of capitalism, unconvinced of the Romanticism of the life well lived yet unwilling to fold to an Existential universe. And this is the style of writing which gets the most attention.

Nevertheless, other poems by Levine create a sort of mystical transport which react to, but cannot be mistaken for, the world of common day. In these instances, the purpose (to reinstate the human) is largely the same as in his more plainspoken poetry, but the settings, conclusions, and tenors and vehicles are of a far more surprising variety and the speaker an omniscient narrator with the characteristics of an angel or God. This is the aspect Mariani noted in Levine's poetry, which the poet then essentially denied. While Levine is a poet of hard

political reality, he also writes, deliberately or not, with a topological extremity that limns a numinous realm behind the toxic landscape. These are poems with metaphysical overtones and surreal dream-visions generally fastened to a commercial local or industrial object. "How Much Can It Hurt" (*Red Dust; NSP* 47), for instance, portrays the antisocial reality of the urban environment using an unlikely setting: the supermarket:

> The woman at the check stand
> Who wishes you cancer
>
> The fat man who hates his mother
> The doctor who forgets

In this unhappy city, essential human bonds have been sundered by an unexpressed, perhaps unacknowledged, and thus undefined anger. We know of its existence only because the speaker has the power of human divination—a power the narrator of "You Can Have It" (almost certainly meant to be Levine himself) does not possess. Such insight allows the speaker to gaze with vision even longer than that of Whitman, and this clairvoyance morphs into images of the now distant Dresden firebombing, "the kindergarten blowing its windows out / chalk burning the little fingers" as if this terrible calamity of war relates to the contemporary urban desolation; all are victims of some ruthless force much greater than themselves. It should not be forgotten that Detroit was a key apparatus in the "Arsenal of Democracy." The city converted its automobile factories—its civilian works, in other words—into a manufacturing hub of jeeps, tanks, and bombers. This particular history of creation, in which the best industry produced vehicles of war, lingers in the collective memory of the location and manifests itself as sublimated psychic violence in the present. History is unescapable, the poem seems to suggest, and the background of World War II and its literal violence toward the innocent becomes a correlative to the sublimated psychic violence of consumerism toward the powerless, regardless of class or situation. Nevertheless, despite the unexpected allusion, the poem is firmly rooted in the experiential world, complete with its connection to history and geopolitics.

Then, however, as if to highlight the limits of immediate perception, the types of tenors used are gratuitous and composed of violent

conjunctions of imagery: the speaker describes his slumber that ensuing evening as if predicated upon nightmare logic:

> My face punctured with glass
> The teeth eating themselves in dreams
>
> Our blood refusing to breathe, refusing to sleep
> asking the wounded moon
>
> asking the pillow, asking, asking
> How much can it hurt?

Interestingly, this switch to surrealism marks a progression from hard exteriority to an almost inexpressibly conflicted interiority. Body responds to subconscious, hard reality to emotional subjectivity, and clarity to ambiguity in the paradoxical unveiling of personal truth beneath the greater mechanisms of culture. The rhetorical answer is, of course, that "it" can hurt a great deal, and that is the point of Levine's ending irony. Such an abstract turn is the result of anger so bone deep that it is indescribable except as oneiric free association. It is possible to read this interior conflict as an extension of the industrial history of the city, and even the speaker's own culpability in the violence of the past. But expression of this is difficult; this is a Jewish poet writing in the wake of Auschwitz and the other unforgotten atrocities of Western Civilization, after all. As a mystical answer to history's illogic, Levine may be participating in the "barbaric" (as Theodore Adorno names it) practice of poetry after great inhumanity. It is too simple to suggest that "no poetry" should be written after Dresden (which is not what Adorno would suggest anyway); rather, Levine's dystopic revelation answers Adorno's central claim that literature should seek to change the culture of barbarity. His message may not be widely absorbed in an era that has seen repeated warfare, but Levine speaks out as an artist for peace. Such symbolic spiritualism is attached to, and thus overshadowed by, his social critique, and so it is an important part of Levine's artistry which has flown under the radar.

An example is the elegiac "Fist," (*Red Dust; NSF* 46), dedicated to an unlikely subject, a roll of iron, which, like the empty fist it reminds us of, symbolizes rage. The iron forms a microcosm within the industrial environment, an element that is part and parcel to the whole. The first stanza describes the metal itself in terms that are anthropomorphizing and animating. Iron is "growing in the dark" as

if alive (fungal life, a bulb blooming in Roethke's dank basement, or perhaps as a prisoner in solitary), and because it is alive, it "dreams all night long." Levine gives us no clue what moves its elemental mind, but "dreams" are usually a vernacular expression of hopes and desires. Somehow this product has taken on the attributes of the living. It "will not work," however, because it is inanimate, unlike the people who made it. And by reminding us that this inanimate object comes from animate makers—that it will not, in fact, "dream" or "work"—the mind is meant to turn to these people who have not yet entered the scene. It is a symbol of a failing mythology ("A flower that hates god") and a failing spirituality ("a child tearing at itself") which holds nothing because, being inorganic, it cannot. The first stanza establishes the paradox of an industrial product which contains the history of life. If Levine is a poet of the people, where does this animating transference to industry come from? Where are the people who created it?

Right on cue in the second stanza, the speaker turns and addresses us directly. We learn that it is "Friday, late" night after the end of the work week at "Detroit Transmission." The speaker is introspective as he imagines his own legacy flooding into "the cold streams / north of Pontiac," essentially at the verge of corporate America, as soon as the dawn, vernacular for new life, illuminates the factory. Meaning is tremendously abstract here, and it would seem that the speaker sees potential for change, but, as is so often the case, the action is unclear and must be couched in abstraction. He conceives of escape to some conceptualized realm, perhaps the afterlife, which seems to offer no clear comfort. If there is hope, it must come from some other entity than the spiritual. And in the third stanza, the iron fist actually represents this hope: it must open. And once the fist opens, unleashing the life pent inside it, it "is no longer." Again the iron is metaphorized as stunted vegetative growth, a "Bud of anger," a "kinked / tendril of my life," which expresses the speaker's personal defeat. His appeal to the iron in the "forged morning" of the mill is to "fill with anything—water" (vernacular for life), "light" (vernacular for clarity and knowledge), or "blood" (vernacular for love or violence), "but fill" to make itself free of the tormented past.

Once again, Levine has crafted a lyric of the working person unmoored by the environment. To evoke the complexity of this state, he voices a nearly supernatural transference in the language to assume the qualities of divine judgment. Levine utilizes the pathetic

fallacy, yet his evocation is highly successful, I argue, because of this very imagistic extremity. We are forced to wrap our minds around the words, and we are forced into Levine's emotionally charged images. In other words, Levine utilizes a supernatural tropology to express the destruction of the human spirit by industry and the machine, and, in doing so, the audience is compelled to change this subjective reality—even if what is to be done is not entirely clear.

Levine is known for his blighted industrial cityscapes, ostensibly (if not by name) Detroit. His cityscapes are often wildly luminous, even volcanic; toxicity and mechanization predominate; the human experience is relegated to poverty, spiritual devastation, and obscenity. Levine, in other words, focuses on the damaged lives and locals in the corporate-industrial complex as a way of pointing out the power of the natural world, now lost. However, a cure for industrial hegemony is difficult to find.

"Coming Home" *(They Feed They Lion; NSP* 75) is just such a tableau poem of Detroit, "the city pouring fire" with "the twisted river stopped at the color of iron." It is a macrocosm of the industrial cityscape. Language—the potential saving power—is stopped here as "The fat stacks / of breweries hold their tongues" and "the stems of birches" are "dirtied with words." And again, the natural world in which "the wolverine, the northern bear, the wolf" are lost in "a shower of human breath" exhaled from sulfurous foundries. In this visionary moment, both the human and natural environments have been poisoned. The children emerge with "charred faces, eyes boarded up . . . the cry of wet smoke" clogging their throats. As with "Fist," industry has separated humanity from itself and from nature, and tropes of fire, smoke, pollution and toxicity describe a spiritual and environmental dystopia. And again, the hyperbolic quality of the language implicitly forms an argument that this city "we burn every day" must be saved—although, again, the answer to the hegemony of the factory is not at all clear, simply the call to action. In either poem, the animating principles of rage, despair, and hope are in Levine's fiery poetic tropes, and this pyromancy is meant to move the reader as if we were hearing the speaker shout and cry ourselves. Levine is a poet who challenges the supremacy of the city environment, calls for the return to nature, and believes in the promise of the individual. In this regard, Levine extends the Transcendental and Romantic movements into the postmodern era, with one important difference: Levine's poems bear the signature of defeat, the lack of a

presence in the world. The natural Romantic symbols of rejuvenation (rivers, childhood, and landscapes in particular) have been denuded of their power. In true Romantic tradition, however, there is always hope interlaced with the melancholy. Levine's vision includes glimpses of the spiritual and the mystical that come directly from the experiences of the people and places, even if this is an accidental occurrence.

Like the Deep Imagists inspired by Lorca to find new possibilities in the liquidity of thought and vigorousness of language, Levine gives credit to Spanish and Latin American poets (Hernandez, Alberti, Neruda, Vallejo) for the elliptical, disjunctive diction in *Red Dust* (1971) (Mills 46); in fact, the twining of experiential and surreal image might actually mark Levine as a member of the Deep Imagist movement except for the sense of an alternate reality explicating the common reality the poet inhabits. Levine's mystical voice begins early, speaks most fully in *Red Dust* and *They Feed They Lion*, and is subsumed again beneath the rarified vernacular language he is known for. Nevertheless, the visionary voice never entirely disappears and travels itinerantly across his career in poems such as "Noon" from *Red Dust* ("There are / small streams / the width of a thumb / running in the villages of sheaves"); *Pili's Wall* ("Take these needles / crowding to your blood / these dense yellow mouths"); "Detroit Grease Shop Poem" from *They Feed They Lion* ("Stars / on Lemon's wooden palm, / stars that must be capped, / rolled, and anointed"); "Uncle" from *1933* ("The long boats / with the names of the winds / set sail / in the sea of his blind eye"); and "Making Light of It" from *A Walk with Thomas Jefferson* ("I can follow the day / to the black rags and corners it will / scatter to because someone always / goes ahead burning the little candle / of his breath, making light of it all") among many others.

While his later collections are more plain spoken overall, Levine never completely abandons the rhetoric of mysticism. "Ask for Nothing," from the 1995 Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Simple Truth,* is one such example and, at the same time, an interesting rarity. Like "How Much Can It Hurt," "Ask for Nothing" is written in the second-person present tense (an unusual voice for a poet who prefers memory) juxtaposed to the unexplained magic of human history. In this instance the violence is absent and work takes on a homespun yet mythic quality in a tableau of the imagination. "Ask For Nothing" begins with a simple Frostian "walk alone in the evening . . . toward

the fields / asleep under a darkening sky" and quickly transforms into a visionary tableau of human art and industry. You, the reader, walk in a familiar landscape, one you have seen every day, but the engineering of your footsteps turns the dust into golden rain. You are now like a god bringing life to the Earth. That is why in the distance you see, as if out of a novel of the Southern Gothic (Faulkner or Hurston), a vision of the entire human family in their journey through generations:

> beyond the first ridge of low hills
> where nothing ever grows, men and women
> astride mules, on horseback, some even
> on foot, all the lost family you
> never prayed to see, praying to see you,
> chanting and singing to bring the moon
> down into the last of the sunlight.

Also like "How Much Can It Hurt," and "You Can Have It," the "moon" is an important metaphysical presence: it symbolizes the human spirit and illuminates the forces which affect it. In fact, the moon symbol in Levine's poetry is protean and deserves a closer reading. Finally deep into images of the imagination, the language reflects the growing power of the subconscious. Windows "blink on and off," voices "fade like music / over deep water," and "tumbling finches / have fled into smoke." Weirdest of all, however, is that the simple evening stroll opens onto "the one road" under the sorcery of the moon which now "leads everywhere." "Ask for Nothing" has perhaps Levine's greatest purview, encompassing the breadth of human endeavor as it extends into a future, past knowing or even imagining, in which anything can happen. Lyrical mysticism could be considered simple surrealism—simple in that it only accesses dream states to describe the illogic of the subconscious—but in this case, the surreal has a far more pointed and political bent, and Levine's surreal passages allude to a transcendent escape from intractable historical, economic, and human reality. This is surrealism which melds economic, commercial, industrial and human into a painful gestalt, suggesting that such familiar concepts as money, work, person, thing, and home are a melting pot of the dream deferred.

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NOTE

[1]It should be noted, of course, that Levine is often considered to continue the legacy of Whitman and W.C. Williams.

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AGING WOMEN ON SCREEN: ALEXANDER PAYNE'S DEPICTIONS OF OLDER WOMEN IN *ABOUT SCHMIDT* AND *NEBRASKA*

LAURA BEADLING

Martine Beugnet notes that the typical image of older women in cinema is "passive invisibility" and that she belongs to "one of the least visible categories" in film (2006:2). This is not true of Alexander Payne's films, at least two of which, *About Schmidt* from 2002 and *Nebraska* from 2013, feature complex, if problematic, older women characters. In *About Schmidt*, Warren Schmidt retires and realizes that his job was meaningless and, worse, that he is not close with his wife Helen or daughter Jeannie. After Helen's sudden death, Schmidt goes on a road trip in his oversized RV to his daughter's wedding to waterbed salesman Randall. Schmidt meets the whole Hertzel clan, including Randall's mother Roberta, and tries to stop the wedding.

In *Nebraska,* aging alcoholic veteran Woody Grant mistakenly believes he's won a million dollars in a magazine sweepstakes and his sad-sack son David agrees to drive him to pick up his money. Woody and David end up spending the weekend in Hawthorne with Woody's family, who find out about and begin angling for some of Woody's supposed winnings. Woody's wife Kate and their other son Ross also come to Hawthorne as well, and David learns a bit about his father along the way. While both *About Schmidt* and *Nebraska* feature men as the main characters, each has interesting and vibrant secondary female characters, *About Schmidt*'s Helen and Roberta and *Nebraska*'s Kate Grant, although the depictions are quite different in each film. All three women are Midwestern wives and mothers, but Payne is careful to depict all three as three-dimensional characters who go far beyond the stereotypical representations of sweet grandmothers and sexless nobodies. As we begin to understand that age, like race and gender, is a socially constructed category, media

interventions that subvert stereotypes and enlarge our understandings of the possibilities for aging personhood are important, yet remain all too rare in a cultural landscape that often depicts old women as the butt of jokes but not as actual people.

About Schmidt features not one but two dynamic older women as characters and they both have complex lives and motivations. Schmidt's wife, Helen, dies early in the film, but her character, while not large, haunts the rest of the film. Her scenes, while only in the beginning, are sharp and memorable; from calmly telling Schmidt that her father didn't think much of him when they first started dating to her charming excitement at eating breakfast in their new RV, Helen's character has a range of emotions. Despite the brevity of Helen's presence in the film, she goes well beyond the stereotype of the sweet grandmother who is always cheerful, loving, and innocuous.

More interestingly, Payne is not done with Helen once she dies; she has depths, experiences, and history that are only revealed after her death. While Helen appeared to be a dutiful Midwestern wife and mother, keeping her house spotless and helping her daughter plan her wedding, her complex personhood was concealed by Schmidt's lack of interest in her and his dismissive attitude. It is only after her death that Schmidt discovers that she had a years-long affair with his best friend. Moreover, Schmidt believes that he and his wife only speak to their daughter Jeannie every few weeks but discovers from his daughter that she and her mother were on the phone with each other almost every day during the planning of Jeannie's wedding. Only after her death does Schmidt think to ask if she was happy with him as a husband, or just too polite to show her disappointment.

Even in the mise-en-scène of the early scenes in the Schmidts' house, Payne takes care to show Helen's housework, even though Schmidt himself never notices. In the background of many of these scenes are bits of evidence of the literally thankless and unnoticed work done by Helen over the years. For instance, vacuum cleaners and laundry baskets full of clean, folded clothes are included but unremarked upon. After Helen dies, the housework is no longer being done and things fall apart, comedically of course.

Even moreso than Helen, Roberta Hertzel, the mother of Randall, the man Schmidt's daughter is marrying, has a meaty role with nuance, depth, and range despite being at least in her '60s, elderly indeed for most big-budget American films (and with a $30 million

budget *About Schmidt* did indeed have a substantial production budget). Roberta is introduced when Schmidt shows up at her house somewhat unexpectedly a few days before the wedding. In short order, she offers her condolences about Helen, pours them both a stiff drink, puts her feet up, and reminds Schmidt that he owes her money for something wedding related. Unlike the Schmidts' fussy house of grays and blues with sparse furniture and decoration, Roberta's home is crammed full of furniture, crafts, musical instruments, and color everywhere. Furthermore, it doesn't take long before she has also discussed with an increasingly horrified Schmidt her hysterectomy, breastfeeding Randall until he was almost five, and her two divorces. Right from her first moment on screen, Roberta is vibrant and engaged in a way Schmidt is not.

However, Roberta is not completely crass; she is portrayed as having both a zest for life and experience and sensation alongside an ill-concealed impatience and snappishness. Unlike most female characters in their '60s, Roberta is not just a mother or a wife; she has her own agenda and a range of motivations as well as a depth of history and emotion denied to most characters her age. She is larger than life and steals the scenes she's in with her personality and energy.

Although they could have easily been one-note joke characters, Payne's two older women characters, while comedic, are nevertheless imbued with a point of view and emotion, which makes it all the more jarring when Payne makes tired jokes about their bodies and sexualities. Victoria Bazin and Rosie White, in their introduction to a 2006 special issue of *Studies in the Literary Imagination* on aging and feminism, describe the cultural norms surrounding the aging woman's body as "debilitating" and this is especially true in visual culture, where aging female bodies are rarely seen as subjects or main characters (iv). One of the most jarring moments of *About Schmidt*, then, is the moment when Roberta drops her robe to join Schmidt in her hot tub; it is hard to read that scene in any way other than as endorsing a reaction of horror to the sight of Roberta's old, fat body.

That is certainly the reaction the scene gets. Writer and director Sarah Polley calls on this scene from *About Schmidt* as the "seminal scene" that makes her point that, while young women are sexually objectified, old women's bodies are "constantly the butt of a joke" ("Polley"). Likewise, I have shown *About Schmidt* in my Introduction to Film classes to well over one hundred students, and there are always vocal reactions of amused horror from the students.

Nor is it the case that this is a throwaway scene not much remembered or associated with the film; this particular image, of Roberta entering the hot tub with a petrified Schmidt, was featured in all of the trailers for the film. Toni Calasanti, Kathleen Slevin, and Neal King assert that "women grow invisible as sexual beings through the aging process" and become figures of scorn, which is clearly the case with Roberta in this scene (21).

Furthermore, the scene mocks Roberta, who has such an obviously disgusting body (obvious at least to Schmidt and the young viewers), for appearing not to know that her body is deserving of disgust, which makes her expression of sexual desire humorous. Her presumption that her expression of her sexuality and sexual desire is legitimate is, according to the logic of the film and American culture, both laughable and repellent. Calasanti, Slevin, and King also note that old women may no longer be subject to the male gaze (to which they may have become accustomed), but to the "gaze of youth," which disciplines women's bodies in different ways (21). If old women present themselves as desiring subjects despite their aging bodies, as Roberta does, they become visible but laughable. Such old, heterosexual women may feel themselves as sexual beings still, but sexual beings who are "now cast aside rather than objectified" (21). Women who may have been objectified as sexual objects earlier in life may now become invisible.

While it could be argued that the film skewers and satirizes all its characters, male and female alike, the film is clearly more sympathetic to Schmidt's point of view and treats his character much differently than the other characters. After all, while Roberta is shown to be bewildered by Schmidt's hasty departure from the hot tub, the camera follows him as he flees back to his RV; the audience is never invited to see what she makes of his horrified rejection of her. Furthermore, Schmidt, too, is shown naked, but, unlike Roberta, his moment of vulnerability occurs in private and is not mocked in the same way.

Nor is Roberta the only one that the film mocks in terms of female embodiment. Although both Schmidt and Helen are bodily examined by the camera, with various body parts—ears, ankles, armpits, rumps, etc.—being shown in close-up for comedic effect, only Helen is dehumanized and mocked. Even though the shots are edited very similarly, with a series of close-ups on various body parts, the male and female bodies are framed quite differently, resulting in different

kinds of laughter. Schmidt's voice-over narration is key to how the humor is perceived in these parallel scenes. While Schmidt's body is framed in terms of his bewildered perception of his own body, Helen's body is objectified and criticized from Schmidt's point of view. When Schmidt plaintively catalogues the many changes in his aging body, such as the veins on his ankles and the hair in his ears, each part in question shown in extreme close-up as Schmidt speaks about it on the sound track, and the audience is encouraged to identify with him. Aging is presented here as a set of bewildering bodily changes that seem not to affect how one feels or how one thinks about him or herself. "I can't believe it's really me" he confesses in voice-over narration.

On the other hand, the close-ups of Helen's various body parts are framed through Schmidt's hostile point of view. From the very beginning of this section, Schmidt distances himself from her, saying in voice over, "I ask myself every night: who is this old woman who lives in my house?" The audience is not invited to identify with her as we are shut out of her perception, and the humor is at her expense: it's at her, not with her. When Warren catalogues what he sees as Helen's many faults, including several bodily issues, such as the way she smells, depicted by a close-up on her naked armpit, and how she sits, shown by a close-up on her rump as she forcefully plops into a chair, there is no understanding or sympathy. Helen is talked about; we are not given her voice-over insight into her own feelings about her body, her husband, or anything else.

Diane Gibson notes that the field of gerontology has a "tendency to ignore old women" except insofar as they deviate from the "dominant male pattern" (433). Likewise, in the most objectifying and othering scenes of both women, Schmidt is filmed in similar ways, yet his scenes are mitigated through his own subjectivity as presented through his voice-over narration. Neither woman, on the other hand, gives her own account, either in dialogue or voice-over narration, of her own experiences of aging.

While *Nebraska* shares many similarities with *About Schmidt,* its treatment of Kate Grant is very different from the depictions of both Helen (who was actually portrayed by the same actor who played Kate: June Squibb) and Roberta. Both films are classified as dramedies and take aging masculinity as their primary focus; Jack Nicholson's Warren Schmidt and Bruce Dern's Woody Grant are the respective protagonists and each film takes the most time and care

with these characters. There is also a focus on deficient father/child relationships in each. In both films, the Midwestern setting is shown to be nice on the surface only, with darkness roiling just beneath. Anger likewise lurks just below the surface in many of these otherwise blandly "nice" Midwesterners, and families are depicted in each as hotbeds of seething but unspoken tension.

One way, though, that *Nebraska* differs greatly from *About Schmidt* is in its treatment of its old woman character, Kate Grant, Woody's long-suffering, angry, and frank wife. While *About Schmidt* focused on Schmidt's anger and loneliness, *Nebraska* allows Kate to be angry and bitter as well. Like Helen and Roberta, Kate has a range of emotions that she expresses throughout the film. From the first moment she is on screen, her anger, disappointment, and frustration with her husband and sometimes with her youngest son are quite evident. She berates Woody for frightening her and, after pressing food on their son David, ends her first scene by threatening to put Woody in a nursing home, yet when Woody's relatives begin pressing him to give them some of his supposed winnings, she resolutely stands up to them, refuting their claims that they kept Woody afloat with loans and finally telling them that "they can all just go fuck themselves." Kate is funny and forthright and has depth and range.

Unlike Kate, Helen in *About Schmidt* was shown to be a proper and restrained Midwestern housewife who kept a nice house, waited on her husband "hand and foot," as her daughter said, and always presented herself as cheerful; it is only after her death that the viewer discovers that she had hopes, desires, and experiences that Schmidt never knew about. Kate, on the other hand, is clearly also a good Midwestern housewife in that she makes the best of their hard circumstances, works at her own business, and feeds her son while doing (or allowing him to do?) his laundry at their house. Despite these housewifely virtues, though, she is never silent and does not suppress her own thoughts and opinions. The film clearly shows that Kate is not out of line to be frustrated with her increasingly senile husband, who was obviously never a very good husband or father even before the dementia set in. Not only do we find out that he was unfaithful to her at least once, but that he was damaged emotionally during his time in the Korean War and was never emotionally available. Kate's irritation with him is echoed in his older son's similar feelings about him; by having Ross echo Kate's sentiments, Payne clearly erases the potential of reading Kate as simply bitter and mean.

Clearly, Woody had many serious faults as a husband and father: he has apparently always been a drinker, and, while he is certainly an alcoholic by the time the film's events take place, he steadfastly continues to deny it. Despite all this, though, Kate is not shown to be just a gossipy and judgmental old woman; she stands up for Woody and, when she leaves him in the hospital to return to Montana, she bends down and tenderly kisses his forehead. Her final words to him in the film are, "You big idiot," but they are said and meant affectionately.

Like Roberta in *About Schmidt,* Kate is no stereotypically sexless old lady, and she still thinks about sex and views herself as a sexual person. Kate often embarrasses her son with her frank talk about how popular she was among the men of Hawthorne and her judgments on the sexual habits and attractiveness of various characters throughout the film. As soon as she arrives in Hawthorne, she goes with Woody and David to a local cemetery to pay her respects, which aren't very respectful at all. Her judgmental dialogue about Woody's dead relatives is hilariously crass. Of Woody's little sister Rose, for instance, she says, "I liked Rose, but, my God, she was a slut."

Kate's judgmental gossip is tempered by that of the characters around her; rather than portraying Kate as a bad person, Payne seems to take care to show that, in a small town, gossip and judgment are normal. When Kate talks with her sister-in-law Martha, for instance, they both gossip nastily about another woman who is pregnant and, in their view, not very attractive. Even Peg, the old woman who runs the newspaper and who used to date Woody back in the day, indulges in some snarky gossip about Kate with her son David. More interestingly, though, is how Kate still sees herself as a desirable person, not just in the past but in the present. At the cemetery, Kate discovers that someone else she knew from her past is also buried there. Upon seeing Keith White's gravestone, Kate remarks that he "wanted in my pants too" but was too "boring" to date. As her husband and son walk back to the car, Kate lifts her dress and exclaims, "See what you could've had, Keith, if you hadn't talked about wheat all the time!" She clearly views her body as still worthy of desire.

While this scene has similarities with Roberta's hot tub scene in *About Schmidt*—both feature older women displaying their bodies with pride—Payne's camera films them very differently, which changes the impact of each. In *About Schimdt,* Roberta is facing the camera when she drops her robe. While the camera does cut away to

a longer shot from an oblique angle that shows that she's naked without any details, that shot comes only after we've seen a full shot of her body from close in. Furthermore, the camera is allied with Schmidt's point of view, which is below Roberta, giving her body a looming, even threatening, quality. By contrast, Kate's cemetery scene in *Nebraska* is filmed quite differently. Kate is never fully nude; she just lifts her dress. She is also filmed from behind, so very little detail is seen. In fact, only the back of her legs to just above the knee (and knee-length panty-hose) is shown. Furthermore, as David and Woody are already heading back to the car, the camera is not allied with a disapproving gaze, either male or youth. The result of the differing camera work is that while the audience laughs *at* Roberta and her desiring body, the audience laughs *with* Kate as she can't resist a final dig at a deceased suitor. Both women clearly view themselves as sexual beings, but each character is treated very differently by the film she's in.

Kate Grant represents a step forward for a filmmaker who has shown to be interested in old women characters throughout his career. While *About Schmidt* offered two rich secondary characters who are old or older women, in *Nebraska,* Payne offers Kate, one of the most fully realized old women in American cinema to date. Furthermore, while Payne seems particularly interested in issues of aging masculinity, his examination of Woody does not come at Kate's expense, while Schmidt's dominating perspective does make it difficult to explore fully either Helen or Roberta.

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HOW REGIONALISM DIES: THE INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY OF *THE MINNESOTA REVIEW*

JON K. LAUCK

The once formidable early twentieth-century movement premised on highlighting and promoting regional literary voices and histories did not fare well in the later decades of the twentieth century (Dorman; Lauck 2013). This decline of regionalism, particularly Midwestern regionalism, has not been explained very well, a failure due in part to the movement's diffuse nature, in part to the prevalence of the factors which caused the movement to decline in the first place, and in part to modern technology's erasure of place. To understand the fate of regionalism, in short, is a complicated matter, but one can find some critical clues in the shifting fortunes and peculiar odyssey of one quarterly literary journal, a once-favored venue for regionalist thought, as were *The Midland, The Southwest Review, The Frontier, Prairie Schooner,* and *The New Mexico Quarterly*. One such journal, *The Minnesota Review*, which began with a routine interest in regionalist themes and a recognition of its regional surroundings, had surrendered all such interests and connections by the later twentieth century as it was on its way to becoming *the minnesota review* and being decoupled, in every form, from regionalism and its early Midwestern origins.

The Minnesota Review was launched by several University of Minnesota professors in 1960 with the aid of a grant from the Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation, which sought to promote regional writing and culture and economic research.[1] UM English professor Richard J. Foster was the moving force behind the creation of *MR*; other editors included Sarah Foster (UM English instructor in extension), Neil N. Myers (UM English department), Harry Strickhausen (Minneapolis businessman), William Stucky (Hamline University English department), and Sarah H. Youngblood (UM English department).[2] The UM professor Allen Tate, who was best

known as a Southern regionalist during the 1930s but also promoted regional writing more generally, served as *MR*'s Advisory Editor.[3] Foster was born in 1928 in Rochester, New York, and earned his BA and masters at Oberlin College in Ohio and his PhD from Syracuse University. His UM colleague Lonnie Durham remembered Foster as "smallish, dapper and handsome. Very sharp and quick-witted, but never cruel or condescending. He was popular with both faculty and students, a moderate partyer, though he loved a good time, eating out, the theatre and symphony." Foster was generally liberal in his political views and opposed the war in Vietnam, for example, but was not a protester or marcher (Durham). Foster, another colleague recalled, "was an Americanist, with a particular interest in 19th-century American literature" whose "break-through book" was *The New Romantics* (Indiana UP, 1962), which focused on the New Critics, including the regionally inclined Allen Tate (Warde). He also edited a book for the University of Minnesota Press entitled *Six American Novelists of the Nineteenth Century: An Introduction* (1968), which included essays on Midwesterners such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells, and served on the board of editors for the University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers series. Foster had a strong interest in regional writers and also wrote about nineteenth-century bourgeois or genteel writers such as Elizabeth Stoddard (Warde; Foster 1972). His students remember Foster as a regionalist, a traditionalist, and "a nineteenth century man at heart" (Norman). Foster is not remembered as a radical. His book *The New Romantics*, for example, largely favored the New Critics, who were generally viewed, for lack of a better term, as conservative and traditionalist. Foster resigned from the UM English department in 1968 (in favor of a "substantial salary increase") to move to Macalester College in St. Paul. In 1973, Foster moved to the University of Hawaii. He died in 1977 and was buried in the Lutheran cemetery in Harmony, Minnesota.[4]

The early *MR* embraced an inclination toward regionalism and a disinclination toward radicalism. During its launch in 1960, *MR* recognized that its work, "along with several other literary magazines that [had] appeared in the last two or three years, [was] part of a modest but noticeable Northwestern literary renaissance." Despite this allusion to regionalism, *MR* called for submissions of all kinds. When situating itself in the literary world, however, *MR* explained that it viewed the attacks of other journals and magazines on the

"bourgeois beast" and business culture as "aggressive" and "trivial," tending to place a "crippling limitation" on writing. These unspecified journals and magazines "lack[ed] a seriousness and integrity," *MR* opined. The *MR* sent the clear message that it would avoid the tendency to assault the American middle class, a tendency which had become commonplace among modernist and radical writers. *MR* "decline[d] to profess a 'viewpoint'" and pronounced that "we are going to keep our editorial mouths shut after this little initial splurge of self-analysis."[5]

During its early years, *MR* was mildly regionalist and paid some attention to the journal's Minnesota and Midwestern setting. The first issue of *MR* included the feature "Artists of the Midwest," which spotlighted Kent Kirby, a North Dakotan who taught in Ohio. The first issue also included a feature on the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis that called for more theater which was "not dominated by Broadway or Hollywood," a common decentralist theme in regional writing (Jones). The second issue of *MR* included the feature "Artists of the Midwest," which spotlighted Willis Nelson, a North Dakotan who taught in Wisconsin. Subsequent issues continued the "Artists of the Midwest" series and included essays on Midwestern writers such as Edgar Lee Masters and Mark Twain and pieces written by Midwestern writers such as James Wright, Frederick Manfred, and August Derleth. In 1962, for example, Manfred, a committed regionalist from Iowa who was living in Minnesota, reflected on the scene at the funeral of Sinclair Lewis (Manfred). After pieces by Manfred and Derleth were published in 1966, however, *MR* started to become a much different publication.

While still at the University of Minnesota in the early 1960s, Richard Foster turned *MR* over to Harry O. Weber in the UM classics department. Weber's "inclination" was "toward writers like J.D. Salinger and William Golding" (Swanson). Weber soon passed the journal to Roy A. Swanson, a native Minnesotan who was also a member of the classics department, and Swanson took the journal with him when he moved to Macalester College in St. Paul. Swanson "retained the original principles, with a nod, however, to classical literature," which was his specialty (Swanson). Swanson edited a best-selling issue of *MR* which focused on Pindaric criticism and reprinted a UM doctoral thesis on this topic in its entirety (Baxter; Swanson; Young). When Swanson moved to the University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee in 1967, he passed *MR* to his colleague Alvin Greenberg, who also taught in the Macalester College English department.

By the time *MR* left the editorship of UM professors, the UM English department had lost most of its former orientation toward Minnesota and the Midwest. Garrison Keillor, a UM English major during the 1960s, remembers little regional work persisting during his era (Keillor; Lauck 2014). The UM English department still made some room for the work of the New Critics but was also turning to more cosmopolitan and left-leaning writers and scholars and generally becoming more interested in the broader intellectual currents of the postwar era (Marx 39-40). Younger members of the department, one professor recalled, "spent our time grousing about the state of the department (then in the hands of mediocre Midwestern scholars) and planning strategies of resistance." This professor, Marty Roth, who became a UM professor in 1965, remembered that regionalism in the UM English department had died: "The department I entered was wholly national, and local writers, like Meridel Le Sueur and Robert Bly, felt ignored and discounted by the academics and answered it with anger" (Roth).

This discounting was new at Minnesota. Until the 1950s, the UM English department was housed in Folwell Hall, named for the first president of UM, who was known for his extensive multivolume history of the state of Minnesota.[6] In the 1920s, Guy Stanton Ford, a devoted Midwesterner, became the dean of the graduate school and helped found the University of Minnesota Press, which would publish regional works (Lauck 2013, 83-84). Theodore Blegen, another Midwesterner, who subsequently became dean of the graduate school, also launched a regional writing fellowship program in the 1940s that was focused on promoting writing about the Midwest.[7] The Midwestern-oriented writer James Wright, who hailed from Martins Ferry, Ohio, was hired by the department in the 1950s. John T. Flanagan, a Midwesterner who focused on the history of literature in the Midwest, also worked in the UM English department during this era. In the post-World War II era, however, the regionalist forces were largely in retreat in the UM English department, which would become a leading center of postmodern and radical literary theory.

By the late 1960s, *MR*—now based at Macalester—was shorn of any regionalist leanings. The last UM-related editor, Roy Swanson, noted that by this time *MR*'s "contents generally reflected the tastes and preferences of its respective editors" (Swanson). Swanson's suc-

cessor, Alvin Greenberg, recalled that Swanson "advertised *MR* as a journal of existential thought and literature" and recalled how, after he took charge of the journal, he "frequently received submissions with a cover letter that said, 'Dear Editor, Here is my existential poem'" (Greenberg). Greenberg altered *MR*'s editorial policy by ending its "existential editorial bias" and pursuing "experimental" writing, "including devoting one entire issue to a somewhat pornographic novel that caused one of the board members to resign" (Greenberg; Bernard). While an undergraduate at Macalester during these years, the writer Charles Baxter served as the business manager of *MR* (Spring 1966-May 1969) and recalls that *MR* had no regionalist leanings at that time (Baxter). By 1972, the McKnight Foundation ceased funding *MR*. Greenberg recalls that Foster, who had by then moved from UM to Macalester to chair the English department, "pretty much hated the direction I had taken the magazine and refused to cooperate to provide me with any institutional support" (Greenberg).

Greenberg then passed *MR* to C.W. "Bill" Truesdale, a former Macalester colleague who had moved to New York. As a result of this move, *MR* was, rather oddly, edited from Manhattan. Truesdale "turned 'Minnesota' into a metaphysical category" and *MR* was decoupled from its earlier regionalist inclinations (Baxter). In 1973, Truesdale turned *MR* over to Roger Mitchell, who agreed to take it over when Truesdale was about to terminate publication. Mitchell had written for Truesdale's New Rivers Press, which had been launched in the East in 1968, moved to Minneapolis in 1978, and, after Truesdale's death, begun again at Minnesota State University-Moorhead under new management.[8] Mitchell moved *MR* to Indiana University, where he taught. Under Mitchell's direction, *MR* "acquired its leftist credentials" (Baxter). Mitchell "rebranded *MR* as a journal of Marxist thought and literature," a line of inquiry and emphasis frequently at odds with regionalism (Greenberg; Mitchell 1973; Steiner). Mitchell recalls that he "transform[ed] it into a journal interested in Marxist Lit. Crit. which was very trendy at the time" (Mitchell 2013).[9] The Fall 1975 issue of *MR,* for example, explored "The Marxist Alternative to the Traditions" and published Fredric Jameson's "Notes Toward a Marxist Cultural Politics." Under Mitchell's editorship, *MR* became *the minnesota review*.

MR kept moving. In 1981, Mitchell passed *MR* to Fred Pfeil and Michael Sprinkler at Oregon State University, who were both mem-

bers of the Marxist Literary Group. Pfeil pioneered "whiteness studies" and "left his signature on the journal in its favoring experimental fiction, as well as in its commitment to a left politics" (Cerniglia and Jeffrey Williams; Mitchell 2013). Pfeil, a Buddhist, pacifist, and nonviolent social justice activist, died in 2005 (Hamilton). When Sprinkler moved to SUNY-Stony Brook in 1986, he took *MR* with him. Sprinkler, who was an "indefatigable powerhouse of crisp, incisive thinking and unshakeable commitment to the advancement of socialist culture," died in 1999 (Wald). *MR* later moved to East Carolina University, the University of Missouri, Carnegie Mellon University, and Virginia Technological University, its current home. Its former editor, Roger Mitchell, recently commented that *MR* came to be "marked by no identifiable mission and a good deal of editorial motion based on who was editor and what he or she was interested in. It was, more or less, a laboratory for the editor's interests or views." Since *MR* was mostly edited by academics, Mitchell notes, the "well-defined interests" of these academics shaped *MR* (Mitchell 2013). Their interests were "literary or critical and had little or nothing to do with place or region. Academics are the original gypsies, tied to a text and not necessarily to a region. A Joyce scholar in Winnemucca, an Americanist in Warsaw, etc." (Mitchell 2013).

MR has been, in short, decoupled from any sense of place. The current fiction editor of *the minnesota review* has noted that "[w]hat's intriguing to me is that it has never attempted a return back to its birthplace, its old stomping grounds. Maybe it hates its parents. Or maybe it doesn't have any parents—maybe *The Minnesota Review* is an orphan" (Liles). *MR* is not an orphan, however, as even a rudimentary review of its origins would attest. It had identifiable parents and beginnings and a lineage in the Midwest that were regional and nonradical. But these have long been forgotten. This journal's loss of connection to a recognizable place or region, along with the rise of Marxist literary criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, partly explains, in microcosm, the sad fate of regionalist writing in the American academy.

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NOTES

[1]See the news release entitled "New Literary Quarterly Due Next October," February 9, 1960, University of Minnesota News Service, UM Archives. The original grant request was not retained by the McKnight Foundation. Only materials for grants made after 1973 were

saved. The Foundation was launched in 1953 by William L. McKnight, an executive at Minneapolis-based 3M Company. Dorothy Wickens to author, October 2, 2013.

[2]*MR* vol. 1 no. 1 (Fall 1960); "New Literary Quarterly Due Next October," February 9, 1960, University of Minnesota News service, UM Archives.

[3]For Tate on regionalism, see Tate, "The New Provincialism," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 21. 2 (Spring 1945): 262-72.

[4]On Foster's departure from the University of Minnesota, see "Big Classes Precipitate Resignations," *Dispatch,* April 20, 1968. Sarah Youngblood, who was originally from Oklahoma, also resigned in 1968 from the University of Minnesota and moved to Mount Holyoke College. On Foster's death, see "Richard Foster Dies at 49; University Faculty Member, *Honolulu Star Bulletin,* October 12, 1977.

[5]The original purpose of the journal is set forth in *MR* 1.1 (Fall 1960). On the "literary flowering . . . in the Upper Midwest" during this time period, see Mark Vinz and Grayce Rad (eds), *Dacotah Territory: A Ten Year Anthology* [a]Fargo, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1982),3.

[6]See "English at Minnesota: A History," 4, a draft history of the department in preparation by the UM English department.

[7]On Blegen's impressive efforts, see Blegen to Helen Clapesattle, December 1, 1943, FF Fellows, Box 5, Blegen Papers, UM Archives; Malcolm M Willey to David H,. Stevens, December 21, 1943, FF Fellows, Box 5, Blegen Papers, UM Archives; John T. Flanagan, *Theodore C. Blegen: A Memoir* (Northfield, Minnesota, Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1977), 73-74. Blegen praised the University of Minnesota for providing writing fellowhips for regional writers and the University of Minnesota Press for making a "place, and a large place, for books interpreting the Upper Midwest." Theodpre C. Blegen, *Grassroots History* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1947), 11. Blegen secured the funding for the Regional Writing Fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation; the fellowships were designed to "secure the writing of sound but readable interpretations of regional life for as wide a popular audience as possible." The results of these fellowships include the novels *The Thresher* (1946) by Herbert Krause and *This Is the Year* (1947) by Frederick Manfred. Committee on Regional Writing news release, April 15, 1944, FF Fellows, Box 5, Blegen Papers, UM Archives; Flanagan, *theodore C. Blegen,* 73-74.

[8]On Truesdale's press, see C.W. Truesdale, "Literary Lights: The Small Presses Come of Age," *Macalester Today* 9August 1990), 16-19; Laurie Hertzel, "New Rivers Press Marks 40 Years," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune,* November 7, 2008. See also the forthcoming *Paper Camera: A Half Century with New Rivers Press* (Moorhead, New Rivers Press, 2015).

[9]The Fall 1973 issue stated that the "general perspective of the magazine will be Marxist." "Editor's Notes," *MR* new series 1 (Fall 1973), 175. See also Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 340.

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A MEMOIR OF THE MIDWEST: *FLYOVER LIVES* BY DIANE JOHNSON

CAROLYN DURHAM

Diane Johnson's *Flyover Lives: A Memoir* has been widely and, in general, positively reviewed since its publication in January of 2014. In particular, the book has been consistently praised for the quality of the writing, characterized, for example, as "eloquent," "smart," and "engaging" (Yardley, Gwartney) and for the appeal of the first-person narrative voice, found to be "charming," "affectionate," "candid," and "often humorous" (Gressit, *Publishers Weekly,* TERRANCE). Taking into account the content and the genre of the work, as well as the style, the *Boston Globe* concludes that "solid Midwestern values seasoned by charm, affection, and lovely writing" more than make up for the "lack of incest, addiction, murder, and shocking secrets" presumably required to attract readers to memoirs set in other parts of the country (Medwed). At the same time, however, few opinions are uniformly laudatory. The critiques of both readers and professional journalists center on two primary aspects of *Flyover Lives,* its title and its structure, both of which, I will argue, are key to Johnson's understanding of Midwestern literature.

At the risk of convincing those who have not yet read the book—or reinforcing the suspicions of those who have—that Johnson's memoir is at the very least curiously organized and unclearly unified, I want to begin with a brief description of the shape of the work. Divided into four parts of very unequal length, *Flyover Lives* is framed by a contemporary story that takes place in France and which, in part, provides the impetus for the text that lies in between. A French friend's accusation that Americans are ignorant of their ancestry and indifferent to history rankles Johnson's self-perception and motivates an investigation into her roots: "Was it possible I was only pretending to be comfortable in Europe when I am really an Illinois hayseed whose core of naïveté cannot be effaced?" (19). Her comment is, of

course, intentionally ironic: to interpret disapproval of one's country as a personal attack on one's individual psyche is no doubt as classically American as the accusation of American ahistoricism is stereotypically French.

Within this narrative framework, Johnson divides the second section of the book, "Flyover Country," into six short chapters about the Moline, Illinois, of her childhood. The twenty chapters of the third section, "Eighteenth-Century Beginnings," relate stories of the author's ancestors and their eventual migration to the Midwest. These chapters, informed by the diary written by her great-great-grandmother, Catharine Martin, when she was seventy-six (precisely the age at which Johnson began writing her own memoir), focus on the lives of pioneer women. Although the final section initially appears to resemble the second in content and the third in length, the eighteen chapters of "Modern Days" do not, in fact, deliver the structural parallelism they superficially promise. Geographically, the text ranges from the Midwest to Missouri to California to New York to London before returning to France; it also incorporates a lengthy discussion of Johnson's screenwriting experience with five major directors, as well as a series of personal anecdotes about marriage, motherhood, and divorce. The book closes with a short "Epilogue": Johnson's sixtieth high school reunion provides an occasion for both the text and the writer to return one last time to Moline.

Some reviewers of *Flyover Lives* appear to have missed both the self-mockery and the underlying empathy implicit in Johnson's early description of herself as a closet "Illinois hayseed" with an indelible "core of naïveté." In contrast to the many readers, both amateur and professional, for whom the success of the book lies precisely in the accuracy and affection with which it reawakens their own Midwestern memories, some journalists see their contrary assumptions of authorial arrogance and aloofness figuratively summed up on the very cover of the book. For Bill Savage of the *Chicago Tribune*, "'Flyover Lives' gets off to a start as rocky as an Illinois farm field . . . Though people who live on the East or West Coasts of the United States might refer to the vast expanse of the continent between LaGuardia and LAX airports as "flyover country," the title expresses more than a little condescension." Similarly, Zoe FitzGerald Carter of the *San Francisco Chronicle* finds "a distinctly flyover feel to 'Flyover Lives' . . . as if Johnson, living her coastal, international life, could only glance back at the Midwestern experi-

ence from a hazy distance, already on her way to somewhere more interesting." Even Christopher Benfey of the *New York Times*, whose review is highly laudatory, faults Johnson for "at times . . . adopt[ing] something of a 'flyover' attitude toward her native Midwest, populated [in her own words] by "Default Americans, plump, mild, and Protestant.'"

Although the word "flyover" appears three times in Johnson's memoir, it is conventionally combined with "country" only once, and not, in fact, in the overall title of the book but rather in the title of its second section, which, paradoxically, is grounded exclusively in the Moline of the 1940s and '50s. It is the thirty-third chapter, however, entitled simply "Flyover" and included in the final section of the memoir, devoted to "Modern Days," that provides the clearest sign of Johnson's wry humor. Taking the notion of "flight" surprisingly literally, "Flyover" in this context refers to her father's "cherished wish" that she "grow up to be an airline stewardess," a desire fully shared by his daughter at a time when "'stewies' were regarded as glamorous globetrotters" (174). Their plan is thwarted not by any awakening to the writer's eventual calling but only by her unfortunate failure to grow tall enough to qualify.

Whether intentionally or not and regardless of the fact that authors have little say in what ends up on the covers of their books, the illustration that appears on the front of *Flyover Lives* also invites a wonderfully ironic and textually pertinent reading, fully in keeping with Johnson's characteristic humor. The cover twice portrays the same female figure, presumably a representation of the author, who is seen both flying an airplane over the United States and standing firmly in the Midwest, represented by a farm, a tractor, the Great Lakes and two evergreens. The depiction of the United States is otherwise restricted to a few skyscrapers on the East Coast, a palm tree in Florida, a mountain range, and the Golden Gate Bridge. To the right of the image, France is similarly caricatured by a drawing of the Eiffel Tower in the north and a beach umbrella and villa in the south. The jacket of Johnson's memoir inevitably recalls Saul Steinberg's famous *New Yorker* cover, which epitomizes the traditionally pejorative understanding of "Flyover Country" by foregrounding a relatively realistic Manhattan street scene juxtaposed with a narrow strip of land between the Hudson River and the Pacific Ocean within which the Midwest consists only of the words "Kansas City," "Nebraska," and "Chicago." In contrast to Steinberg's drawing,

Martin Haake's cover illustration, indebted to American folk art, uses cultural stereotypes and childlike simplicity throughout so that no geographical area is privileged by the quality of the drawing; at the same time, however, the most prominent area is, clearly and appropriately, the Middle West.

In addition, Johnson's memoir can be seen to challenge the assumption that the adjective "flyover" leads of necessity to a derisive description of the Midwest. Because the author's experiential account encompasses so many different people, places, and events—she foregrounds summers in upper Michigan, Iowa, and North Dakota, for example, as well as her childhood in Illinois—the text reflects the vastness and the diversity of what is in itself an ill-defined geographical region with controversial borders. "Flyover" also recalls the word "overpass," and the vignettes of *Flyover Lives* explicitly serve to bridge differences between different areas of the country (notably, the Midwest and the South) and between past and present (the adult author and all of her past selves, both personal and ancestral). In the United States, moreover, "flyover" also refers to a "flypast," that is, a celebratory flight linked to national pride and memory, and again this is fully consistent with Johnson's text. The novels of manners for which Johnson is best known, including those set outside the United States, have always centered on the concepts of "America" and "Americaness," but even in this context the nonfictional *Flyover Lives* serves as a model. If some of Johnson's memories are clearly nostalgic—books of green stamps, casseroles made with canned soups, streets lined with elm trees—the clear majority of her observations focus on fundamental American types—the soldier, the con man—and fundamental American values—religion, happiness, optimism.

One may certainly think that the author oversteps in ascribing to her family the status of "default Americans," but the choice to present them as representative not of Midwesterners but of all Americans, as the frequent use of the narrative "we" reinforces, is an important one: "This story starts with some people named Cosset because their story can be taken as exemplary" (59-60). The story in question is of course one of a nation whose citizens led "flyover lives" from the beginning—"all American stories begin with someone crossing an ocean to come here" (59)—and continued to do so throughout history—"it was a nation of people moving around" (117). Indeed, given the value placed on mobility in the United

States, Johnson's own desire to escape the place where she was born is surely widely shared by American children in particular. Thus, Johnson's description of her eclectic memoir of the Midwest as "really a travel book" in the epilogue to *Flyover Lives* serves not at all to deride the region as a place to pass over but rather to remind us that it is the vital "heartland" of America whose traditional values recall the "charm and goodness" of American society (262-63). But perhaps the clearest sign that Johnson's use of the term "flyover" has nothing to do with a preference for a coastal existence lies in how thoroughly uncomfortable she is, first in New York and then in California, once she does leave Moline: "It was in California that I knew I had indeed finally left, or been cast out of, my native land—out of Moline and the Midwest. In Los Angeles I was fully deracinated; after this it wouldn't matter where I lived—England, France, Iran. Deracination was what I had always hoped for, but yet I didn't take to it . . . I didn't thrive" (185).

The second major focus of reviewers' discontent is, as I noted earlier, the shape of *Flyover Lives*. FitzGerald Carter attributes what she denounces as a "distinctly flyover feel" to the structure of the book as well as to its tone: "much of 'Flyover Lives' has a haphazard, unconsidered feel"; its chapters "feel strung together rather than part of a coherent narrative." Benfey, too, describes the memoir as "loosely structured" and Debra Gwartney of *The Oregonian* calls it "a scattered, meandering, and often-shapeless effort." Readers appear equally confused: "it felt unfinished and a bit wayward . . . . It jumped around a lot"; "it comes across as a collection of random moments"; it felt like "a conglomeration of unrelated stories" (*Elle*). Without for a moment disputing the formal unconventionality of *Flyover Lives,* which Johnson herself conceived as "a meditation on the Midwest" whose varied pieces and subjects would be unified by the continuity of the narrative voice (Durham 8), I want to suggest that the construction of the work stems not from carelessness, indifference, or a lack of attention to careful crafting, but, on the contrary, from a conscious desire to find a form—or rather to combine a series of forms—that best reflects the content.

As we know, the immediate impetus for Johnson to complete the autobiography on which she had been working for some years was the concurrence of her age and that of her great-great-grandmother, who began to keep a record of her life at the age of seventy-six. The portrait of Catharine Martin and an initial quotation from her writ-

ing, in which she expresses the prescient hope that her "grandchildren's children" will read her diary, serves as the frontispiece to *Flyover Lives*; and this is subsequently the single text from which her great-great-granddaughter cites extensively. It seems very clear that Catharine's diary not only acts as a key source for Johnson's own memoir but also provides one of the primary models for the work's episodic, anecdotal, fragmented, and personal nature. Virginia Woolf's description of her own *Diary* provides an apt analogy: "Something loose knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes into my mind" (cited in Jelinek 208). Although Johnson refers not to Catharine but to Catharine's mother at the end of her memoir, she fittingly concludes as she began, by claiming a direct link to the maternal voices of her past: "I sound to myself just like great-great-great grandmother Anne Perkins at the end of the eighteenth century, as if nothing changes at all" (263).

In other ways as well, Johnson constructs *Flyover Lives* to resurrect the aesthetic forms as well as the facts of the past. Her particular interest, as in many of her novels, focuses on women and the arts and crafts associated with them. The form of Johnson's work, as much as its content, brings back a world in which women "always seemed to me to be busy making things—canning and quilting, knitting and crocheting" (121). The quilt, in particular, again featured in one of the rare photos in the book as well as in the text, offers yet another model for the multiple layers and the separate pieces that are joined together to form the overall patchwork that is *Flyover Lives*. Estelle C. Jelinek, in the introduction to her collection of essays, *Women's Autobiography*, notes that narratives of women's lives, unlike the unified and linear stories of male autobiographers, are characteristically "disconnected, fragmentary, or organized into self-sustained units rather than connecting chapters" to produce "a pattern of diffusion and diversity" (17).

Lest I seem to have been too dismissive of negative critical commentary on *Flyover Lives*, let me end by noting two additional models that I believe Johnson's work also reflects, albeit ironically. Although every bit as appropriate as the diary and the quilt, these analogies are not normally seen as similarly positive. In the midst of speculation about how people amused themselves in towns and times without social or cultural forms of entertainment, Johnson concludes that "there is plenty of amusement in gossip." In what might well be

a description of her own casual, conversational, often speculative, and on occasion even mildly wicked text, she notes that "[g]ossip implies an engagement with others, an interest in them, a sense of narrative and pleasure in stories well told" (158). Finally, she refers to the prevalence of a substance that, like *Flyover Lives*, is of mixed and impure form: "mud recurs in midwestern recollections with much frequency" (132). A MUD (Multi-User Dungeon), of course, also refers to a virtual world in which multiple participants are engaged in role-playing fantasies; one might think of a high school reunion, similar perhaps to the one that brings Johnson back to Moline over fifty years after she left.

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"THE BEST COMBATANT STORY OF THE GREAT WAR"? THEMATIC AND DESCRIPTIVE JUXTAPOSITION IN THOMAS BOYD'S *THROUGH THE WHEAT*

DAVID ALAN RENNIE

In his review of Thomas Boyd's *Through the Wheat* in the *Bookman,* John Farrar compared Boyd's first novel to Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, writing that, "If someone could have given Willa Cather Boyd's army hero William Hicks, for the last half of "One of Ours," we should have had a great American novel." Without taking Farrar's idea of a composite Cather/Boyd novel literally, his contrast between the works nevertheless serves two purposes. First, it serves as a useful contradistinction for those familiar with Cather's novel, yet unacquainted with Boyd's text. Commenting in a past edition of *MidAmerica,* Paul Miller wrote that although "Cather questions the ultimate value of heroism in modern, mechanized war, she is old fashioned enough to hold on to its possibility" (101). If *One of Ours* is ambiguous about the possibility of heroism in modern warfare, Boyd's narrative—composed of the repeated exposure of his protagonist to military drill, combat, digging defenses, dead and rotting corpses—emphatically negates such a possibility. Second, Farrar's endorsement places *Through the Wheat* as a Midwestern novel of the First World War on a par with *One of Ours*, a status which this essay seeks to avow.

A native of Defiance, Ohio, Boyd is one of many authors from the Midwest, including Ernest Hemingway (*The Nick Adam's Stories, Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises* & *A Farewell to Arms*), F. Scott Fitzgerald (*This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and the Damned* & *The Great Gatsby*), Cather, Mary Borden (*The Forbidden Zone*), James Stevens (*Mattock*) and Zane Grey (*The Desert of Wheat*) who have written on the subject of World War I. Despite the initial critical and commercial success of *Through the Wheat*, which I shall outline below, the

work has since faded into obscurity, and to date Boyd has been the subject of only a single scholarly article, published by *MidAmerica* over thirty years ago: Douglas A. Noverr's "A Midwesterner in the Maelstrom of History." In this article Noverr argues that "Boyd's outlook was essentially deterministic, behaviouralistic, and naturalistic" and discusses Boyd's ideological leanings in *Through the Wheat* and in his last novel, *In Time of Peace* (99). This article seeks to expand on the work of Noverr, providing the first explication of the formal strategies Boyd employed to articulate his naturalist outlook in *Through the Wheat*. First, it will examine how Boyd, like Cather in *One of Ours* and Hemingway in *In Our Time*, employs the technique of juxtaposition by contrasting Midwestern and European settings in order to support his contrasting imagery of warfare and the natural world. Second, I will examine the ways in which a dichotomy of prose types and destabilized language emphasizes this figurative contrast in order for Boyd to convey the psychological trauma experienced by William Hicks.

Through the Wheat strongly reflects Boyd's personal experiences of World War I. Boyd enlisted in the US Marines in 1917; the following year, during his military service in France, he participated in actions at Belleau Wood, Soissons, Saint-Mihiel, and Blanc Mont, where a poison gas attack invalided him out of the war. By 1921 Boyd had moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he edited a weekly column in the *St. Paul Weekly News* and managed Kilmarnock Books. Boyd had been initially reluctant to enter journalism, and it was only at the insistence of his fiancée Peggy Smith, a journalist for the *Chicago Daily News,* that he found himself working for the St. Paul weekly. Yet Boyd's confidence in his role grew as he began meeting and interviewing writers such as Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, and, most significantly, F. Scott Fitzgerald (Bruce 40). Boyd first met Fitzgerald in person in 1921, and the acquaintance developed further when the Fitzgeralds moved into St. Paul, where Scott made regular visits to Kilmarnock Books. Stimulated by his literary acquaintances and Peggy's success in placing her first novel, *The Love Legend*, with Scribner's, Boyd set out to transmute his experiences of WWI into what would become *Through the Wheat*. While both Harcourt Brace and Scribner's rejected the novel on the grounds of the superabundance of WWI novels already on the market (Bruce 45-6), Fitzgerald was greatly impressed by the work and successfully lobbied Scribner's into accepting the novel. Published in April of 1923, *Through the Wheat*

fulfilled the promise Fitzgerald identified, topping the *Chicago Tribune*'s bestseller list by August and reaching a seventh printing the following year (Bruce 56-7). The novel's critical reception was also positive. Theodore Dreiser wrote to Boyd, telling him that "with the exception of Latzko's "Men in War" and Crane's "Red Badge of Courage" I do not recall a war book that has so gripped and moved me." Unsurprisingly the novel's highest praise came from Fitzgerald, who described it as "the best combatant story of the great war" in the *New York Evening Post*.

Despite its initial success *Through the Wheat* has never emerged from the peripheries of literary criticism. Typically, the commentary which *Through the Wheat* receives focuses on the representation of heroism in the novel. In the *Cambridge Companion to American Literature 1890-1950* David Minter offers the suggestion that *Through the Wheat* is a work "from which all signs of honour, coherent authority, and clear purpose have vanished" (173). Similarly, the *Encyclopaedia of American War Literature* tells us that *Through the Wheat* is "a novel of protest" characterized not by "heroic resolve but —suicidal apathy" (44). As such, our understanding of the narrative and descriptive strategies in the novel remains largely undeveloped. Under scrutiny, however, Boyd's first novel emerges a densely crafted, vividly descriptive and psychologically incisive text. Like Dreiser, Fitzgerald compared *Through the Wheat* favourably to *The Red Badge of Courage* in his review of the novel, and such comparisons to Crane's seminal text of American warfare have been the most popular recourse to describing *Through the Wheat*. More recently Boyd biographer, Brian Bruce has opined that "[w]ith his descriptions of the natural surroundings, the quality of light, and even the activities of ants on the battlefield, Boyd was clearly trying to strike the same naturalistic notes that Crane stuck in *The Red Badge of Courage*" (45). Repeatedly Crane describes troop and artillery movements in terms of animal or insect imagery and emphasizes the lack of human agency involved in these procedures by presenting images of natural phenomena which express the divorce between the regenerative natural world and the human realm of mechanised warfare. Moreover, Boyd incorporates a distinctly Midwestern character into his imagery.

Through his use of wheat imagery, foregrounded in the novel's title and revisited in multiple images, Boyd links Hicks's upbringing in rural Ohio with the fields through which he and his fellow Marines

confront the enemy in France. Boyd writes that "[i]n the early springtime this particular sector looked very much like one of the calm farms which Hicks was accustomed to see in many parts of Ohio. The birds sang as lightheartedly, the sun was as bright, the grass was as green and fragrant over the slightly rolling field" (22). Having emphasized the similarities between the French landscape and Hicks's Midwestern home, Boyd then builds a sense of contrast by juxtaposing and merging descriptions of wheat with images of combat. The tops of a field take on "a sticky green of decaying corpses"; we are told that "[d]azzling sunlight beat upon the full-topped heads of wheat—[and] on the absurdly shaped helmets of the soldiers"; "heads of grain" are compared to "the slender lances raised by an army of a million" (133, 186, 195). In these images Boyd conflates the dialectics of home and abroad and the regenerative power of the natural world as opposed to the destruction of martial conquest. Through this simple though powerfully suggestive device, Boyd integrates the venues of Ohio and France in a delocalised yet universal symbol. At one point Boyd even describes a French wheat field as "majestically and omnipotently engulfing the universe" (184), establishing a dual sense of topological familiarity and displacement mirroring the fate of an Ohioan fighting in the first global war in the fields of France.

Yet Boyd is not the only Midwestern author of World War I to contrast the topography of the Midwest with that of European battlefields. As John Rohrkemper has commented, in both Cather's *One of Ours* and Hemingway's *In Our Time*, the contrast between Midwestern and European landscapes mirrors the modernist penchant for juxtaposition. Although modernism predated the First World War, the conflict accelerated and symbolized many of its artistic processes. While many thousands of young lives were altered radically the unprecedented scale and slaughter of mass industrial war produced for American servicemen a further sense of severance with the past created by the vast distances separating the New and Old worlds. As Rohrkemper contends, "Juxtaposed against the strafed European countryside was a remembered land of one's youth, an idyllic America, an early twentieth century manifestation of the New Eden" (20). Furthermore, he adds, the particular characteristics of the Midwest, free from the stigma of slavery that had tainted the South and, unlike the Northeast, still clinging to the ideal of Jefferson's yeo-

man farmer, posed "the starkest contrast to the political cynicism and violent destruction which the war revealed to the American" (20).

Yet while the contrast between Claude Wheeler's upbringing in rural Nebraska and Nick Adams's Michigan adolescence work to emphasize the brutal new reality of warfare, the contrast is reciprocal, revealing in both novels a critique of an Edenic conception of the Midwest. Part of the positivity that Claude Wheeler finds in warfare is that it acts as a corrective to the confines and disappointments of his adolescence in rural Nebraska. While Krebs of "Soldier's Home" who "went to the war from a Methodist college in Kansas" (111), returns home to feel stifled and alienated by his mother's religiosity and insistence that he follow the example of local boy Charley Simmons who, "has a good job and is going to be married" (115), in *Through the Wheat* Boyd supresses Hicks's back story, telling us only that he is "accustomed to—many parts of Ohio" and that he spent his summer vacations at a "northern Michigan farmhouse" (22). The narrative, which ends in France, with Hicks reduced to a psychological vacuum, offers us no more information on his life back home. As such *Through the Wheat* does not perform the same reflexive critique of the Midwest that Cather and Hemingway achieve.

Although Boyd does not challenge the "supposedly Edenic Midwest," his sustained contrast between the wheat fields of Hicks's past and his present creates the same "thematic parallel to the fragmentation and recombination of images" (29) that Rohrkemper identifies in *In Our Time*. In this collection Hemingway juxtaposed not only geographical locations but also, by interspersing his stories of conflict with vignettes, made juxtaposition undergird the entire structure of the collection. In the case of *Through the Wheat*, the juxtaposition of setting and imagery is instead supported by the use of corresponding prose types. Once again a comparison with *The Red Badge of Courage* can aid our understanding of Boyd's text. In *Art Matters* Paul Lamb argues that "the human consciousness apprehends the external world through the mind's instantaneous perception of what is going on out there and its equally instantaneous perception of what is being felt in here" (50-51). As Lamb explains, although we might view perception as being objective and sensation as subjective, these are in fact both completely subjective and simultaneous occurrences, subsequently mediated by the mind's retrospective understanding of those perceptions and sensations. For Lamb these processes have corollaries with the types of descriptive

language used to describe them in fiction: language that records perceptions of the external world is impressionistic; language that describes the internal sensations which accompany perceptions of the external world is expressionistic (50-53). To illustrate the difference between these types of prose Lamb finds examples of each form in *The Red Badge of Courage* and contrasts them with a view to correcting the orthodox critical understanding of Crane's novel as being primarily impressionist in its mode of representation (55). By "impressionistic" Lamb refers to passages like the following where Crane presents external data as it impinges on Henry Fleming's consciousness: "The corpse was dressed in a uniform that had been blue, but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish" (43). Likewise, much of *Through the Wheat* is composed of this kind of empirical documentation that records the ordinary details of military life: manoeuvres, rest, facing inspection, the general contempt of the soldiers for their officers, receiving mail, and even—in the same neutral reportage—scenes of death and wounding. Often these descriptions are strikingly similar to those offered by Crane: "Once or twice men were killed when the shells struck, and their bodies were hurried away to the dressing station; one morning the body of a red-haired German—was found fastened to the barbed wire in front of Hicks's post. There was a hole in his side made by the explosion of a small hand-bomb" (29).

Yet, as Lamb argues, to describe Crane's work as "impressionistic" is too simple; such a definition omits the prose in the novel which deals with sensation as opposed to perception, and the same can be said of *Through the Wheat*. The sensations, or *qualia,* which accompany perception, are much less straightforward to communicate in language because "[p]erception—involves a subject apprehending a material object outside of itself, whereas in sensation the subject is dealing with an ineffable experience within itself" (Lamb 51). Thus, Lamb argues, there is a second type of "expressionist" language in *The Red Badge of Courage* in which Crane approximates the *qualia* of Henry Fleming's sensations: "In the air, always, was a mighty swell of sound that it seemed could sway the earth. With the courageous words of the artillery and the spiteful sentences of the musketry mingled red cheers" (45). Here noises are represented by abstractions: sound swells, artillery and musket fire are given literary personifications and Crane uses synesthesia to convey "red

cheers." Lamb's understanding of the prose of *The Red Badge of Courage*, expanded to include "expressionist" as well as "expressionist" description, can equally be applied to *Through the Wheat*: "Just as the trees in a clump of woods, perhaps a mile away, were beginning to come out against the sluggish sky like sharp, delicate etchings, the batteries awoke. After the first flock of shells, sounding like black, screaming spirits, were fired" (91).

Here, in contrast to the documentary passages of the novel, combat is represented, as in *The Red Badge of Courage,* by abstraction, personification and synaesthesia. Such arresting metaphor and abstraction permeate the novel. For instance, at the close of the novel the sun, reminiscent of Crane's famous image of the "red sun pasted in the sky" (52) is described as "an ochre cannon-ball—suspended in the soft blue sky [and] Efflorescent clouds, like fresh chrysanthemums, were piled high atop one another, their tips transuded with golden beams" (265). Under comparison with *The Red Badge of Courage* it emerges that *Through the Wheat* is a novel characterized by a dichotomy of documentary and expressive language, a distinction which allows a more developed understanding of the naturalist imagery in both novels. It can be seen that the figurative contrast between human and natural realms is supported by the expressive language used to describe images of the natural world, which contrasts with the often sordid documentary representations of human warfare.

Furthermore, this juxtaposition of prose types allows Boyd to depict the descent of William Hicks into psychosis and suicidal apathy as the novel progresses. As Boyd describes it, "the odour of — dead bodies—the infuriating explosion of artillery; the kaleidoscopic stir of light and colour had bludgeoned Hicks's senses" (252). As the novel progresses, Boyd's language shifts from documentary descriptions to increasingly abstract and expressive prose, vividly implying the psychological trauma caused by the material circumstances of warfare.

However, even identifying the presence and effect of impressionist and expressionist prose in *Through the Wheat* does not amount to a full understanding of the language in the novel. Lamb claims that, "Crane's combination of impressionism and expressionism works to immerse the reader in the flow of Henry's experience" (57) and this summation can equally be applied to *Through the Wheat*. However this is, on its own, a somewhat reductive assess-

ment of the prose in the novel. Not every description of an external event is shown as Hicks perceives it, nor is every abstraction necessarily an approximation of the *qualia* he experiences. It would be more accurate to say that the text fluctuates between documentary and expressive language that is not necessarily filtered through Hicks's consciousness. In fact the language used in the novel is far more destabilized than this qualification allows. While most of the narrative follows the experiences of Hicks, there are occasions when Boyd breaks away from him for short, yet sustained, forays into the lives of other characters who have, until then, only been included peripherally. For instance, as Third Platoon approach a wooded area possibly occupied by German soldiers, Boyd suddenly shifts to the perspective of Private Kahl: "'Damn this mud,' he told himself—'Yes,' thought Kahl, 'It's amusing that we walk so slowly when we are right out in plain sight.' It struck him as odd that the line was not being fired upon, and he explained it to himself—'But—what if the Germans are just waiting until we get right almost into the woods. Wouldn't that be a mess!'" (93-94).

Yet not only does Boyd sporadically shift from Hicks to Kahl, he employs a variety of literary devices in the process of doing so. Note in the above example that Boyd initially bookends Kahl's thoughts in quotation marks, yet in narrating Kahl's next thought, Boyd continues without quotation marks in the line "It struck him . . .". Then in the following sentence the narrative shifts again, this time to be told from Kahl's perspective, ending with the rhetorical exclamation: "Wouldn't that be a mess!" Much the same occurs in the aside concerning Sergeant Harriman. This passage begins with a transcript of a full letter sent to Harriman by his sweetheart at home in which she indicates that she may soon marry another man. In the subsequent passage the reader is told how Harriman feels ("It left him feeling cold") then, as Harriman decides to shoot himself in the foot, the narrative shifts to Harriman's own voice: "A shame to spoil leather such as that—By heavens this was no joke, shooting yourself in the foot" (148).

The stylistic fluctuations contained in these two asides, involving shifts in character, narrative perspective and punctuation, are symptomatic of the amorphous variety of language that pervades *Through the Wheat*. There is, for instance, Boyd's penchant for erudite affectation in his passages of documentary description: the authority of Major Adams is, "as impersonal as the fourth dimen-

sion"; soldiers imitate an officer's posturing, "instead of using the customary flat-footed form of perambulation"; while Boyd writes of "the obverse bank of the ridge" (110, 241). By contrast, the kind of expressive language Boyd uses varies enormously. This language can take the form of unorthodox simile; for example, soldiers wearing gas masks are compared to "pompous owls," the dawn is described as being like "a fifty year-old virgin," and the bloodied face of a dead soldier is compared to "a battered sunflower in the evening" (36, 43 & 107). These erratic instances of multifarious language and focalisation might, in another context, read as blemishes and imperfections, but this is not the case in *Through the Wheat* partly because the documentary detail of the novel balances these linguistic extravagancies.

Moreover, Boyd's frenetic language and focalization play a vital supporting role to the central axis of documentary and expressive prose in the text, mirroring the very chaos and volatility of war. *Through the Wheat* is, in many ways, a novel of juxtaposition: contrasting the natural and the human, the physical and psychological, each vivified by equally contrasting descriptive modes. Central to this theme is the sense of contrast and continuity found in the repeated use of wheat imagery, which continues to echo Hicks's past even as this becomes corrupted by the most gruesome images of warfare. This sense of contrast is at its most complete at the end of the novel, where the fields have been turned to "drab earth, beaten lifeless by carnage," where corpses instead of crops occupy the ground and a local farmhouse becomes "a grey-capped sepulchre" (266). The totality of this final image and the corresponding depth of Hicks's psychosis rest on the total effacement of the regenerative potential of the natural world which has been building throughout the novel and, finally, on Boyd's awareness of the parallel between thematic and descriptive juxtaposition contained in his sustained conflation of images of warfare and the rural Midwest.

Ultimately the criteria to be fulfilled by the "best" war novels are subjectively prescribed and evaluated. But even if we do not agree with Fitzgerald that *Through the Wheat* is the "best combatant novel of the great war," I hope to have argued the case that it should occupy a more significant place in the canon of American war literature that criticism has so far afforded it. Now that we are in the centenary years of the First World War, the renewed critical focus on the literature of the conflict presents an opportunity both to further the academic

rehabilitation of *Through the Wheat*, and in doing so, to enrich the process of scholarly remembrance.

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ALICE THE BEAUTIFUL: REMOVING SOCIETY'S JUDGMENT IN HEMINGWAY'S "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

RACHEL KARSLAKE

There is one short story in the Nick Adams collection that seems to baffle critics. Although Hemingway once claimed this story as a "simple tale" (Young 7), critics have found "The Light of the World" anything but simple. Multiple interpretations have been written, all claiming to have the answer to Hemingway's eight-page riddle, all theories claiming the "light" as one of the various male characters and dismissing the value of the females. Although these interpretations have their value and merit, they all neglect the most obvious source of light in the story: Alice. After Nick is removed from the small-town society within the story and placed as a fellow "outcast," he is then able to see Alice without society's judgmental lens and perceive her true beauty.

From the very beginning, Nick and Tom are placed as outcasts in an unfamiliar small town. The story opens with the friends entering a bar, whereupon the glass covers are placed over the free-lunch plates, and they are refused access to this standard service. James Barhour addresses this scene: "As they enter, the bartender places a glass cover over the free-lunch bowls. The implication is obvious—there is no such thing as a free lunch. However, the episode suggests an added distinction about statement and fact: words are often misleading and phrases gloss over truth" (6). The bartender covers the free lunch when the boys enter, but not as a metaphoric lesson as Barhour suggests. What Barhour neglects to mention is the fact that a free lunch is available to Nick, but not to Tom. This fact becomes evident as the story unfolds. In the exchange that follows, the reader quickly notices that the bartender is slightly more tolerant of Nick, but for Tom it is a different story. After Nick's beer is already drawn, the bartender serves Tom: "He drew that beer and cut it off and when

he saw the money he pushed the beer across to Tom. 'What's the matter?' Tom asked. The bartender didn't answer him" (39). The bartender refuses to interact verbally with Tom any more than he has to. The scene continues: "Tom reached over and took the glass off the free-lunch bowl . . . 'No,' said the bartender and put the glass cover back on the bowl" (39). This time, the refusal is specifically directed toward Tom. This rejection is followed by a quick retort, resulting in the bartender reaching under the counter for what the reader can only presume is a gun. Nick quickly distracts the man by ordering a second beer. Hemingway enhances Tom's refusal when, after the drink order, he offers Nick the free lunch, removing the glass tops.

At this point, the reader begins to feel uneasy about the bartender's dislike of Tom. As this uneasiness begins, the story quickly escalates with the boy's removal from the bar. After Nick is offered the free lunch, Tom once again verbally confronts the bartender, and this time the bartender's response is very telling: "'All you punks stink'" (40). This slang reference, "punk," quickly tells the reader part of the bartender's problem: he believes that Tom is a homosexual.[1] What is not disclosed at this point in the narration is that there is more to the bartender's dislike of Tom than meets the eye. However, because the story is written in the first person, the reader feels the confusion that the boys experience in this brief encounter—only seeing the story through Nick's perspective. Later in the narrative, the real reason for the bartender's hatred of Tom is subtly suggested in the train station.

It is not until Nick and Tom reach the train station on the outskirts of town that the reader gets a hint of why the bartender treated Tom so badly. Hemingway only gives clues to the reader, relying on a close reading to solve what some critics see as a puzzle. The first piece of the puzzle is given to the reader when Nick and Tom enter the train station: "Down at the station there were five whores waiting for the train to come in, and six white men and four Indians" (40). At first, this seems like a mere description of the people that Nick sees when first entering the station. Later in the story, after Nick and Tom interact with some of the other waiting passengers, Hemingway again turns to Nick's observations of the people not included in the immediate conversation: "Two Indians were sitting down at the end of the bench and one standing up against the wall" (42). Nick's observation goes mostly unnoticed because of the discussion that he and Tom are engrossed in with the others. Further into the story, Nick's

observations of his surroundings are given once more: "The ticket window went up and the three Indians went over to it" (44). At this point, the reader takes notice that only three Indians are mentioned and begins to ask: where is the fourth?

The question of the missing fourth Indian has been a prominent theme in the interpretation and criticism of this story. For the most part, the "missing" Indian has been made to be of larger consequence than the author may have intended. Some critics, such as Barbara Maloy, have interpreted the whole story based on the concept of this missing Indian. In her work, she compares Hemingway's story to the *Alice in Wonderland* stories written by Lewis Carroll: "Since the Indians never speak and do nothing else of significance in the story, their function may be primarily that of adding linguistic strength to the picture of a shifting scene . . . If, however, we are in a Looking-Glass world of fantasy, these 'authorials [sic.] errors' become further evidence for our cause" (119). Maloy interprets the missing fourth Indian as a intended trick played on the reader by Hemingway and infers, from this and other scenes, that the whole story is a parody. Upon further investigation, this interpretation cannot hold its ground. The "missing" Indian is not really missing at all; the fourth Indian in the story is Tom.

The fact that Tom is the fourth Indian in the train station is not an unbelievable scenario in a Nick Adams story. Readers of the Nick Adams stories know that many of Nick's interactions and friendships are with Native Americans. Because this story is written from Nick's perspective, Nick does not see Tom as anything other than his friend. Therefore, the fact that Tom is a Native American is not revealed at first to the reader. Nick simply does not see Tom as different from himself, even though others, like the bartender, do. This insight on Tom's Native heritage is mentioned in Philip Young's work, "Big World Out There," which focuses on the Nick Adams stories. When writing about "The Light of the World," he states that Tom is "in life an Indian boy named Mitchell" and one that Hemingway frequently spent time with (8). With careful reading backed by Young's explanation, the puzzle comes together easily for the reader.

Nick and Tom's removal from the bar sets the story in motion, placing the two in an outcast position within the small town's society. At first, this removal is confusing for the boys. Their immediate reaction is rejection and exodus, choosing to leave town as soon as possible. This reaction is perfectly understandable; the status of "out-

cast" or "other" is not desirable by any individual in society, especially in a small town. John Donohue explains this human desire to belong in society in his work, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*. In the book he observes that "to be an individual is to 'stand out' from the group or the system and such separation always entails vulnerability. Deep in our nature there is a desire to belong, to fit in" (174). The vulnerability in standing out is that the individual becomes the unwilling receptor for society's harsh judgment. This harsh judgment often leads to mistreatment, and in extreme cases, violence. When Nick and Tom arrive at the station, they find that they are not alone in their desire to escape judgment; in fact, there are others there waiting to escape as well.

Hemingway provides a brief description of the characters within the station, but the reader learns more about the individuals listed as the narration unfolds. Through the narration, the reader soon learns that besides the four Indians, there is an openly homosexual man, and three of the five prostitutes are very large women. The largest of the prostitutes is Alice, and Nick gives her first notice in his description of the women who are waiting: "She was the biggest whore I ever saw in my life and the biggest woman . . . There were two other whores that were nearly as big but the big one must have weighed three hundred and fifty pounds. You couldn't believe she was real when you looked at her" (41). Nick's initial description of Alice is one of amazement; he had never seen a woman that large. At first, Nick's description seems judgmental and harsh, but as the narration continues, the reader is able to see that his description changes for the women of average size: "The other two were just ordinary-looking whores, peroxide blondes" (41). Nick does not give the women a second thought; instead, the paragraph is devoted to Alice's description. When Nick provides the description of the women of average size, it is almost dismissive and the women are referred to as "ordinary-looking." This disparagement of the two smaller whores guides the reader to dismiss their presence in favor of the larger women, who are described further in a more favorable manner, despite Nick's obvious initial shock at their size. He describes the two larger prostitutes in comparison to Alice and says that: "They'd have both gone well over two hundred and fifty pounds. The other two were dignified" (42). Although the women are both large, they are not dismissed and are even referred to as "dignified." Nick's prefer-

ence for the larger women quickly becomes evident, and as the story continues, the focus shifts to the largest of the women: Alice.

Once in the station, the story shifts dramatically to Alice and she alone becomes the primary focus of the narration. The shift in narration and focus to Alice is not unintentional, but in fact, planned by the author. Young refers to Hemingway's intention and quotes the author within his work, saying: "He [Hemingway] tried once to explain it by saying that although it is 'about many things,' it is really 'a love letter to a whore named Alice'" (7). Hemingway's intention of favoring and highlighting Alice is easily seen through the narration and through Nick's thoughts and actions in the station. Aside from her large physical presence, Alice possesses the qualities that the other female characters do not: beauty and humanity.

The fact that Nick finds Alice beautiful is not hard to detect. His physical attraction to Alice grows in the time he and Tom are waiting in the station and is revealed to the reader through his inner dialogue. The first admission of Nick's attraction to Alice is through his admiration of her voice. Nick refers to her voice three times, thinking: "She had a nice voice," a "really pretty voice," and "that sweet lovely voice" (41, 42, 46). As the narration moves forward, Nick admires Alice's voice more and more, progressing from "nice," to "really pretty," and finally to "sweet lovely."

Nick's admiration for Alice soon includes more than her voice, and by the end of the story, he also admits to being physically attracted to Alice. By the end of the narrative, Nick's regard for Alice is expressed: "She had the prettiest face I ever saw. She had a pretty face and a nice smooth skin and a lovely voice and she was nice and all right and really friendly" (46). Alice becomes the "whole package" for Nick; she is beautiful in his eyes. But before this beauty can be verbally admitted to the world, Nick is pulled out of the situation by Tom, functioning as society's check, and leaves the station.

Society's judgment of Alice is not favorable: she is an obese prostitute. Alice does not escape this judgment, even in a train station filled with other "outcasts," which can be heard through two of the other characters: the cook and Peroxide. Alice is not judged by the others in the station because she is a prostitute, but for something that society feels is much worse—her obesity. The first attack on her weight comes from the homosexual cook: "you big disgusting mountain of flesh" (41). The cook compares Alice to a mountain: immovable and large. Peroxide, a prostitute herself, also attacks Alice's size:

"you big mountain of pus" (46). Peroxide deepens the insult, adding the infectious "pus" into the description, making Alice not only large, but gross as well. Peroxide's attack comes directly after a debate about the love of one man—Stanley "Steve" Ketchel.

The point of the women's argument over the intimate knowledge of Stanley "Steve" Ketchel is not about the details, truth, or symbolic meaning of the boxer's life, but rather about Ketchel's life story as a vehicle for highlighting Alice's other virtue: her humanity. Many critics focus their arguments on Stanley Ketchel's biography and state that the flaws in the narration about the details of Ketchel's life impugn Alice's credibility and truthfulness. However, when the conversation is taken as a whole, the details of Ketchel's life are not what is important; rather, the plausible descriptions of the women's memories separate the truth teller from the liar.

Alice is seen as truthful and as a sympathetic character through her reactions to Peroxide's claims and her own responses. Upon hearing Steve Ketchel's name, Peroxide begins a dialogue that claims her true-love relationship with the boxer. This description is delivered by Peroxide in a detailed and staged manner. Nick describes the other passengers' reactions: "Every one was very respectful to the peroxide blonde, who said all this in a high stagey way, but Alice was beginning to shake again. I felt it, sitting by her" (44). The passengers listen to Peroxide but are not moved by her proclamation of love. Nick, the reader's guide as narrator, again shifts the focus from the average Peroxide back to the larger Alice, pointing the reader to notice her "shaking" and the fact that he is seated "by her," physically showing his solidarity with her. The narration is then turned toward Peroxide and her "love story" with Ketchel. When her dramatic monologue is finished, the crowd, although moved by the remembrance of a seemingly popular boxer, was somewhat unmoved by Peroxide's love: "It was sad and embarrassing" (45). Peroxide's description was too much and unbelievable. The fact remains that she is a prostitute and the undying love of a locally great boxer seems doubtful. Another reason for her unsympathetic reaction from the crowd is Alice's response to her story—she's crying.

Alice's tears are the second emotion that is displayed by Hemingway for the reader. By contrast, Peroxide shows little to no emotion, even in her speech about her now dead true love. By giving Alice strong emotions (laughter and tears), Hemingway brings her alive and makes her character compelling. However, he goes further

than that—he makes her truthful. Alice finally reacts to Peroxide's story, calling her a liar, and offers a more plausible story of her own. After calmly calling Peroxide a "dirty liar" (45), she tells the others that she knew Ketchel in her hometown of Mancelona (45). Hemingway improves her story by repeating the word "true" multiple times in her dialogue, enhancing her point, whether truthful or not. In her admission, Hemingway brings Alice's emotional side forward to increase believability: "Alice was crying so she could hardly speak from shaking so. He said, 'You're a lovely piece, Alice'" (45). Alice's display of emotion enhances her truth, but also her plausible compliment made by Ketchel helps to make it stick. Ketchel calls Alice a "lovely piece," a compliment fitting for a prostitute and not an unbelievable admission of love. Alice's story is realistic and confronts Peroxide on her relationship with Ketchel. At the same time, Alice also answers Peroxide and society's judgment of her body with cool confidence.

Alice's answer to Peroxide and society's judgment of her body comes in one breath. After refuting Peroxide's claims about her "love" with Ketchel, discounting her narrative as secondhand, Alice retorts with a simple and clear statement about herself: "I'm clean and you know it and men like me, even though I'm big, and you know it, and I never lie and you know it" (46). Alice's answer begins with a declaration concerning her health: she's "clean." Alice states that she is free from venereal disease—a common problem in the very early part of the twenty-first century, before antibiotics were in full use for treatment. Not only is Alice healthy, she is desirable. Alice affirms, to Peroxide and the waiting passengers, that men like her. The fact that men are physically attracted to Alice should not be hard for the reader to believe. Although society may dictate standards of female beauty, in the end beauty is an individual preference. As before, repetition is used to reinforce her point to the reader. The phrase, "and you know it," follows each of Alice's statements: a total of three times in one sentence. This poignant repetition serves to cement Alice's words, adding to her already established credibility in the reader's eyes. Alice defends her body with skill, but despite the truth in her speech, society still frowns upon those who do not conform to the norm of the "ideal" woman.

Any deviation from society's standards is usually met with considerable criticism. For Alice, this is also the case. When Peroxide's memories are informally disproved by Alice, she resorts to society's

standards of judgment to discredit Alice's story, saying: "[i]t would be impossible for Steve to have said that" (46). Because Alice weighs 350 pounds, Peroxide feels that it would be "impossible" for Ketchel to admit any praise toward Alice and not herself. Peroxide's disbelief is not outside or different from the societal standards of the time: "Society's definition of the beautiful female is one who is thin. While men and women are discriminated against for being obese, there is a marked difference in how much weight is acceptable for each of the sexes and a marked difference in the ratio of females that are rejected because of size" (Beach and Martin 54). Peroxide is surprised at Alice's confessed compliment because of her size. Alice is not only obese, but what we would classify today as "morbidly obese."[2]

The harsh judgment of obese women is nothing new in a society where standards for the ideal body weight for women were set long ago. Even during the pre-World War I era, the time period of this story, the standard of female beauty was already established as thin. As Jill Zimmerman states in her article, "An Image to Heal," thin female body standards have been in place for well over 100 years:

> For over a century, newspapers and magazines have been deluging Americans with images of ideal beauty, and only strict emulation of these ideals has been sanctioned as attractive. There was a period of time during the early-to mid-1800s when the full female was considered beautiful. However, the slimmer, more athletic-looking Gibson Girl, first created by Charles Dana Gibson, replaced it as the ideal in the 1890s, and thinness has remained an integral part of female attractiveness ever since. (Zimmerman 20)

As early as the 1890s, thinner has been valued as ideal and better in society. Alice, for obvious reasons, does not fit society's standards. Not only is she a member of a profession that society frowns upon, but she is extremely overweight and these two in combination work against her, even among other "outcasts."

Despite Peroxide's harsh words and society's judgment, Nick still finds Alice to be beautiful. Nick and the reader are drawn to Alice despite what society says they should feel. Through Nick's eyes, the reader is able to see beyond society's view of Alice's physical body and realize that beauty is based on individual attraction, opening the reader to think beyond the established "ideal." Alice is more than physically beautiful to Nick; her beauty reaches to her soul, showing Alice in her true "light." As Roger Scruton observes in his work,

Beauty: A Very Short Introduction, beauty is more than the shape of the physical body: "When we speak of a beautiful human body we are referring to the beautiful embodiment of a person, and not to a body considered merely as such" (40). It is Alice's inner "light," combined with her physical body, that makes her truly beautiful to Nick. He is able to see Alice as what Scruton describes as an "embodied person" (40). Scruton explains that "[a] body is an assemblage of body parts; an embodied person is a free being revealed in the flesh" (40). In the station, Nick is able to truly see Alice as a whole person. He is able to see beyond society's rules and become aware of his own individual standards of beauty. Through the combination of her physical beauty and humanity, Nick is able to see the light of her soul, revealing Alice as the story's true "light" in its small "world."

The story is designed to highlight Alice's beauty. The reader is able to see past what society tells us to see, and view Alice for herself. By immediately removing Nick and Tom from society at the beginning of the story, Hemingway enables Nick to judge the people waiting in the station. By becoming an outcast, Nick is free from societal chains and is able to question the reader's standards of judgment that are based in societal rules. When the reader is also able to break free from established and unspoken rules, then Hemingway's "light" becomes easy to see.

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NOTES

[1]Punk definition 3c in Merriam-Webster's dictionary: *"slang:* a young man used as a homosexual partner especially in a prison."

[2]Morbid Obesity is defined by the University of Rochester Medical Center in the following way: "An individual is considered morbidly obese if he or she is 100 pounds over his/her ideal body weight" (np).

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON AND TROUTDALE, VIRGINIA: THE POWER OF NATURAL LANDSCAPE AS MIRRORED IN TWO BLUE RIDGE STORIES, "THESE MOUNTAINEERS" AND "A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

MARILYN BOSSMANN

Sherwood Anderson's short stories, "These Mountaineers" and "A Sentimental Journey," are frequently lumped together with "A Jury Case" as expressions of his view that the mountain people of Virginia are "America's last and uncorrupted human beings." This essay challenges this limited interpretation of Anderson's stories as incompatible with his determined effort to debunk Northern cultural stereotypes and the futile efforts of "romances" to portray the mountain people of Southwestern Virginia as "noble savages" (Anderson "These Mountaineers" 161-165). He asserts in June of 1930 that "[t]here is no people anywhere more misunderstood than these mountain people" ("What Say!" 8).

Anderson loved the Blue Ridge Mountains and contended that "[i]n Virginia, there is a touch of the South without too much of it" (*Nearer the Grass Roots* 9). By living among mountain people, Anderson also realized that they defied mystification, just as the Blue Ridge Mountains on any evening at sunset appear solidly placed. Instead of myths and mythologizing, his narrative conveys a strong sense of time and place, focusing on the coming of industrialization and the factory system to the mountain communities of Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. It is also laden with a clear and critical recognition that the communities in these "lonely and lovely hills" are subject to the same destructive and dehumanizing forces of social and ecological disintegration as those inhabitants of the "tenement districts of cities" ("These Mountaineers" 171). This recognition constituted a literary epiphany for Anderson, as he admitted to

his editor, Paul Rosenfeld, in January of 1930, shortly after finishing both stories:

> Lately, I have been thinking that, as my central interests seems to be working people, small farmers, factory and mill people, and as the position of all such peoples becomes more and more insecure and uncertain in the American industrial system, that with mass production, speed-up systems . . . the real living drama of American life now lies with them (Modlin 111).

As editor and owner of two local newspapers—one Democrat and the other Republican—Anderson's life and art were intertwined with the mountain people living in the environs of his farm, Ripshin, in the small mountain town of Troutdale, just outside Marion. This essay will integrate into a critical analysis of "These Mountaineers" and "A Sentimental Journey" information gained from ethnographical studies of the people of Troutdale, including close friends and business associates of Anderson, as well as citizens of Troutdale who still remember when Anderson lived among them.

It is important to realize that Anderson did not settle among these mountain people in the manner of a privileged, indolent "country squire," as some have supposed. Rather, he related to them as equals, not least because that was the only way they would relate to him. He was an active, engaged member of the Troutdale community. Indeed, Anderson dreamed of being in the vanguard of a new breed of small-town newspaper editors "fighting ugly prejudices, mass brutality, [and] stupidity" enculturated in "poor whites" by generations of "slavery, race prejudices, [and] the appeals of cheap politicians…" (Anderson, "Letter to Will Alexander" 8). Anderson's art was an integral part of his political practice and local, social, and ecological activism and cannot be understood apart from it.

"These Mountaineers" and "A Sentimental Journey" are mirror-image stories. The former focuses on the corruption of mountain culture and the destruction of habitat by lumbering and mining, while the latter takes as its theme the harmonious union between humans and mountains that resists these destructive forces and influences. "These Mountaineers" confronts the romantic illusions of a Northern outsider with the reality of dirt and decay, embodied in the "evil-looking old man" in a logged-out part of Virginia, while "A Sentimental Journey" shows through mountain man Joe's disillusionment with the outside world the close, rich bond between family, community,

and mountains that is absent in "These Mountaineers." Both stories communicate a strong sense of place and the narrator's journey through that place. The narrator in "These Mountaineers" appears as a hungry outsider tramping through a rugged terrain, void of "the great forest" and populated by the indigent remnants of a population now dispersed in mill towns and factories ("These Mountaineers" 161-163). He comes upon an "evil-looking" old man who lures him to the dubious hospitality of a dilapidated old cabin, also occupied by a pregnant, emaciated teenage girl and her "lazy" withdrawn boyfriend. The encounter is brief, tense, and hostile. The scene reeks of dirt and decay, isolation and loneliness, fear and hatred, in a landscape and culture uprooted from the past and stripped of all energy and vitality except for the hurt . . . hateful pride and forcefulness of "a child [who] knows too much and not enough" (170). The narrator tells the story as an outsider, demonstrating patronizing curiosity and, eventually, stiff indifference, remaining a "foreigner" or outsider, as naïve strangers are still called in these mountains.

In contrast, David, the narrator in "Sentimental Journey," moves from outsider to mostly trusted insider by telling the story of the journey of the once "feared" and "cold" neighboring mountain family man, Joe, who is visiting David among his books and who is thinking that David and his wife were "not too grand" (178). Out of curiosity about the outside world and the need for some extra cash, Joe travels eighty miles away from his thriving but confining homestead in the densely wooded hills to get work in a mining town (180). Taking his son of seven years with him for companionship, Joe makes his way in the mining town and earns good money, but soon is repelled by the noise, grime, and violence of the place and people. Seeing the homesickness in his boy's eyes, Joe decides to travel back prematurely through the snow-covered mountains. After an arduous journey, facilitated by "[a]ll the people in the mountain cabins," he arrives home to a warm homestead with " . . . plenty of wood in the house," realizing that the concern he had about his wife's ability to "fell trees as well as a man" was a mere smoke screen for the real reason he journeyed so hard to reach home: "Both he and the boy were half insane with desire . . . [Joe] wanted back his hills. He spoke of the happiness of himself and the boy trudging in the darkness in the deep snow" (183, 186,182). The journey home "was all sentimentality on Joe's part," as the narrator comments on Joe's apparent susceptibility to feelings (182). Contrasting the stark, stripped-down prose of

"These Mountaineers," which prefigures Hemingway's "monotonous insistence on the inarticulateness of life," "A Sentimental Journey" conveys Anderson's Lawrencian sense of "the dark rich life of the earth and moving with the ancient rhythms" (Troy 508, Bishop 12). It is, according to Anderson, a life that can be sustained only "out of the [modern] world" ("A Sentimental Journey" 177).

It is only by recognizing Anderson's acute sense of the dialectic between nobility and corruption, worldliness and innocence, thrift and laziness, ruggedness and dilapidation among mountain people themselves that we can understand his view of the integration of landscape, family, and community that characterized the thriving lives of mountain people and the threat of destruction posed to those lives by the mining and the lumber mills that "denuded some of Virginia's most scenic virgin forests" (Williams). A close-grained analysis of these two short stories shows Anderson's marvelous use of details, as they throw up images of how the family, work, and food of the people living in the Blue Ridge Mountains are debased by the forces of industrialization, but where the impassioned human spirit, cut from the mountain's "lush iron" core, struggles to survive (Gaterud C1).

Anderson's recollections include pictures of this area: "[t]he very landscape felt old, settled. Anderson's explanation was that it had come 'up out of the sea earlier than most places in America.' It had had time 'to soften its outlines'" (Townsend 247). Yet, these outlines define "imperturbability," the boundary between the inner and outer world, in which the inner is valued over the outer, and the ascent is defined as the realm of spirituality, awareness, and transposition (Herder 134). The inner landscape is one of an integrated life and nature, a sense of fullness and harmony. "A Sentimental Journey" depicts the imprint of mountain landscape and its people who blend into the surrounding hills (173). The narrator David who now lives in " . . . a log cabin built on the bank of a creek . . . spot[s] Joe, the mountain man, for the first time: David is picturing "'[r]omantic tales of mountain men shooting strangers from behind trees or from wooded mountain-sides . . . [when] suddenly, out of an old timber road, barely discernable, leading off up into the hills . . . [Joe] emerged . . . mounted on a beautifully gaited but bony bay horse . . . [Joe's] eyes [are] cold and gray . . . as the gray sky overhead . . . [He came] . . . [o]ut of the thick golden-brown trees, well up the side of the mountain . . . a thin column of smoke floating up . . . the night was turning cold . . . [d]arkness was coming on fast . . ." (175-177).

Here the mountain serves as a natural barrier. "There was no development of a road system . . . [mostly mountains were] . . . inaccessible . . ." (Wright). The landscape picturesque is not separate from the mountain man instinctively dwelling there nor from his symbolic nature ensconced in the "immobile mass . . . " (Herder 134).

But Anderson was no romancer. He presents the mountains as ". . . the crucible of life, containing the opposite poles . . . all-embracing image of totality . . . clarity of force" (Cirlot 220-221). Anderson describes Troutdale and the Blue Ridge: "It is a mountain county with three rich farm valleys," just over Walker Mountain—a stretch of less than 10 miles (Anderson, Letter to Will Alexander, 3). The land was rugged, fierce when blanketed in storms and snow, and its citizens, though self-sufficient, could be entrenched, mean spirited and untamed, in contrast to a sweet nature also found in mountain folk. Anderson's friend and business associate W. F. Wright remembered that "…Troutdale had been a vicious community before [Anderson] arrived; people 'planted evil weeds in other people's gardens—literally'" (Rideout 2, 9). The land was nearly timbered out; consequently, "people worked for five cents an hour" (Harliss). A former mayor of Troutdale, Callie Hash Wright, remembered that some families had lost everything after the lumber companies pulled out and had to move, when Troutdale "had gone down to the bottom" (Greer 11). Anderson could take satisfaction in helping change this social landscape with what W.F. Wright later called a "'spirit of kindliness' which [Anderson] introduced into the whole Ripshin area" (Rideout 2, 9).

A bleak vision of the landscape in "These Mountaineers" is manifested in the narrator's interpretation of the "mountains stretched away, above the poor little houses ("These Mountaineers" 162). The mountain's heavy timber is diminished, ill-formed, and telling of the narrator's vague understanding of those lands stripped and those people separated from the naturalness of the "great trees," even though the narrator confirms that "[m]uch of the country will grow nothing but timber" (163). He arrives on a hot, arid day, when the stark characters appear in the landscape. He identifies the people separated from the Blue Ridge Mountains, then and now known for their patterns of light and dark, bringing illumination and "darkness made visible" (Cirlot 54). Once abundant with blue-green spruce forests, the mountain's association is now with a loss of previous glory. The narrator has little understanding of those lands once heavily timbered and those people now separated from the naturalness of "great trees."

The "unsalvaged" characters—the old man, the young girl and the young man—stand out from the hills.

The narrator references the landscape as something that does not belong to those "white and poor . . . mountaineers" who were defined as people and poor and white and mountaineers, dismembered from the naturalness of the surroundings (161). The landscape is of ". . . factories . . . com[ing] down into this country . . . mill towns . . . [and the narrator] was walking . . . in a hollow . . . lost . . . [on a] road of some sort. [He] had gotten . . . to a little town . . . at a cross roads . . . On both sides . . . were the magnificent hills . . . the 'Blue Ridge . . . glorious blue. What a country it must have been before the lumber came . . . soft moss . . . silence . . . great trees" (161-163). The narrator casts his bait "to fish," penetrating the deep scene " . . . that lies under the world of appearances" (Cirlot 100). But his fidelities lie elsewhere. He views the landscape as something separate from its mountain dwellers, of a generation brutalized by poverty and ravaged hills.

The narrator's perseverated view of the landscape serves as the backdrop for presenting the dysfunctional "family," a triad of lost, angry souls, the evil-looking man; the young man, elusive, withdrawn, and emasculated, who was "'. . . too damn lazy to fish . . . he's too damn lazy for anything on earth'" ("These Mountaineers" 170) and the girl-child. The old man exploits the girl-child, with his presentation of her as a hellcat, a vixen and responds to the narrator's inquiries, by saying, "'Oh, you're curious, eh? . . . She ain't mine . . .'" (166). The girl's trauma represents the basest form of exploitation, the most precious, sacred image on earth yet the one most scrapped. She is raped, with child, pacing " . . . won't eat . . . very, very young . . . ragged . . . dirty . . . thin . . . bare," a throwaway and the center of the breakdown of the Appalachian cultural staple—the family intact (167-70). Yet her strength is not muted; her angry spirit is sustained. Her image is a " . . . sketch of feminine pride among the 'poor whites' of the Southern hill country," and Anderson grew to " . . . [cherish, respect and admire] . . ." these young women (Geismar xix). The narrator of "These Mountaineers" admits, "In many of these young mountain faces there is a look it is difficult to explain—it is a look of breeding, of aristocracy. I know no other word for the look . . . she had it" (167). In a letter to Eleanor Copenhaver, Anderson inquired:

> I wonder what you will feel about "These Mountaineers" . . . In it is bound up something of the new tone I am after now in writing.

> You will see how much less I am in it as a personality . . . I think the writing gains strength by it. It doesn't seem to me that you lose sympathy for the girl. I tried to make her stand alone, without relation to anyone, a portrait. I don't mean by this . . . that I want to give up feeling. (Modlin 27)

Anderson expressed great concern for mountain girls, recognizing the apparent abuse they suffered. He noted they were tired yet full of life, of "mill age" at thirteen (*Nearer the Grass Roots* 35).

Anderson was conscious of the complex sides of mountain culture and stress and took it upon himself to affirm the better over the worse. In a letter to Will Alexander, Anderson confirms his belief about families in Troutdale: "In Virginia family is everything. Certain families have considered themselves as sacred . . . ," as represented in the family dynamic emulated in "A Sentimental Journey" (8). Joe's family was big, cohesive, and once separated and then joined together. A woman's strength was equal to that of a man's. Father honed his son's skills to survive and carry on.

The contrast between the families is represented by the contrast between their treatment of the children—the focal point of all future families. Anderson chose two contrasting states of being to create mirror images: the large, hardworking family found in "A Sentimental Journey" and the dysfunctional clan in "These Mountaineers," emphasizing the radical differences in the treatment of the most innocent parties affected by the invasion of industrialization—the young boy and the young teenage girl. The most terrible image that Anderson records from his wanderings of ravaged southern mining and milling is the use of poor mountain girls recruited to work in the mills, with no family or assurances that their safety, health and well being would be protected. He claimed that "I am told, children have two ages, the real age and the 'mill age' . . . these are the poorest of poor people, from the hills, the mountain gullies. They went with weary steps long the road . . . . they had thin legs, stooped shoulders, delicately featured, hardbodied little mountain girls" (*Nearer the Grass Roots* 25, 3).

The girl-child in "These Mountaineers" is represented by the sound of her "barefooted [feet] across the floor" (166). She has no voice, no influence over the actions of her sinister guardian and his depiction of her as a "Hellcat . . . [who] won't eat" (167). She has no say in her welfare, though she appears on the stairs, poised above the

men, with a "look of breeding, of aristocracy" (167). The evil-looking man's claim that she is not his is truer to her state than he realizes because she is the chosen one, a dispossessed, abused girl-child "stand[ing] alone" in a hollow, disjoined, on the earth but not of the earth. Her sacredness is in the form of her once innocent state, now manifested in the child she is carrying. This child is her family, though the girl-child may not survive without the solidness of family structure or anyone around her who is practiced in skills of survival. She lashes out as the female animal protector, a skinny "wilder looking creature . . . filled with hatred" (167, 168). Her pa has died; her homeland has been hollowed out; there is no work, and those around her have no backbone nor will they use the natural resources or mountain skills so abundant in days past. The narrator observes the girl's status and decides to return the next day to try to give her a twenty dollar bill, pay off for being poor so she may be able to "get out." But she scorns him, knowing he is an outsider who cannot really help her. He does not share his fresh trout caught in the nearby stream and has no intention of doing so. And his money is tainted. She tells him " . . . to put it somewhere . . . ," and to get out and not come back (171). He leaves, without "transcending his indifference," showing no loyalty to her predicament. He has no epiphany and, in his own defense, superficially queries, "What was I to do? After all, a man looks after his hide" (171). The narrator relies on a convenient, ugly quip, justifying his intrusion, limitations, and prejudices, as Anderson reveals the narrator's defensiveness and irrationality.

Anderson's imaginative configuration of the abused pregnant girl-child represents the idea of the land's invasion gone awry with respect to the preservation of mountain family culture and terrain. Those industries stripped the forests and its inhabitants, forcing able-bodied men and women to leave the area and seek jobs. Carolyn J. Wright recalls this poverty-stricken time: "Families had to leave the mountains to find work . . . . That's what happened at that time . . . it was before the depression and people were poor . . . the house . . . [was] very primitive . . . you cannot imagine working so hard . . . you never saw fat mountain people . . . most of the women were real stringy because they worked so hard and walked a lot and didn't have much food" (Personal Interview, 4 March 2008). The new realities of mountain-family trauma are manifested in the representation of the girl-child's predicament and the depleted mountainside where she dwells. Anderson's imagery conjures "a dangerous alliance of the

manipulation of the nation's success myth with an expanding modern technology" (Dunne 114).

In great contrast, the narrator in "A Sentimental Journey" introduces Joe as "setting out—taking with him the oldest, a boy of seven" (179), with good reason: Joe's corn crop failed and his hogs had died. He has to replace his goods for the well-being of the family by traveling to seek work in a mining town eighty miles away. Carolyn J. Wright recalls:

> That just hurt my feet to think about that seven year old. All that child knew was the loyalty to his father. It would be normal to take the eldest…He would not take the girl . . . A man is to do certain things . . . . You would have nobody to talk to, nobody to teach things, trapping, hunting and storytelling and no doubt, the wife had nothing to say about it . . . [The boy] might have been her favorite child . . . [Joe] went off to make money but he missed her, the hills, and his family, no doubt he was a little embarrassed or grateful or comforted" (Personal Interview, 4 March 2008).

In the industrialized town, the boy was uncomfortable and not acclimated to resting "on the floor in a miner's cabin" (180). Joe shared with his son the same uneasiness and alienation while in the "huge factory with grim-looking walls . . . noise night and day . . . air filled with black smoke" and alien people "strange and terrible" (181,180). The boy's tearful eyes spoke the truth about mining towns. The boy and Joe were locked in their loneliness, and the normality of the father and son bond grew when Joe's "curiosity about the outside world was quite gone" (181). Finally, leaving the mining town, Joe returns to the trail in winter, "Hungry for its whiteness" and the seemingly pure nature of its surroundings (181).

Subsequently, Joe travels home with the boy under what appear to be impossible conditions, using their skills of "wading through the deep snow" (181). The boy still has no shoes—Joe cuts quilt pieces for the boy's feet. The money earned in the mining town will be used to feed and support the family and not on such luxuries as a pair of shoes. Using the horse and the naturalness of "struggl[ing] forward afoot . . . it warmed them up" (183), they were welcomed in mountain cabins, except for one that recently housed "outsiders." Joe forced his way in to the outsider's cabin, to warm his boy by the fire, and the "outsider" people, misunderstanding Joe's need to save his son from the cold, appeared terribly frightened of Joe's intrusion. But

Joe knew the odds of survival, and he loved his son. They left the house, and as the snow grew deeper, the boy used his acquired skills of "breaking the way" through the solid snow and brush (185). Arriving home, Joe saw that his wife had plenty of wood in the house. From the mining town, Joe brought only enough cash that was needed; money was a means to an end, even though he had a hard time claiming his paycheck before he left the mining town because he could not read the directions to claim his pay. Carolyn J. Wright adds, "You [couldn't] read about what day they pay you or about how much they pay . . . . It would be true that a man like Joe could not read or write . . . It was no sin (Personal Interview, 4 March 2008).

Anderson offers additional meaningful associations by presenting symbolic notions of consumption in the mountain culture through the use of the food images in "These Mountaineers"—defined as nourishment unavailable or wasted—and "A Sentimental Journey"—portrayed as useful and prudent. In "These Mountaineers" there is no fish, no store, but only dirty canned beans. Tired, hungry, and lost, the narrator hopes for some store-bought "cheese and crackers or a can of sardines" (163) after going fishing for trout in the nearby stream. He comes upon the evil-looking old man who offers the narrator beans. Showing ignorance of this time and place and the old man's intentions, the narrator admits he would be glad to have anything and tramps up to a logged-out area with the old man. The narrator imagines that food in all settings in this part of the mountains consists of warm, appetizing homemade beans and an imported Smithfield Ham, but he experiences store-bought beans on a dirty plate and the fire extinguished near the cabin, even though stream trout is readily available in the mountain valley. Yet it appears no man, including the old man and the young man who seem to be living in the cabin, will fish, " . . . to [satisfy] the hunger all around him" (Cirlot 108).

In this stark setting, the evolution of passing down mountain survival skills is evidently elusive. Even more desperate is the girl-child and her inability to "eat . . . [or] . . . keep anything down" (168). She is too sick to eat, though she is clearly pregnant. The young man is too "lazy" to fish and the old man serves beans from a can, food images representative of a cultural phenomenon of denial, decay, and industrial production, along with the imported will of "foreigners" taking and not sharing. The narrator is guilty of misunderstanding natural ownership of the mountain people. He tries to throw money

around, leaves, and does not return. His own "fishing" has brought him little knowledge and less wisdom, similar to those "outside" industries' pillaging without thought of word or deed.

In "A Sentimental Journey," the image of food is quite different. There is no real sense of the lack of nourishment. What we get is Joe's discrimination in choosing his own food over that of an outsider's. And even though he does sit to eat and offers moonshine to David in his cabin, Joe chooses to do so, a symbolic gesture of acceptance of people he now knows and trusts on his own terms. Joe reports he travels to a mining town to earn money to pay for new hogs. He takes nothing else. When he travels home, he must force his way into a cabin owned by "newly settled outsiders," and even though he is curious about the kitchen and food, he does not partake, except for the warmth of the fire for his son's well-being. Joe remembers that he "went into the kitchen but would not touch the food he found, that he reckoned the people of the house were higher toned . . . so high and mighty that he would not touch their food," making certain that David's wife heard that part of the story (185). Joe's mountain confidence appears to be that he does not need what outsiders have, and he supports the idea that "the people of the grand house evidently did not have any better food than he sometimes had at home" (185). And as Joe's story ends, he tells how the boy and he arrived home "almost starved," but apparently not wanting for borrowed food from a "foreigner's kitchen" (185).

"These Mountaineers" and "A Sentimental Journey," in an unexpected juxtaposition, are often overlooked by critics as being simplistic or thin and representative of Anderson's deterioration, a writer "gone south." But Anderson's impulse was to make contact with American community life. An outsider himself from small-town Ohio, he slowly gained the luxury of his Troutdale neighbors' trust, companionship, and storytelling. His support for mountain culture and his ability to write about it in relationship to its strengths, ills, and complexities did not make him the owner of it. What he did do is struggle to understand it and not simplify its interpretation. There is no deficiency in his attempt " . . . to perceive imaginative facts that offer unique insights into his subjects," and his rendering of characters mirrored in the Troutdale landscape was far from commonplace or disconnected from relevant social, political and economic contradictions (Taylor 49). What we need to remember is that Anderson's

final push was "to be true to the essence of thing" and especially that of the unfolding American story, whether in Troutdale or Winesburg.

Irving Howe spoke to this phenomenon: "The true action of these stories are so seldom dramatic in the usual sense of the term: Their purpose is not to record a resolution of conflict but to refract an enlargement of consciousness" (104). It was a surprise to see so little praise or critique of these two stories juxtaposing artistically structured images that readily rub against one another. What Anderson presents here is a challenge to those who cast off or misunderstand his newly found voice influenced by his time spent on one mountain, along with its trepidation and beauty. And, perhaps, the mirrored images in these two Virginia stories represent Anderson's attempt to serve up an apotropaic reminder that America's mountain culture might not but should be preserved.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OFMIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2012

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, during 2012. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence within the twelve-state area that defines the Midwest. Fiction and poetry using Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including (if applicable) designations of locale within square brackets at the end of each citation. However, because of space constraints, primary source materials are limited to separately published works; those appearing in literary journals and magazines are generally not included. Secondary sources, usually journal articles, books, or doctoral dissertations, are listed by subject.

The third section lists *Library of America* editions of Midwestern authors issued in 2012; and periodicals published for the first time in 2012 that relate in some way to Midwestern literature, either in subject, content, or locale, are listed alphabetically by title in the fourth and final section of this bibliography.

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Abbreviations used in the citations denoting genre and publication types are as follows:

A	Anthology	juv	Juvenile fiction

bibl	Bibliography	lang	Language; linguistics
biog	Biography	M	Memoir
corr	Correspondence	N	Novel
crit	Criticism	P	Poetry
D	Drama	pub	Publishing; printing
I	Interview(s)	rev	Review essay
jrnl	Journalism	S	Short fiction

Citations for novels, poetry, short stories, memoirs, and other types of literature about the Midwest, as well as those written by Midwestern authors, are continually sought by the editor for inclusion in this annual bibliography. Please send them to Robert Beasecker, University Libraries, Grand Valley State University, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale, Michigan 49401; <beaseckr@gvsu.edu>.

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