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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 Except for winners of our annual poetry and prose contests, we do not publish poems, short stories, or creative nonfiction.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, 535 Elinor Street, Chattanooga, TN 37405. If your essay is selected for publication, you will then send your manuscript by electronic attachment to marcia-noe@utc.edu after making any required and/or desired changes. Please follow the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook. In documenting sources, use parenthetical citations within your essay and 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
Loren Logsdon

PREFACE

On May 7, 2009, members of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its thirty-ninth annual meeting. Highlights included three sessions celebrating the centennial of Gene Stratton-Porter's *A Girl of the Limberlost* and the Mark Twain Award Panel on the work of Scott Russell Sanders. At the awards banquet on Friday night, the Society presented two David Diamond Student Writing Prizes: to Stephanie Carpenter for "Doctor and Patient," and to Matthew Low for "John Neihardt Writes: Textual Appropriations of Indigenous Storytelling." The co-winners of the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize award were Ed Morin for "Yes" and Roy Seeger for "Diminishing Returns." The Paul Somers Prize for Creative Prose went to Dawn Comer for "Raised in a Corn Palace." Loren Logsdon received the MidAmerica Award and the Mark Twain Award went to Scott Russell Sanders.

SSML is currently operating at a loss due to increased expenses in publishing its journals and convening its annual symposium. A major gift from the late Jane S. Bakerman has 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, David D. Anderson, Robert Beasecker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ray B. Browne, Mary Ellen Caldwell, Louis J. Cantoni, G.B. Crump, David Diamond, 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.

CONTENTS

THE TIME I TOOK PATSY WALKER UP TO HOLY REDEEMER

MARY MINOCK

to pray for sinners and to sit
in awe in that big romanesque amber candle light
of a gray March afternoon in a
one true and only holy apostolic church
with her and her little hillbilly hiccup
and clearing of her throat
and with her protestant residual
from her grandmother
like an our father called a lord's prayer
with extra unnecessary words
and only one other now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep
prayer besides
like Kool-Aid at that baptist wedding
Mama took me to on Fort Street
with little stingy sandwiches
and bride in a white suit instead
of a long-trained gown
and *didn't she even have a hat*
let alone a veil
and it sure didn't last long
not much to it

and saw Patsy's big blue protestant child eyes
open wider than my eyes
because of course I was used to it
and to hear Mrs. Reid
practicing an agnus dei on the organ
trying to get at some measure
something on the organ something in the stops

and taught her the sign of the cross
and she so game, devout, aping me and even
the ladies there to light candles
dipping their hands into the holy water
on a Saturday afternoon with the weather warming
and it being the third or fourth Saturday in lent
I don't remember which
and all of us knowing the dark time would be coming to an end
in Alleluia He has risen
and then Mrs. Reid would be pulling out
all the stops

was the day I knew I was making progress,
would be storing up some grace in heaven,
returning one, the first of many I'd return,
to do my part to amend
the mess that Martin Luther made
by not being patient
not to mention
he later married a nun
and it would have to be
in a protestant ceremony
with God-knows-what refreshments
although in those days they didn't have Kool-Aid,

and Patsy had a conversion before my eyes
like coming home to magic and sure it was
with all the side altars and the infant
of Prague in the corner
along with a pair of crutches on the side
of Saint Joseph's altar that I'd never seen before
and didn't see again and wondered about it
but I could explain it, for it must have been
a miracle, the lame walking,

and I knew that I could do it myself
if need be, I didn't need to be a priest to do it:
I baptize thee in the name
of the father, son and holy ghost
if only I had water not grape juice

or beer or the high-balls that filled so many glasses
at a catholic wedding
or protestant could-you-believe-it
Kool-Aid at a wedding
cheap and Mama saying,
Well you know those baptists
don't drink, but I thought at a wedding at least ....

but then the wedding was over
and Mama and I were leaving,
walking home, and Mama calculating
the cost of the pillow cases and sheets
and saying *cheap,* and *the cake was a mix*, and
Well, I'm still hungry
so we stopped at the greasy spoon
on Junction and Fort for a nice hamburger,

and I was so glad I was part of the one true and only holy,
and poor Patsy never even went to church at all
before I started her on the course to conversion
she being my best friend.

Madonna University

FELLA WITH AN UMBRELLA: FINDING JOY ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

DAWN COMER

I'm just a fella, a fella with an umbrella,
Glad to see the skies of blue have turned into skies of gray.
—Irving Berlin, "Fella with an Umbrella"

LolliLolliPopPopPop, LolliLolliPopPopPop.

Words tumble from my mouth, my arms and legs swing and twitch. Stand, sit. Stand, sit. Spit spatters green plastic, making shiny bubbles on the Christmas plate. Mommy's hands hold my wrists, her mouth makes words, but I understand only the tightness of her grip, the pulling of me to her as words keep tumbling from somewhere deep inside and far beyond. LolliLolliPopPopPop, LolliLolliPopPopPop. *Saying this is helping somehow, but I don't know how, only that I must say* LolliLolliPopPopPop, *and I cannot stop from saying* LolliLolliPopPopPop *even as Mommy tries to make me stop but I cannot stop, can only say* LolliLolliPopPopPop *over and over and over again. Body folds in on itself, melts off the chair and I flail, spilling purple juice over tan turkey and white potato paste and rough brown stuffing and slimy green bean goop and bumpy red jello. And I see this all happening as if it isn't even me in this body, just me on the outside, the words,* LolliLolliPopPopPop, LolliLolliPopPopPop, *beating inside my head, keeping me in this place and out of it. Voices hit me, slap me from every direction.*

Stop! Stop it now!
Do you want a time out?
Can't you control him?
Mommy, what's Elliot doing? Why does he keep saying that?
Bad.
Elliot, just look at me, listen to me. Please, baby, please.

But I can't do anything but be who I am and where I am in this place, and not who I am and not where I am all at the same time. Mommy has wrapped her arms around my chest tight, too tight, and my teeth find her and my mouth closes and my chant stops and I am moving now across the scratchy blue carpet, down the hall, away from the lights and the sounds and the smells of Christmas and I go someplace else, not just to Grandma and Grandpa's bedroom where Mommy drags me and holds me and makes angry and fearful sounds at me, but to a place where I don't have to be where I am, where my biting stops, my spitting stops, the LolliLolliPopPopPop, LolliLolliPopPopPop *stops, and I stand and walk to the window, and the sun is shining and it is beautiful and now I am Cinderella and I say that the day is beautiful and ask if I can go outside, but I'm not even asking Mommy, just telling myself that I will, and in the middle of all her rush of sounds I hear "time out" and my screams rip through me and I am on the floor again, kicking hard, my head banging backwards against the bedroom door.*

DECEMBER 22, 2007

Side by side they sit atop upturned white plastic buckets, knees spread, hands busy and black with the stain of walnuts. The older man, the grandfather, knows the young boy better than the boy knows himself, maybe better even than his own mother knows him,at least in certain regards. They have a task to complete and that is enough. Any talk is incidental, sporadic. In the corner of the shed rests a red Hills Bros. coffee can, emptied of rusty screws and bolts and meant for the boy's use should he have to pee.

Rough worn big hands break through the soft blackened hull with a remembered certainty of how walnuts are to be shucked. Smooth new small hands smear the dark old stain on new tan pants. The boy is sitting still now. Not spinning. Not screaming. Not singing *LolliLolliPopPopPop, LolliLolliPopPopPop.* Not switching in and out of other characters, other personalities, at a frenetic and frightening speed. And even though the grandfather had been angry with the little boy, had just hours before brought a belt out to the kitchen ready to strap the boy into the chair if he would not sit still, had even told the boy's mother, "I'm not the problem, *you're* the problem," something in him now knows this is not the case. Something in all of them at this Christmas gathering—grandfather and grandmother, aunt and uncle and cousins, the great-uncle who lives as a hermit except on occasions such as these, the baby sister who at six months

seems to recognize it is only her brother who screams like this, and even the mother—something in them knows, if not quite what, that something about this boy is different. Something is maybe even painfully different.

They say that this man was once like this little boy, that the grandson is a mirror of the grandfather's childhood. "In the house where I grew up," the grandfather says, "you can still see where my head made dents in the plaster." Or at least, you could see see those dents if the house were not occupied by the man's younger brother, a man whose head may not have put dents in the walls but whose entire life has been marked by walls put up to keep out the entire world, family included. But the little boy and the man, not the the man's brother, are the subject of this story, or at least the subject insofar as there is one. Who knows? That may change and the brother may become the subject. Maybe even the mother. But back to the boy and the man whose story this is so far.

There is, or so it would seem, one cardinal difference between the boy and the man. Up to this point, the boy's three and a half years of life experiences have not led him to distrust people and the world, have not colored his perspective on every social interaction so that others are always the enemy and closeness is always suspect and dangerous. No, this boy is all about closeness and hugs and contact, about kisses and performance, about twirling around and around and around with his opened umbrella on both rainy and sunny days, his very person radiating joy. The man, he has his own joys, but they are less about people than about his garden and his cat Ezra, brought back to life by prayer and Robitussin in the dead of winter. The boy's worst punishment is to be left alone. The man's greatest joy is to be by himself in his garden or, if not alone, in the company of his trusted and forever faithful wife, his one true friend, his guide through this world of threat and confusion.

They fight me and I run in circles, around and around and around inside the pen of chicken wire with holes that aren't even round like holes should be, holes with sharp angles made with twisted wire that aren't even circles. Always Grandma's chickens fight me, kicking up gray dust to hide inside, and I am mad because I don't understand why they just won't leave me alone, why they won't stop fighting, why they have to fight dirty like this. Clouds of gray and I can't see them coming, my feet kicking faster, running now, squawks and clucks tearing at my ears, beaks like bullets exploding on my ankles. Big Red is

on me, an overhead attack, talons in my shoulder like Grandma's darning needles, and I am hurt and mad at these chickens that won't leave me alone, these stupid birds, always fighting, me running through the skittery mass of them, swinging my stick at them, and I kick up my own dust, run harder, run all the way through them to swing wide Grandma's back door, to yell, "Grandma, Grandma, the chickens won't stop fighting me!" hoping she'll pick up her red-handled broom, believing she will come outside to help me, but Grandma looks at me and shakes her head and clicks her tongue and sighs, her back turning to me, turning back to her bowl of pitted cherries, her cup of sugar, her green-jade pie plate with the crinkled edge, covered with a tan bottom crust. "Grandma," I yell, my body tense and twitchy, the stick in my hand at the ready, "Grandma, make the chickens stop fighting me!" The sweet white sugar spills over the sour red cherries, the empty cup returns to the counter, Grandma turns to me and throws up her hands and I watch the movement of her sun-peeled lips as they open and close, shifting into shapes wide and open, then tight and squinty, her teeth once touching her lips, pressing down into them tight before releasing into an open "O." I watch her lips and I hear her words, but I can't tell if they come at the same time as the movement of her lips or if they wait there in the air, hang there waiting for the lips to stop so my ears can work, but however it all happens I hear her voice saying, "Well, Roger, you stop fighting those fool *birds and they'll stop fighting* you." *I know the words, but still they make no sense, no sense at all, and so I say again what I said before, "But I can't stop fighting them because* they're *fighting* me." *But Grandma just shakes her head, turns to her counter with its gleaming metal edge, stirs sugar into cherries, her words, "I just don't know what gets into you, Roger," softer than the soft clang of wooden spoon against metal bowl. I stand for a moment inside, but then outside I hear the soft cluck of hens, the scritch-scratch of claws in dirt, the sound of waiting chickens.* ErErErErERRRRR! *Big Red's battle cry. Too close and I grab my ears against the pain. I rush outside, hear the bang of the door like a distant explosion, run back to the fight I* must *finish, the fight I didn't start, the fight that is all their fault, these chickens who won't leave me alone.*

DECEMBER 22, 2007

Between the two of them, this boy and this man, there's not a great give-and-take conversation. The man may ask questions about the boy's baby sister, but whether or not the boy responds with sensible answers is beside the point. Instead the boy may say, "Cinderella has a beautiful blue dress," or, "Look, Grandpa! There's a paperclip in the corner! I wonder what that is doing there." And the man might say, "Is that so?" followed with, "You know, these walnuts could stain your hands for days," Or he might just as well burst into singing "Hello, Dolly," knowing the boy will likely sing along.

The mother of the boy sees and hears and knows all these things but has not yet begun to make sense of them. And she won't even begin to, at least not for a few more days when terms like "Asperger's Syndrome," "Autism Spectrum Disorders," and "Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified" enter her regular vocabulary. These words will become the mother's lens for understanding her relationships with her father, her uncle, herself, and most of all her son. All she knows right now about her father is how frustrated she has always been, how overlooked she has felt, how misunderstood and inconsequential her goals and dreams and life felt in conversation with this man who seldom asked about her and, when he did, couldn't listen or follow up on anything, spiraling off instead into a monologues about how one day his co-workers' carelessness would get him killed on the job, about Wendy's dollar menu where he could feed his wife and himself for a mere three dollars including a frosty, about how to tie a bowline knot.

But in this moment, on this day so close to Christmas, God or nature or whatever is to blame or thank struck the family with a force stronger than lightning, casting everybody apart to grieve and to begin making peace with both new and old conflicts. To understand that maybe all this mess wasn't simply the fault of poor parenting or inborn rebellion, that maybe the answer was not simply to spank the child hard and often. At the center of all this sat the boy, a child of three years and six months who knew nothing beyond the agony of losing control and the restoration of walnut-shucking.

This is not a Christmas miracle story, at least not in the traditional Christmas card sense. There is no singular moment of joyous epiphany where you can watch the family standing outside bundled in warm woolen clothes, singing carols as fresh snow falls to the ground and above them all a star quite brighter than the rest shines the way to salvation. On this night, at the close of it, you would see the boy's father enter the scene to find the mother sobbing. You would hear the mother's uncle tell the boy's father that the boy, just like his grandfather before him, needs to be beaten (and even

then, of course, he would never change), hear the boy's father repeat to the mother what her uncle has just said. You would taste the mother's burnt-coffee curses sentencing her uncle to hell and you would feel the peace-making aunt's soft hands on the mother's shoulders, ushering outside this mother who hurls to the deck the plastic bag of Christmas leftovers in Cool Whip containers, needing something to break so she can feel less broken inside. You would find the boy's father carrying the boy—hands stained with walnuts, pants wet with pee—away from his grandfather's shed, putting him in the car beside his baby sister who does not recognize any of this as out of the ordinary, just the way things are in this moment. You would watch hurried goodbyes between the boy's mother and her own mother. Lots of tears. Lots of crying. Nobody knowing exactly what is happening or what will come next. But you *would* see a Christmas miracle story, perhaps, one in its birthing. Bloody and loud. Muscles tight and shuddering. Souls guarded. An impossible miracle full of a wanting that all should be over even when all was just beginning.

And yet, as the silver Prizm pulled out of the driveway, separating the boy and his family from his grandparents, great-uncle, aunt and uncle and cousins, a peace as new and true as the night was dark and cold entered in. Though for years this family had longed for a miracle, nobody ever really believed the miracle would happen, let alone that it could happen in such a distressed, chaotic, near-violent time, could be so total. Within days, daughters forgave a father, a wife understood a husband and forgave herself, and the man who was both father and grandfather had a way of thinking about himself that made sense at last, going beyond his being different and difficult and misunderstood. Asperger's Syndrome. Autism spectrum disorders. At last the man and the family had words to make sense of his social awkwardness, boorish monologues, incomplete conversations, oppositional tendencies, black-and-white thinking, sensory sensitivities, and, oh, so many other things. But this is all becoming technical. There are, after all, stories that show all this.

Picking sour cherries by the bowlful teases out memories of childhood visits to Grandma and Grandpa Burns.

Ladders in trees, white sheet against green grass.

Do I remember or just imagine another July day, three decades past?

Cherries fall from the tree, shaken out or just plucked and dropped, rolling into the center and funneled into white plastic buckets while my grandmother sorts and pits cherries into a stainless steel bowl beside her. Summer. Near the tree closest to the house a merry-go-round fashioned from a long plank secured to a rotating metal base grounded in concrete. Me, belly on the plank, spinning, watching the ground whiz by beneath, legs straight back then dropping, knees bent, feet dragging, slowing my spin.

JULY 5, 2008

Always—in the background and off to the side—there was Uncle Norman. Uncle Norman, who had time for children, showing us Frisbees spinning on fingers, gyroscopes spinning across tables. Uncle Norman, talking about what makes tops and Frisbees and merry-go-rounds, what makes even planets and solar systems spin and rotate. Physics and mathematics wrapped up inside his head and spilling out of his mouth. Uncle Norman, the misfit of the Burns family, which was itself a collection of misfits out of sync and at odds with the larger community. Uncle Norman, whose brief encounter with the terrors of college social life outweighed his love of mathematics. Uncle Norman, the child who never left home, the man who gathered eggs, baled hay, milked cows, talked math. A puzzle to me. I watched him with my father and I sympathized. I neither understood nor particularly liked all my uncle's talk of math, but I knew he was the one who would show me how to play IQ and explain the best strategy for winning. He was the one who would show us how to send the Slinky down the stairs, the one who would make up jokes for us. That he had tantrums and shouting matches with my father seemed reasonable enough. That he rarely smiled around his father, my stern and rigid Grandpa Burns, I could understand.

So when did I stop relating to Uncle Norman? When did I stop caring much about him and how he lived and who he was? Perhaps in high school, around the time I was old enough to see the stress he caused my mother, made manifest in her migraines after a day of listening to Norman's rants while washing my grandmother's hair with Prell at the kitchen sink. That Mom had to stop the truck on our long drive home, had to stop and stumble to the side of the road to vomit made me angry with Uncle Norman, sad for Mom, helpless for myself. Perhaps I stopped caring around the time I recognized his impoliteness, his smug "I'm *always* right," his never saying "thank you" for anything. Or perhaps I stopped caring on that summer afternoon when I dozed off listening to Uncle Norman work out a math problem, waking twenty minutes later to his continued talking only

to realize my presence really was not necessary, that he was his own audience.

A memory of a summer's day. I stand with my big sister Linda and Uncle Norman in my grandparents' front yard, midway between house and chicken coop, off to the side closest to the white shed for farm equipment, the same shed that holds the vise Uncle Norman uses to crack hickory nuts. My sister and Uncle Norman and I have been playing keep-a-way with a white Frisbee that has a picture of a lined globe on the top. But we are not playing now. Norman is holding the Frisbee up for us to see, using his fingers to trace lines around it and talking about it as if it were a part of the solar system. He talks about Einstein and relativity and quarks, even time travel. I get lost in his words, and while I'm amazed he knows so much, I'm also annoyed. I can't follow even half of what he says, and I really don't share his interest. I want time to start again, for the game to start again, but instead I stand and shift my weight from one foot to the next, unable to redirect the conversation of a man who must say all he must say before he can stop.

Another memory. A different summer. Evening and I am inside, hunched over lined notebook paper, too dull pencil in hand, writing at the small desk in the small room I share with another "troubled teenager" at Charter Beacon, a psychiatric hospital in Fort Wayne. I am just fourteen, yet working through my own family and personal issues so that I might survive until adulthood, or at least my fifteenth birthday. I am writing a letter to Uncle Norman expressing a commonality between us, saying I have seen my father's response to him and felt just as embattled and misunderstood as he. I fold my finished letter into thirds, slip it inside the envelope. I lick the glue strip, press down the flap, and hope for a response, a connection of like minds, something that makes sense from someone, even if that someone is my strange Uncle Norman.

Uncle Norman never responded to my letter, of course, never said a word about it, not that summer nor in the more than two decades since. Still, I remain embarrassed to think of my peculiar teenage self having written to my uncle in such a familiar way, having sought that type of connection and transparency not just with another human being, but with him. Even so, I still keep company with her, that peculiar teenage self who feels this unnamable strangeness of living as her self in this world, who longs for recognition and understanding in the face of another living soul. Who was she anyway? Who am I now?

JULY 6, 2008

I have been told that, as a child, my father was bullied, that as young as first grade he hid from the other schoolchildren, had deep anxieties about school. I imagine him holed up inside the outhouse or alongside a *Little House on the Prairie*-style schoolhouse, pressed tight against the wood, trying to disappear. But disappearing wasn't an option for a child larger than the rest, even though I can imagine my father trying, waiting for recess to end so that he might return to his desk and chair where he could go unnoticed by doing what he was told. I don't imagine my father as shy exactly, just insecure, maybe even afraid, not knowing how to go about fitting in and eventually giving up after so much teasing about weight and perhaps family and any number of other things that kids invent or exaggerate.

My father would have tried to do the right thing, of course. Even as a child I suspect he was big on rules that could give structure and meaning to events, the sort of boy who wants things to make sense, even if at times he would rather invent and follow his own rules rather than the ones handed down to him. And I can imagine him my father after school, going to visit his grandfather who had the sorghum mill, who pressed apples for cider, who raised bees that they could watch together, bees that returned to hive and home, pollen heavy on their legs. I can imagine his grandfather was a good listener to whatever talking he had to do, that he affirmed and valued my father, his grandson, in a way that most did not, that he saw in him potential and not just trouble. There are stories I find I now want to know that I never thought to ask about before, stories about my father during different parts of his life, particularly his childhood and school years. And I want to know these things not only to understand my father better, but also because I hope to better understand my son.

What made me sad:

Going to the playground for Elliot's preschool field trip. Watching my son throw sand, stomp another kid's sandcastle, kick off his shoes and refuse to put them back on, pick up interesting bits of trash to show to his teacher, run around alone.

Walking back to the car with Lucy and seeing Elliot sitting alone at a picnic table, hearing him shout out excitedly to nobody in particular and everyone in general, "I have a juice box!"

Wanting Elliot to stand up and move to the other table where the rest of his class and teachers sit together, room enough for one more.

Recess and I sit at the top of the dull-metal monkey bars with Kelly, a girl from Mrs. Taylor's morning kindergarten class who has dark hair and brown eyes. It's just the two of us, Kelly and Dawn, and I am happy. We talk and laugh and understand each other in a way that is new to me and surprising. Kelly is my first friend.

Recess and I wander alone. Kelly has moved away, I guess, taken with her family to wherever families go when they move, and I am even more alone than before we sat together on the monkey bars. On the pavement, I weave around circles of sitting girls who dress and undress Barbie and Ken, around straight lines of boys who play keep-away with red rubber balls. I haunt the edges but wouldn't know how to join even if invited. The monkey bars are free, so I climb to the top where I sit and imagine Kelly still sits beside me. In our imagined togetherness, we watch our classmates, small beneath us, and wait for Mrs. Taylor to blow the whistle that will return us to our room.

MARCH 14, 2008

Meltdowns and rages are hard to understand, whether they occur in my son, my father, my Uncle Norman, or me. It's the way they happen so suddenly, so "out of the blue," like thunderstorms on hot summer days. Everything seems relatively normal and even keeled until BAM! Lightning slices the sky. Rain hammers down. No time to find shelter, not even an umbrella.

My child writhes on the floor, throws things, calls me "stupid head." My father narrows his eyes, spits condemnation, goes paranoid in his accusations and loses any rationality in his conversation. My uncle's face flames red as he yells, "I'm right! I'm always right and you know it," storming out of the house and into his rusted blue Dodge Ram.

Even in myself I can't quite grasp why meltdowns and rages happen. I think life is going along fine and then my son won't put on his shoes or starts maniacally stuffing toilet paper in his mouth and I'm so completely surprised and overwhelmed that my body fills with anger and all I want is to get it out, OUT, **OUT**! I yell. I grab my son

tight, too tight. I pull the car off the road and threaten to leave him in an abandoned parking lot midway between home and his grandparents. I hurl a bag of frozen corn across the kitchen and watch the bag explode, watch the kernels skitter across the floor, seeking shelter beneath the cabinets, the stove, the refrigerator, the green corner shelf half-empty of cereal boxes. Once, before I had even the slightest inkling of autism, I slammed my son down hard on his bed and shouted, "Do you have any idea what I want to do to you right now?" Even as I rage I regret my words, regret my actions, regret that I could really care less in that moment that my son is scared or hurt.

All I want is to find my son's "off" button and hit it hard.

JULY 6, 2008

"You're a saint," the pastor tells me as my whirlwind son touches everything in sight at Vacation Bible School and runs the hallways.

"You must be exhausted," my friend Alice sympathizes when I mention my early suspicions that Elliot has Asperger's Syndrome. Alice and I haven't seen each other in two years, and Elliot isn't even present, but she has had a young boy with Asperger's in one of her art classes and has talked to his wiped-out mother.

"Is he always like this?" my father asks, eyebrow raised, as Elliot runs himself silly in circles and sings loud nonsense songs. I am grateful that, at least, that these days, the days following the miraculous Christmas catastrophe, my father is not telling me, "Elliot is spoiled and needs a good spanking. Your parenting is the problem." I am grateful that his eyebrow is raised instead of his eyes being narrowed.

Still, I do not know what to make of such comments or how I, the mother of a child on the autism spectrum, is supposed to feel about them. Some moments I want to accept the sainthood, play off of my exhaustion, play up to Elliot always being "like this" and to my having a really rough life. Some moments I want the sympathy for it. But most of the time I resent the sainthood/martyr comments. You see, being a saint has to do with more than just my behaviors. Sainthood also implies putting up with more crap that an average human should have to put up with, and for this reason I resent it when people call me a saint because it implies something about who Elliot is, something harder and more negative and more challenging than other children.

But even in those moments when I want to embrace sainthood, I know better. I am no saint. I have crossed the line with Elliot more

times than I care to admit. And how does he respond? He laughs. He gets physical in return, kicking, hitting, biting, spitting. When Elliot was younger, he turned into other characters—Cinderella, Alice, Mary Poppins. But my son doesn't leave me and he desperately doesn't want me to leave him. *"Don't go, Mommy. No no no, don't go. Don't leave me here all alone. I'll be good. I'll listen. I'm sorry you were being frustrated with me."*

Truth is, Elliot is to me still just a kid most of the time, and not just a kid, but *my* kid, *my* child in all his complexities and wonders, and sometimes I resent all the autism language I now use to talk about him, even though that language does help me to understand him better, respond to him more appropriately, lose my patience a little less. It's really only when I start defining Elliot in terms of his autistic traits that I get paralyzed about how to *read* him and how to *respond* to him.

Elliot 101—Midterm Exam

Multiple Choice

1) Elliot is spitting at the kitchen table over dinner while grandparents are visiting. He is spitting because he is:

a) Seeking sensory input and simply enjoying how the spit feels on his lips
b) Overloaded by the company and the change in routine but cannot find a socially appropriate way to express what he feels
c) Deliberately trying to annoy me
d) All of the above.

2) Elliot has poured rice all over the floor and is stomping in it with his bare feet. I should:

a) Put Elliot in time out
b) Make him clean it up
c) Recognize the sensory component and join him in the activity, then help him clean it up
d) Rinse and soak the rice for dinner and make black beans to go with it.

3) I have repeatedly said no to Elliot's getting spices out of the cabinet, but he continues to remove and sample oregano, cumin, coriander, cardamom, and fennel. Elliot is not responding to me because:

a) He is so totally fixated that he can't even process what I'm saying, is literally deaf to me
b) Spices taste better when sampled in a kitchen context that involves a screaming mother
c) He, like all of us, is rebellious by nature, born into sin and set on having his own way
d) Not a clue, really, and since I have no idea how to get him down from the counter, I should just remove the saffron and vanilla extract and let him have his way with the cumin and parsley.

4) Elliot's Mary Poppins DVD isn't working properly, so he is screaming and thrashing and banging his head against the floor. My most appropriate response would be to:

a) Stand over him dispassionately, saying nothing but making it clear by my presence that his antics will not move me
b) Wrap my arms around him, hold him, tell him I love him, and not let go until his body calms
c) Walk away…but if he comes screaming after me, then what?
d) Drag him to his room for time out.

Essay Question (minimum response—250 words)

What in Elliot's behavior is sensory or communication-related, and what's just bad behavior? Is there even such a thing as bad behavior if all behavior is, as Ellen Notbohm so clearly explains in *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew*, a form of communication? If I can acknowledge that my most annoying/difficult/challenging behaviors occur when something else is going on with me, then why should it be any different with my son? Please refer to specific examples to demonstrate logic and reasoning.

July 6, 2008

Elliot is a child who is hungry for relationships, bubbling and spitting and doing baby talk both when he's excited and when he's overloaded. But I can't for the life of me figure out what his reasons are as I pull him away from a child on the playground who says, "He spit on me." I don't think Elliot's behavior at times like these is pure meanness so much as cluelessness. After all, his actions get reactions and attention, even if not of the best sort. And much of the time Elliot is quite capable socially, at least capable enough to befriend playmates and run and chase and do active, social things, if not always in conventional ways. Just don't depend on Elliot too much for a two-

way conversation as he may be unable to answer your questions or follow any particular train of thought for very long. But he's only four, after all, and such abilities may develop over time.

I do not fully understand this autism stuff, or at least it is not natural for me to think in these terms all the time. I do best at it when Elliot is in school, fairly well regulated, and not such a constant presence. When Elliot is around all the time I can become less patient, less inclined to care about his sensitivities and such, hoping, perhaps, that he'd been "fixed" (not that he is broken as such). So I tackle situations head on and the roadblocks get thrown up and he rages and can't function and sometimes I rage and can't function either, though I've gotten much better at this. If Todd and I have learned one thing over the past year and a half, we have learned that it takes creativity and flexibility to parent Elliot, our particular child on the spectrum, and, unfortunately, creativity and flexibility aren't constants but come and go.

FEBRUARY 15, 2009

There are days when I think Elliot will never grow up and leave home. And there are days when I mourn for his childhood passing so quickly before my eyes. He is not quite five and already Elliot seems so grown up. He has bad breath in the mornings, an ability (at last!) to do basic self-care tasks with some coaching. Even though he still has potty accidents, they're seldom total, and he usually gets himself to the potty. Sometimes he even runs to his bedroom when he's gotten wet, saying with the utmost maturity, "I had to change my clothes. The other ones were wet." And when he does this, I am impressed beyond words! Some days he can do these things, and some days he can't.

"Mommy, I'm having a really good day." At 6:15 in the morning, Elliot's day is already a good one. Truth is, my day is too. Fifteen minutes earlier he stumbled out of his bedroom to find me checking e-mail on my MacBook in the bright orange La-Z-Boy, a curbside find we both love. Now we are back in his room, snuggled under his blankets, trying to sleep because "It's not morning yet." And like the best of times with my son, I enjoy this moment for precisely what it is, intense joy at the simple fact of being together.

MAY 10, 2009

My life with Elliot is illuminated by flashes of joy. Always has been. Elliot is not the stereotyped unexpressive monotone autistic.

If anything, Elliot is its polar opposite: gleeful on the verge of mania, passionate to the extreme. When Elliot is happy and all is right in his world, all is right in mine.

"Oh, Mommy!" Elliot shrieks, peering into the pan on the stove, "You made lentils? For me? Oh, Mommy!" he laughs, throwing the whole of his body against mine, wrapping his arms tight around me. "You make the best lentils in the whole world! I love your lentils, Mommy!" And I am bowled over that something as basic as lentils could make anybody so utterly happy.

When Elliot was younger, from roughly age two to age four, umbrellas were his deepest passion, with musicals coming in a close second. And while he still enjoys both (especially umbrellas) I miss those days when they were his everything, when he would dance and spin and sing along to a favorite umbrella-related musical—*Mary Poppins, Singin' in the Rain, Hello, Dolly!,* and *Easter Parade* with its delightful "Fella with an Umbrella," the song my son was born to sing.

Like my son, my father has always had a thing for musicals. It's unmanly of him, perhaps, or at least atypical among the men he worked alongside for years as an electric lineman. But musicals aren't the only thing my son and my father have in common. Following that catastrophically miraculous Christmas of a year and a half ago, during the early stages of figuring out how this thread of autism spectrum disorders knits my family together, a friend who knew of my chronic difficulties with my father remarked, "Oh, boy! Now you're going to end up raising your dad. That's really got to suck." My friend expected that this knowledge of their similar ways of operating in the world would leave me feeling as if I'd been condemned to some bizarre and horrible fate, like I'd be raising somebody who would never get me or understand me, just as I always felt my father never had. My friend expected I would feel helpless, overwhelmed, trapped, that because I knew my father's difficulties, I would therefore consider myself condemned to see them repeated in my son's life, no deviation from the original possible.

But life with Elliot is not really like that. Yes, some of Elliot's peculiarities mimic my father's and vice versa, both helping me understand the other a bit better, but there's a very real difference between those worst tendencies of my father and the best tendencies of my son. If I am in some strange symbolic way raising my father through raising my son, then that means I have a chance to do things a great deal differently than they were done with my dad, let alone

the way they were done with my Uncle Norman, who has lived a much more isolated life. I have an opportunity to understand Elliot and help him to understand himself in a way that my father did not. I have a chance to help Elliot be open to the world and to others, to help him remain open to people instead of becoming paranoid that everybody is out to get him and concluding that the best way to avoid being "gotten" is to shut off any relationships before they get too close. As I see it, I can help my son to foster richer, deeper, and more trusting relationships than my father has been able to.

JUNE 15, 2009

How can I end this piece that has no end, this memoir that reaches as far back into my family's history as it looks forward into my son's undetermined future? Everything I add changes it, and every day our lives are changing, my perceptions shifting. This is only a resting spot, a place to stretch legs and arms and ready myself for the rest of the journey, wherever it takes us. This much I can conclude: simply *knowing* has made a difference, not only for Elliot and our small nuclear family of four, but also for my larger family.

A week after the catastrophically miraculous Christmas visit, we had no choice but to return to my parents' house and leave Elliot and Lucy overnight so we could take care of business out of town. But this time was different. My sister had told me that my dad uttered the never-before-been-heard phrase"I need help" after we ended our previous visit, and his new awareness of something not quite right in himself was something we've all longed for and prayed about for quite some time. When we arrived for the second visit, my father, a man broken in the best of all possible ways, went from calling me "the problem" behind my son's behavior to saying, "*You* tell me how to work with your son. I will listen." And as I told my father that Elliot doesn't do well with direct opposition but that he will usually come around to doing what's desired if the demand is turned into a game, I watched my father strain to listen and pay attention, even to ask questions so he could clarify for himself what I meant. My father even listened as I told him that he should not force Elliot to eat what's unfamiliar or objectionable, that instead he should give Elliot food options, and that when Elliot is finished eating and asks to be excused that he be excused from the table and not be forced to sit until everybody is finished.

As my father listened to me, I found myself forgiving and trusting him enough to leave my son with him and walk away believing that he would not scar Elliot for life.

But that is just one story, one story among many, though perhaps it is the central story, the focal point for all that was and all that is yet to come.

Defiance College

HOLY MOSES!: *THE PIT*, CURTIS JADWIN, AND THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

RICHMOND B. ADAMS

During Frank Norris's sophomore year at the University of California Berkeley, Lyman Abbott published a major work in biblical and theological circles entitled *The Evolution of Christianity* (1892). A prominent evolutionary theist, Abbott captured the tensions within his era by stating, "We live in a time of religious ferment. What shall we do?"(iii). Fifty years earlier, any notion of "religious ferment" within American Christianity was more difficult to find (iii; Marsden 12-14; Noll 22). Historian George Marsden contextualized such stability by noting that even as late as 1870, "almost all of American Protestants thought of [theirs] as a Christian nation" (11). Marsden continues that American Christianity rested on the "absolutely fundamental" foundations of "God's truth [as] a single, unified order" (14). By the 1890s, however, American Protestantism's notion of God's single order had devolved into full-blown anxieties of a constantly developing creation (14-17). How such change bore relation to a God proclaimed as "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Revised Standard Version, Hebrews 13:8) occupied a great deal of cultural space as Norris penned his fiction.

In his final novel *The Pit* (1902), Norris explores these cultural anxieties through the mental speculations of Laura Dearborn Jadwin, the financial mechanisms within the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) and the theological influence of Christian revivalist Dwight L. Moody (*The Pit* 62; 183-187; 123; Marsden 93). Moody's belief in biblical historicity, while prominent, expressed only one strand of Christian *kerygma* present during the Gilded Age (35). Despite—or due to—its singularity, Moody's proclamation of *fin de siècle* Christianity nevertheless bore particular importance by reflecting American Protestantism's sense of cultural hegemony. As Joseph McElrath, Jr. and Jesse Crisler suggest in their 2006 biography, Norris links

Moody's Protestant centrality to the financial speculations of *The Pit*'s protagonist, Curtis Jadwin. In fact, McElrath and Crisler argue that Moody served as the model for Jadwin's character (370). As Marsden notes through his *Religion and American Culture* (2001), arguments for Darwinian evolution—rather than God's creative act in Genesis—lay at the root of late century anxieties within evangelical American Protestantism (134-137; *The Pit*; 18-21). Simultaneous with these disputes, a second well-known cultural movement, called evolutionary theism, was already attempting to bridge the perceived gap between God and science (Marsden *Religion and American Culture* 134-137; Pizer 9-18). Despite its prominence, however, evolutionary theism could never overcome the claims of biblical infallibility basic to Moody and his theological descendants.

Those descendants expressed themselves most vocally through their opposition to the interrelated arguments of Higher Biblical Criticism and evolutionary Darwinism. Originating in Germany prior to America's Civil War, Higher Criticism held that the Bible did not come to be via divine revelation, but was a cultural product of the ancient Hebraic and early Christian communities (Ahnebrink 9; Marsden *Fundamentalism and American Culture* 137). Norris accepted the cultural relationship between Higher Criticism, Darwinism, and evolutionary theism within *fin de siècle* America (Pizer 12). Seeing a means to explore these relationships from the lens of postbellum Chicago, Norris based the second volume of his wheat trilogy on Joseph Leiter's efforts to corner the wheat market at the city's Board of Trade (Kaplan 75). Jonathan Lurie's 1979 history argues that the way in which the CBOT functioned during the last years of the nineteenth century "offers important insights into the ways in which Americans valued stability . . . where it helped to create a framework for change" (xi; qtd. xi). Within *The Pit*, Norris uses specific references to explore the anxieties then coursing through American society.

Norris places his most significant reference in a conversation between Jadwin and his friend Samuel Gretry. As they become further immersed in speculative trading, Jadwin and Gretry discover that the wheat market stands vulnerable to a corner (*The Pit* 253-268). As such, Gretry informs Jadwin that their cornering efforts will result in a counter "attack" as trading opens the next morning (315). Jadwin answers, "[d]on't get scared. [Calvin Hardy] Crookes ain't the Great Mogul" (315). Gretry's subsequent response, even in its

incredulity, frames the manner by which Norris examines the complexities of *fin de siècle* American culture. This essay explores the ways and means by which Norris conducted his explorations.

Gretry reacts to his friend, "Holy Moses, I'd like to know who is then" (315). Jadwin answers, "*I* am. And he's got to know it. There's not room for Crookes and me in this game. One of us two has got to control this market. If he gets in my way, by God, I'll smash him!" (315, Norris's italics). Gretry's answer of "Well then 'J' you and I have got to do some tall talking tonight" juxtaposed with the antecedents of "Holy," "Moses," and "*I* am" clearly echoes a conversation recorded in Exodus 3:13-14. Moses, called by God to lead the Hebrews from slavery to freedom, asks the name of the One who invited him to the task. Norris, while probably not knowing Hebrew, certainly possessed an awareness of the Old Testament Documentary Hypothesis—as will presently be explored—then generating discussion across American society (Rogerson 273-289). In his friendship with Reverend William Rainsford, the Episcopal rector who served as his priest while he composed *The Pit*, Norris undoubtedly gained further awareness of how this portion of Exodus used YHWH to portray the divine name (McElrath and Crisler 368; Bray 304). By his placement of "Moses," "*I* am" and "God" in the same conversation, Norris clearly alerts his readership to larger issues that he wishes to explore (315). In *The Pit* Norris makes the case for compatibility between Darwinian evolution, Christian *kerygma* and evolutionary theism (Pizer 12). Studying the idea during his student years at the University of California Berkeley, Norris listened five times a week as Joseph Le Conte's lectures attempted to reconcile Darwin and Christ (Pizer 12; McElrath and Crisler 124-125). While Norris did not fully embrace Le Conte's perspective, his novel reflects the concerns discussed both at Berkeley and throughout *fin de siècle* American society.

Norris further indicates his awareness of these biblically related discussions by his use of "J" (*The Pit* 315; 73). He, of course, uses "J" as Jadwin's nickname (315; 73). At the same time, Norris almost certainly knew that "J" was the means by which the Documentary scholars referenced the "Jahwist" Old Testament writings of which God's I AM stands as the most prominent example (Bray 304). Norris extends these controversies still more through his use of wheat as both object and metaphor that represents "a . . . creatively multifaceted—'world force'" (Pizer 167). While "benevolent," Norris's

wheat also represents a force capable of destroying anything that tries to impede its "progress"(167).

These myriad of issues in Norris's America have given shape to the critical assessments of his novel. Soon after World War II, Lars Ahnebrink connected Higher Criticism to the rise of American naturalism (9). Donald Pizer argued in the 1970s that Norris's novels explored the "conflict between God, man and a growing body of scientific knowledge impinging on those concepts" (3). While discussing *The Pit*, however, Pizer does not openly link it to either Higher Criticism or the Documentary Hypothesis. The 1980s witnessed Walter Benn Michaels and June Howard looking past the theological and biblical controversies within American culture even as they attempted to fully contextualize Norris's novel (72-73; 74; 148; 167; 170). As the 1990s opened, Claire Virginia Eby saw a connection between men's business success and their sublimation of their "sexual drives" (161). In his *Harbingers of a Century: The Novels of Frank Norris* (1999), Lawrence Hussman argues that *The Pit* begins from "postreligious premises and further develops the message that the preferred way of ethical life depends on recognizing the worth of the other" (167). In their 2006 biography, McElrath and Crisler extend their subject's complexity by citing Norris's lifelong membership in the Episcopal Church (44; 54; 364-365; 369). Despite the attention it has drawn, however, *The Pit* contains areas that invite further study. Specifically, when characters such as the Cresslers refer to Jadwin as "J," they suggest the need for a more thorough exploration of Norris's cultural *milieu* and the central place of the Documentary Hypothesis within it (*The Pit* 73; 315).

Discussions about that *milieu* necessarily draw upon issues present throughout the whole of nineteenth-century American society. Well prior to *The Pit*, concerns over Darwinism, Higher Criticism and evolutionary theism had generated public discussion. In so doing, they began to receive attention from the secular press (Spielmann 55-59). When the public started to debate matters of faith and science, Norris's Episcopal Church initiated an annual meeting to discuss their impact (55-62). Beginning in 1874, the Episcopal Congress convened for the next sixty years (McElrath and Crisler 44; Spielmann 50-62). As an educated and aware Episcopalian, Norris would surely have known of these Congressional gatherings (McElrath and Crisler 44; 54; 364-365). Even if Norris had somehow managed to remain deaf to their discussions, he did, in fact, explore

the same ideas through Le Conte's lectures at Berkeley (Pizer 12). Later in the 1890s, he undoubtedly also referenced these same matters with Rainsford (McElrath and Crisler 367-369). Richard M. Spielmann's historical article makes clear, for example, that Rainsford had participated in the denomination's Congressional gatherings between 1874 and 1897 (Spielmann 59). Given Norris's numerous references to Scripture—particularly in his late fiction—within an era of Protestant uncertainty, it becomes problematic to argue that he neither knew nor cared about the relationship between Christian *kerygma* and American culture. Every indication, on the contrary, suggests just the opposite.

Such linkage has been largely overlooked by many literary critics during the last two and a half decades. In *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (1987), Michaels neglects to mention Higher Criticism, evolutionary theism and Norris's membership in the Episcopal Church. Michaels further lacks a citation of the Episcopal Congress attended by the priest with whom Norris spoke on a first name basis and who gave the eulogy at his funeral (McElrath and Crisler 368-369). While referring to Le Conte as Norris's "favorite teacher," Michaels does little more than label him as a "geologist" and slightly acknowledge his evolutionary theism work via a footnote (170 n. 36). Given both the centrality of Le Conte's evolutionary theism in Norris's life and abundant citations in his fiction, Michaels incorrectly overlooks these connections.

Howard's *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (1985) precedes Michaels in also not referencing the efforts of evolutionary theism to reconcile Darwinism, Higher Criticism and Christian *kerygma.* Even as she deeply explores some elements within Norris's fiction, Howard lacks a reference to Le Conte's influence upon it (206). She further does not cite how Rainsford helped to shape Norris's later thinking (206; McElrath and Crisler 368-369; Pizer 12). These newer approaches to critical methodology, however, do not possess sole claim to underappreciating the full richness of Norris's final novel.

In fairness to Michaels and Howard, more traditional critics also miss the connection between Le Conte and Norris (Lehan 241-242; 240-241). Richard Lehan's *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition* (2005) briefly discusses *The Pit*, but does not place it within a larger cultural-theological context (127-128). Even

as Lehan mentions Le Conte, he only does so by reference to Herbert Spencer (126). While Michaels, Howard and Lehan examine *The Pit* in useful ways, they do not fully acknowledge how Norris used it to examine larger cultural issues. Most prominent among these is how Norris's final novel explores the controversies swirling around the interpretation of Scripture.

During Norris's lifetime, critical examination of the Old Testament's first five books—the Torah—generated intense levels of controversy (303). Gerald Bray, an Old Testament scholar, places these debates into three categories (303-304). Some *fin de siècle* interpreters, Bray indicates, maintained the traditional view of the Torah's authorship even as Moses may have used earlier source materials to aid his writing (304). Bray cited the second argument of the Torah's origins as beginning with written fragments later compiled by a single redactor (304).

In terms of Norris's novel, however, the third framework—the Documentary Hypothesis—bears particular relevance. It stipulated that while the Torah did begin in oral tradition, it later assumed written form by means of not one, but four distinct theological viewpoints (304). Of these, two traditions were used in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 (Bray 14). Julius Wellhausen, the most prominent of these Documentary scholars, argues that since Genesis 1:1-2:4a uses ELOHIM for God's name while the remainder of the second chapter—2:4b-25—names God as YAHWEH, it makes little sense that a single author, Moses or anyone else, composed these two chapters (Bray 304; 284). Over several years, Wellhausen's ideas "provoked a scandal in the English-speaking world" and significantly accentuated the already existing social instability throughout late nineteenth-century America (284; Marsden 18-21). Frank Norris's fiction—and particularly his post-1900 novels—portrays that turmoil.

Such reflection becomes all the more remarkable given that Norris's pre-1900 fiction makes only the vaguest references to traditional faith. McElrath and Crisler describe *McTeague*, along with *Vandover and the Brute*, as specifically "depict[ing] a world bereft of supernatural or spiritual significance" (365). If Norris had died in 1899 rather than 1902, his work would have left a universe grounded not in faith, but a form of "brute" nihilism (McElrath and Crisler 429). While Norris did compose early stories that might have created some measure of theological curiosity, these efforts would have paled *vis a vis* the traditional naturalism of his early major novels (365).

McElrath and Crisler stipulate, however, that after 1900, Norris began to "limn the religious orientation that would at last manifest itself in *The Octopus*" (365). I argue that such orientation is even more pointed in *The Pit*.

Norris discusses these orientations within the opening two chapters of his novel. Upon her arrival in Chicago, Laura Dearborn rides through the downtown and north portions of the city. Norris writes that it "interested her at every instant and under every condition" (59). Simultaneously, Laura cannot look past the dirty streets and the horrid "squalor of its poorer neighbourhoods that sometimes developed, like cancerous growths, in the very heart of fine residence districts" (60, Norris's spelling). Laura further experiences more discomfort from the "black murk" along business streets and the "soot" that dirtied her clothing "each time she stirred abroad" (60).

The first sentence of Norris's subsequent paragraph broadens Laura's ambiguous feelings. Even as she expresses how "life was tremendous," she does not fully separate an assessment of urban disgust from her hopes of personal satisfaction (60). Instead, Laura possesses an awareness of what Charles Child Walcutt suggested as life force (193). Initially, Laura expresses tension with her experience of Chicago by using the naturalistically rooted metaphors of "vast machinery" that "clash . . . and thunder . . . from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn" (*The Pit* 62). She next links the city with "the Heart of the Nation, whence inevitably must come its immeasurable power, its infinite, inexhaustible vitality" (62). Acknowledging as well that such power somehow originated from the city's 1871 fire, Laura simultaneously concludes that Chicago's "resurrection" reflects forces that are "insensate" and "[i]n a way, (not) human" (63). Such forces are like "great tidal wave(s)," upon which given individuals can make their way "so long as (they) can keep afloat" (63). One slip, however, inevitably causes that same force to "crush (and) annihilate (them) . . . with . . . horrible indifference" (63). Laura indicates how such "elemental" force "isn't meant to be seen" and concludes that it resembles "the first verses of Genesis" (63).

If Norris had wanted *The Pit* to describe a world bereft of religious or theological tensions, it stands to reason that he would have not given such an overtly biblical reference to his principal female character. Norris, however, clearly did so, and in such a way that pointed beyond the biblical story of creation. By mentioning "the first verses of Genesis," Norris alludes to the controversy over the two

creation stor*ies*—the Documentary Hypothesis—then raging through the Western cultural world (63; McElrath and Crisler 365; Green 26-70; 71-95, my italics). Even as advocates of the Hypothesis did not ascribe the first verses of Genesis chapter one to the "J" writer, Norris, even if obliquely, makes note of these biblical and theological contentions (*The Pit* 63; Bray 260). He soon connects them to his novel's male protagonist.

Quickly following the Genesis reference, Laura and her social mentor, Mrs. Cressler, discuss Jadwin's potential suitability as a suitor (*The Pit* 68-73; 72; n.p.). Laura comments on his mental strength but initially denies a romantic attraction (72-73). Mrs. Cressler continues by referring to Jadwin's work with the West-Side Chicago Sunday School (72-73). She indicates that such work appears to interest him more than his business operations (73). Mrs. Cressler offers her assessment that Jadwin is "a *fine* man" and that both she and her husband Charles "just *love* him" (73, Norris's italics). She continues to build her case by next pointing to Jadwin's Christian faith and his regular worship participation at Second Presbyterian Church (73). Somewhat weakly, Laura responds that she attends the Episcopal Church (73).

By distinguishing between those branches of Protestantism, Norris connects Laura's move to Chicago with her benefactor's larger intent. Following the death of her father, Laura receives invitations from her Aunt Wess, along with Mrs. Cressler, to live in Chicago (43). Even while remaining indecisive for the next year, Laura begins to feel her hometown of Barrington, Massachusetts "dwindl(ing) in her estimation" and comes to detest the "barren[ness] of 'the New England Spirit'" (44). Laura's detestations grow after the "entire village" disdains her retention of servants to manage her house (44). Norris, however, uses these issues as more than specific plot devices. Laura's hometown tensions and her final decision to leave are additional vehicles that explore the cultural-theological tensions in *fin de siècle* America.

Laura's relocation directly results from an unaccompanied attendance at a Boston-based performance of "Modjeska in 'Marie Stuart'" (44). Within short order, as Norris puts it, "[a] group of lady-deaconesses, headed by the Presbyterian minister, called upon her, with some intention of reasoning and labouring with her" (44). Norris suggests that Laura's fellow Protestants had first managed, if barely, to accept her departure as a single woman from the

"Methodist-Episcopal" tradition of her ancestry (44). In spite of their earlier acquiescence, these lady-deaconesses were now unable to condone Laura's unaccompanied Boston foray (44). After Laura's maternally based Southern temper invites these visitors to exit her premises, she chooses to accept the invitations from Chicago (44-45).

By noting Laura's antagonists as Presbyterians, Norris does more than arbitrarily scapegoat one branch of American Protestantism. As biblical controversies intensified after the Civil War, the Presbyterian Church steadfastly maintained its support of traditional Scriptural interpretation (Marsden 5; Noll *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921* 13-18). Such interpretation based itself on Scriptural infallibility and Mosaic authorship of the Torah (Marsden 5; Rogerson 180). In particular, Princeton Seminary—the Presbyterian Church's primary bastion of theological education—resisted the implications of both Darwinian evolution and Higher Biblical Criticism (Marsden 22; 20; Noll *The Princeton Theology* 13-18).

Given her experience with Barrington's Presbyterians, Laura understandably expresses little patience with those who confine life to culturally and religiously sanctioned literalism (44-45). Laura indicates to Aunt Wess that her nontraditional lifestyle allows no man to undermine how she feels about herself (114). Jadwin's romantic "contrivances," however, give "her no time to so much as think of *finesse*" (113, Norris's italics). Nevertheless, as Mrs. Cressler alludes, "J" has fallen for Laura and would outlast all others in pursuit of winning her affection (73).

Norris indicates, still again, that Jadwin's aspiration—for both Laura and later the wheat corner—will inevitably lead to painful consequences. In his efforts to gain the corner, Jadwin spends increasing amounts of time away from Laura (244-245). As a result, she seeks human contact that might help calm her "vague anxieties" (203; 237). While doing so, Laura freely explores issues of religious thought. Encountering Sheldon Corthell—recently returned from Europe—she discusses theological issues that reflect Norris's debt to both Le Conte and evolutionary theism. In her conversations with Corthell, Laura posits that religion provides a means through which each person can "hoe his own little row" and subsequently serve the greater "general welfare" (245). Sheldon replies with a variation of the Social Gospel. He asserts that helping others must first originate by hoeing for oneself (245). Sheldon believes that "[a] religion that would mean to be 'altogether absorbed' in my neighbour's hoeing would be genuinely pernicious, surely. My row, meanwhile, would be open to weeds" (245).

Sheldon's echoing of the Social Gospel further textures how Norris explores the tumult within *fin de siècle* American society (Cronon 367; Wills 383-388). Norris previously alludes to these compassionate efforts through Jadwin's Sunday School work (*The Pit* 109; 123). Even as Jadwin's condescension toward "my little micks" vocalizes a racism within the Social Gospel movement, it does not completely detract from his efforts to alleviate suffering and, incidentally, gain himself the reputation of "a *fine* man" (123; 73, Norris's italics). Neither Jadwin nor his *noblesse oblige* contemporaries may exemplify the purest form of an imperfect Social Gospel, but Norris stipulates they nonetheless understand realities beyond their own search for profit. Norris makes clear that in actuality, they grasp connections between faith, science and, not coincidentally, good business.

Laura and Sheldon's discussion further connects the Social Gospel with evolutionary theism. Building from Sheldon's exposition through reflecting that "[t]he individual—I, Laura Jadwin, count . . . for nothing," Laura continues that " It is the type to which I belong that's important, the mould, the form, the sort of composite photograph of thousands of Laura Jadwin's" (246). She continues "Yes . . . what I am, the little things that distinguish me from everybody else, those pass away quickly, are very ephemeral" (246). But the type Laura Jadwin, that always remains, doesn't it? One must help building up permanent things . . . . Yes, I think one can say that" (246, first set of ellipsis, mine; second set, Norris's).

Pizer argues that such evolutionary theism gave Norris the means by which to meet "needs deep within his own temperament" (12). It primarily allowed him to affirm a moral order based upon natural law (12). Consequently, Norris could write that Corthell's hoeing offers a pointed contrast to Jadwin's claim to divine status as "*I* am" (315, Norris's italics). Rather than communal sacrifices for the good of the whole, Jadwin's actions inevitably lead to traumatic consequences for everyone in his midst. Norris's climactic sequence, indeed, portrays a cascading series of wrenching consequences. Charlie Cressler commits suicide (366). Laura's sister Page witnesses her beau, Landry Court, wage a heroic, but losing effort to prevent the corner's collapse (408-410). Laura almost leaves Jadwin for Corthell

(386-389). In these events, Norris presents a standard naturalistic collapse.

What raises more interest, however, is Norris's simultaneous conveyance of naturalistic despair ameliorated through hope for theological redemption. Such redemptive possibility roots itself, in part, on the basic decency of his principal characters. Unlike *The Octopus* where S. Behrman and Shelgrim represent the insatiable rapacity of the railroad, *The Pit* includes not a single major character who attempts to destroy another's well-being (*The Octopus* 575-577; 618-619). Norris does, of course, portray Crookes as capable of such behavior and Dave Scannel as having previously done so (*The Pit* 270-278; 340-341). These two men, however, defeat neither Jadwin nor Gretry. Each disappears as Jadwin works his corner. Even as the corner collapses, Crookes does not gloat with condescending arrogance. He rather understands how even the best of speculators—Jadwin—remains vulnerable to the life force (396). Scannel, by contrast, remains so thoroughly beaten that he continues nowhere to be found.

An additional factor in Norris's concluding hope is the influence of Le Conte and evolutionary theism. A moral order does, indeed, exist and will, over time, "prevail" (Pizer 17). Norris's last novel conveys such thoughts as it allows Jadwin and Laura to renew their marriage and leave Chicago for points even further west (417). Even Mrs. Cressler, while grieving Charlie's suicide, finds solace in her sister's love (416). Inevitable change will cause immense suffering, Norris believes, but "all things" will still somehow "work together for good" (*The Octopus* 652). Given a framework that references "the first verses of Genesis"—and by implication affirms that all creation "was very good," Norris's last novel explores the full range of the social and cultural controversies of its era (*The Pit* 63; Revised Standard Version Genesis 1:31).

While generally offering superb analyses of Norris's work, Pizer misses how *The Pit* examines the societal, cultural and theological postbellum transformations that shaped the last third of the nineteenth century. Pizer's argument rests on his belief that Laura's love triangle with Sheldon and Jadwin forms an altogether separate plot from her husband's attempted corner (161). Norris, however, openly links the time Jadwin spends on the corner with his neglect of Laura. As a result, she nearly falls into Sheldon's inviting arms (410). To accept that Norris wrote two plots that somehow manage to fully separate a husband and wife as closely bonded as Jadwin and Laura is

problematic at best. In fact, Norris's intermingled plots augment the breadth of his cultural examination. While perhaps not as epic as *The Octopus*, Norris's 1902 novel illuminates the major socio-political, biblical and theological issues of its time. By doing so, *The Pit* stands as a significant cultural text of *fin de siècle* American life.

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WRIGHT MORRIS'S CHICAGO

JOSEPH J. WYDEVEN

One thing leads to another, but once you're in
Chicago everything leads back to where you
came from, wherever that was.
—Wright Morris, God's Country and My People

Wright Morris is best known as a Nebraska writer and photographer, but Chicago played a significant role in his development as a teenager, and the locale of the city was a key element in several of his novels. Places and incidents associated with Chicago—especially the Larrabee YMCA and its environs—are associated with one of his central mature themes, transformation of character and identity. How he used his experience in Chicago is of considerable interest in tracing the development of this theme, both in relation to his life with his father, Will, as found principally in several autobiographical accounts; and in his novels, where Chicago seemed a kind of laboratory for the exposure of intense emotions leading to radical change of personality serving the interests of life renewal.

It was in Chicago that the father-son psychodrama was played out—mostly as found in the pages of *Will's Boy: A Memoir* (1981)—and the complications in the drama had lasting effects, leading first to a cool estrangement and later to the difficult writing of Morris's novel, *The Works of Love*, which took him seven years to complete, and in which he attempted to come to terms with his losses through an imaginative fiction. In the memoir, Morris focuses mostly on his own experiences, while in the novel he turns his sights more imaginatively on his father's life, calling his protagonist Will Brady. To the extent that Morris borrowed extensively from his past to develop fictional narrative, he was always "an autobiographical writer": while it is impossible to know how closely he was faithful to the facts of his life, some incidents are repeated from book to book, suggest-

ing both that they had their base in reality, and that they served some nearly ritualistic purpose in his personal life.[1]

Morris's father, Will, seems to have been something of a lost soul in the post-pioneer period of Midwestern history, a condition apparently intensified by the sudden loss of his wife, Grace, when she died within a week of giving birth to their son Wright. If the father was bereft, the son in time came to think of himself as "half an orphan"—and sometimes, when his father left him with neighbors and good Samaritans for weeks at a time, more like "a whole orphan" (*Will's Boy* 85).

As detailed in *Will's Boy*, Chicago was the Midwestern metropolis for both father and son, the hub of a skein of lines on the railroad maps of his father's early career as a railroad man. The crucial impact of Chicago on Morris no doubt has much to do with the fact that his experiences there largely happened to him in his early years, when he was between fifteen and twenty (from 1925 to 1930).

Morris first arrived in Chicago after being sprung by his father in 1925 from a detention center for boys in Omaha, where Wright had been detained for shoplifting (*Will's Boy* 87-90). In those days, the roads in Iowa were poor, and it took a week to make the passage in his father's Big Six Studebaker, partly perhaps because Wright himself did much of the driving. The entry into Chicago was inauspicious: "Only someone who has done it the way I did it, driving from Omaha and coming in after midnight, going north on Michigan toward the Wrigley Tower . . . will understand what it was like to reach Lincoln Park and know the lake was there and not be able to see it, just hear the boats honk" (92-93).

In the city father and son first settled in an apartment on State Street, but soon moved to an apartment on Menomonee Street, a block from Lincoln Park. After his father found work with the Northwestern Railroad, Wright found himself attracted to the Larrabee YMCA[2] near North Avenue, and employment at the Montgomery Ward warehouse on Canal Street, both of which are described in *Will's Boy* and later play significant roles in his fiction. Morris by this time was accustomed to independence and was left much to his own devices. At the Larrabee YMCA, he soon found himself under the eye of YMCA personnel, especially Ward Shults, who were impressed with his self-assurance and his ability to get along with—more important, to serve as a model for—the rowdier Italian boys who played pool and ping-pong in the YMCA facilities.

As Morris stated his position, "Boys just naturally looked up to me, even those who didn't like me. Their dislike for me was envy of my [newly discovered] Christian character" (109). Within weeks, he was a part-time YMCA employee, and somewhat later led groups to the Y's Camp Martin Johnson in northern Michigan.

All this time, Morris and his father shared the apartment on Menomonee Street, but this accommodation proved untenable when Wright's sense of morals came into conflict with his father's ways with women. Returning early to the apartment one Sunday afternoon, Wright found his father "seated on a chair with a girl in his lap . . . Her unblinking eyes, her head bobbing, stared into mine over my father's shoulder. Her head continued to bob, my father hoarsely breathing, as if unable to stop the machine he had started" (114-15). Some weeks later, finding silk stockings hanging in the bathroom and perfume on his pillow, Morris had had enough. He moved to the YMCA—in what might have been the first serious act in the long and gradual process of estrangement.

Meanwhile, having discovered some talent for cartooning, Morris returned to school (at Lakeview High School) and started a correspondence course in art, perhaps already dreaming of being "a political cartoonist, like John T. McCutcheon of the Chicago *Tribune*" (151). Other memorable events from these Chicago years included his work as Santa Claus's assistant at Montgomery Ward and an incident in which his hand became severely infected, leading him to dream of "how it must feel to have one [hand] missing. I visualized it with other missing hands, in a bucket" (154). His deep attachment to Chicago was shown clearly when, after a brief time spent in Los Angeles, he noted his return "to the Loop in Chicago, *my hometown*" (143, my italics).

Some parts of the story from *Will's Boy* had been told thirty years earlier in the novel *The Works of Love* (1952), but by and large that novel is devoted to an imaginative account of his father's life as a failed entrepreneur and his subsequent development into something of an American visionary. There can be little doubt that *The Works of Love* is an attempt to give his father his due—to rethink him as a man of flesh and blood, but also to add a spiritual dimension that might not have been immediately apparent from the facts. Especially in the later chapters, Morris transforms his protagonist, Will Jennings Brady, into a man somewhat older than his father, the better perhaps to make his existential loneliness more provocative and to give him

a greater hunger for a redeeming wisdom. Although the character Brady has his father's decidedly bad habits with women, Morris, through his title and selected incidents, makes him into a seeker and an intimate of holy men, such as the "old fool" in Los Angeles who, with "the rapt gaze of a holy man"—like St. Francis—symbolically "[feeds] himself to the birds" (205). More than once Brady is described as hearing voices, and he is often seen as partaking in the secret lives of others—deliberate strategies to give him spiritual weight.

Will Brady finds himself in Chicago in the last of the six parts of *The Works of Love*, entitled "In the Wasteland." Having lost his alcoholic wife in Los Angeles, he boards the train to Omaha but then decides to ride to the end of the line, Chicago, instead. Readers learn that he finds lodging—similar to Morris and his father—on Menomonee Street (218 Menomonee Street, to be exact). The key passage in which Menomonee Street is introduced is redolent of Hemingway, as Morris employs language to give voice to the reception of intense sensations experienced there. Describing Brady's attention to environment while riding the streetcar towards Lincoln Park, Morris writes:

> To get to Menomonee Street in Chicago you take a Clark Street car in the Loop and ride north, twenty minutes or so, to Lincoln Park . . . On certain days you might find Will Brady standing there. Not that he cared where he was going, but he liked the look of the street, the clang of the bell, and the smell of the crushed track sand that came up through the floor. He liked to stand with his hands grasping the rail at the motorman's back. At certain intersections he liked to turn and look—when the door at the front opened—down the streets to the east where the world seemed to end. It didn't, of course, but perhaps he liked to think that it might . . . . (*The Works of Love* 214)

By this time in the novel, sensation—the reception of things "he liked"—is part of Brady's personality, a counterpart to his essential loneliness. Much of the final section details both his pathetic social relations with his neighbors and his subsequent *spiritual* connection to them. His son, Willy Brady, does not appear in this section of the novel, apparently living back in Nebraska—but obviously Will yearns for him, discussing him vaguely with waitresses and other near-strangers, and once a year he revises an unsent letter:

> DEAR SON—
>
> *Have moved. Have nice little place of our own now, two-plate gas. Warm sun in windows every morning, nice view of park. Plan to get new Console radio soon now, let you pick it out. Plan to pick up car so we can drive out in country, get out in air. Turning over in my mind plan to send you to Harvard, send you to Yale. Saw robin in park this morning. Saw him catch worm.* (221-22)

The letter reveals both the emotional distance between father and son and a pathetic attempt to bridge that distance through the former railroad telegraph agent's measured, balanced language.

Employed at night as a sorter of bills for the railroad, Brady spends his days more or less passing the time, moving from place to place where it has long been customary for his acquaintances to reassure him that his son loves him. But at the same time, he seems capable of seeing through his own exaggerations, always seeking some more meaningful understanding of life: what Morris suggests is that Brady's need for real human connection is so compelling, so demanding, that he seeks a visionary solution, the only possibility left to him.

Brady finds this ideal solution in the want ads: the Montgomery Ward store is seeking a man to be Santa Claus. For Brady, the role of Santa Claus allows him "To live in this world, so to speak, and yet somehow be out of it . . . to be mortal, and immortal, at the same time," enabled to speak intimately to children, to have them confide in him: "Out on the street an old man cannot hold hands with children, bounce them on his knee, and tell them lies that he will not be responsible for . . . There is a law against it—unless the old man is Santa Claus" (264-65).

Brady is hired, but to make himself even more worthy of the role, he needs to give himself color in his cheeks, and so he avails himself of a device being demonstrated and sold at the store: a NU-VITA (meaning "new life") lamp designed to distribute "the life-giving rays of the sun" (256). The problem is that Brady uses the lamp too liberally: by a week before Christmas, he finds that the lamp's rays have nearly blinded him, and he cannot open his eyes without the use of his fingers. On December 19, a curious thing happens: either through confusion or through deliberate action, Brady leaves Santa Claus's throne and makes his way to the canal outside the Montgomery Ward store. There, in the canal, the city's waste has collected, and he imagines it on fire:

> All of the juices of the city were there on the fire, and brought to a boil . . . blown to him, so it seemed, by the bellows of hell. An acrid stench, an odor so bad that it discolored paint, corroded metal, and shortened the life of every living thing that breathed it in. But the old man on the landing inhaled it deeply, like the breath of life. He leaned there on the railing, his eyes closed, but on his face the look of a man with a vision—a holy man, one might even say, as he was feeding the birds. (268)

And so—whether by accident or intent is deliberately unclear—Brady descends into the water and drowns, ending the novel.

Speaking to Wayne Booth a quarter century later, Morris claimed that "Brady redeems himself, and all of us, as Santa Claus" ("Organic Fiction" 75). This is an extreme statement, but it is nevertheless reasonable, given the premises offered in the last section of *The Works of Love*. Morris came to believe that he had failed to master the problem of voice in *The Works of Love*, thinking perhaps that he had allowed pathos to slip sometimes too easily into bathos.[3] I choose to believe that Morris was dealing with a complicated emotional attachment to his father and that this novel is both an attempt to give his father a belated tribute and to assuage some of his own misgivings about leaving him behind as he entered his adult life.

Wright Morris also employed Chicago in his next Nebraska book, the National Book Award-winning novel, *The Field of Vision* (1956). The novel is set in a bullfight arena in Mexico City, but its subject is Nebraska and its Midwestern culture, and it employs Chicago principally in relation to two characters, Dr. Leopold Lehmann and his patient, Paula Kahler, both the kind of "'possessed' characters," as Morris said, "toward which I am powerfully drawn" ("Organic Fiction" 95). It is in Chicago that startling events occur in the unraveling of a psychological mystery.

The Field of Vision brings together an array of seven characters to Mexico City, where they sit together watching a bullfight. There are first of all, Walter and Lois McKee, typical middle-class Nebraskans; they have brought with them to Mexico their grandson Gordon and Lois's father, an old pioneer and curmudgeon in his eighties. They have accidentally run into Walter's boyhood friend, Gordon Boyd, causing old feelings to stir in Lois, as Boyd had aroused her passion while she was dating Walter years before. Boyd, under the care of a psychiatrist of sorts, has brought Dr. Lehmann

along to the bullfight, and beside Dr. Lehmann sits his patient Paula Kahler.

Dr. Lehmann, who "resembled those shaggy men seen in the glass cages of the world's museums, depicting early man at some milestone of his career," and who "specialized in mental cases, usually female, that his more successful colleagues had given up" (*Field of Vision* 64-65), is trying to solve the baffling case of Paula Kahler. Paula had first been brought to him as a "chambermaid who had strangled [an] amorous bellhop," but it was soon apparent that Paula was actually "a man, physically normal in every respect." The oddest thing was that Paula, a "man who believed he was a woman," (74-75) fully rejected everything male in her personal world. Lehmann believed she had completely transformed herself emotionally, and so he offered her case as exemplary to Boyd—though Lehmann was still lacking her motive. Discovering that motive involves several flashbacks in the novel—carrying him and Morris's readers to Chicago.

One day Lehmann had found, in Paula's belongings, a postcard addressed to *Paul* Kahler, written by Warren Shults of the Larrabee YMCA in Chicago. (Readers will recognize the name Shults from my earlier discussion of the Larrabee YMCA in *Will's Boy*, but the first name has been changed from *Ward* to *Warren*). Thinking Shults might be able to identify this *Paul,* Lehmann communicates by phone with him, and he is informed that Paul Kahler is missing (117). Alerted, Lehmann determines immediately to take the night train from New York to Chicago.

The journey and entrance to Chicago (like other contents of *The Field of Vision*) are laden with mythic implications. That Morris identifies the train as a night train suggests that Lehmann is taking a "night journey," a dangerous, sleepless mythic journey into discovery and self-discovery. Morris further tells us that the train takes Lehmann to "the heart of the labyrinth," from where he takes a taxi to a hotel "within a block of the Y.M.C.A." (118).

In the hotel Lehmann experiences a series of strange life-changing events, in language charged with expectation and mythic consequence. The room and the bed in which Lehmann lies vibrate with the street car passages outside the window, causing the light bulb above him to move in "an even, somewhat elliptical swing" which Morris compares to the "movement of the earth, tipped on its axis" (119). The room is filled with flies, and at one point one of them falls onto Lehmann's chest, stunned, with its feet flailing in the air.

Suddenly Lehmann remembers watching Paula Kahler, his patient, save a fly from death, an act Lehmann had found "a fine example of the saintly and simple-minded . . ." (121). Lehmann follows his patient's example, refusing to swat the helpless fly on his shirt front: "In the room he felt the presence of a strange personality. One that was part of the room, the enduring personality of life itself. It joined him, sad as it seemed, in the pity life seemed to feel in the presence of such a fugitive thing as life. Not just pity for Lehmann, nor for flies, but for pity itself" (123). It would seem that Lehmann is being prepared for his meeting with Warren Shults at the Larrabee YMCA.

The meeting with Shults occurs shortly thereafter. Shults tells him that Paul Kahler had been his right-hand man, intended for further work at the YMCA, but instead he had disappeared. The picture Shults shows Lehmann depicts a boy with a "smile of brotherly love glow[ing] on his face." Lehmann thinks the boy is "a little on the simple side," to which Shults responds by pointing to a "picture of a simple minded Saint on his wall. His hands were spread out before him and around his head hovered many small birds. Gathered at his feet were many small creatures, some known to be friendly, others unfriendly, but for the moment at peace among themselves" (159-63). This is not the first time we have encountered the St. Francis of Assisi archetype in Morris's fiction. Shults further tells Lehmann that even at the YMCA camps Paul refused to kill anything, including troublesome insects and ringworms.

By this time Lehmann is beginning to understand that Paula, his patient, is indeed the missing Paul Kahler, but he still needs a motive. That motive is supplied by further information from Shults, from a file entitled "Kahler, Otto—case of." Otto Kahler was Paul's father and one day he was lost in a blizzard. His body was buried in the snow and not found until the snow melted weeks or months later. Shults speculates that the body was found and processed by someone who deals clandestinely in bodies for medical purposes. At any rate, a severed hand with a missing joint on the left hand had been found and recognized by a medical student, who, Shults continues, "put formaldehyde in his lunch pail and brought the hand to Mrs. Kahler for identification. Paul was there at the time. He left the house in the evening and was never seen again" (166-68).

But in fact, Paul *had been* seen again—transformed into a woman, *Paula*—and he had allowed himself at least to strangle an "amorous bellhop" and so become Lehmann's patient. Morris's clarification of Paula's case is spelled out in different sections of the novel, none perhaps better than here: Paula is described as having "[a] simple-minded wonder and affection for childish things. A nature that refused to acknowledge the aggressive elements. Maleness, that is. Maleness being at the heart of it" (115). The cause—perhaps the last straw—for his transformation from man into woman is the visit from the medical student with his father's severed hand, one further sign of the world's essential violence, typically performed by males.

Transformation, for Morris, was an essential human quality that he has Dr. Lehmann see wherever he looks: "What did he see? A transformation. He saw it take place. Before his eyes, the commonplace miracle of everyday life. You can begin with a will, a way, and you end up with something else. The human thing to do was to transform something, especially yourself" (75-76). Nevertheless, Paula still calls for help in her sleep: "St. Paula Kahler, who had changed one world, still burned with need in the world she had changed, and needed even more help in the new world, rather than less" (202).

Obviously, Wright Morris invested the Larrabee YMCA and its environs with mythic significance—linked to his own experiences as a teenager working with Ward Shults. Because the Larrabee YMCA had empowered Morris and instilled him as a teenager with confidence in his abilities and skills, he came to think of it as a special place of knowledge and enlightenment, and so he turned it into a place of mythic power when he needed such a place in his fiction.[4]

Chicago entered Morris's fiction substantively again in only one more novel, *Ceremony in Lone Tree* (1960). There, serving the role of an outside observer and commentator on the various ceremonies set on Scanlon's ninetieth birthday in the Lone Tree Hotel, appears a man named W. B. Jennings. This Jennings, a writer of "adventure stories for boys of all ages," is the son of a man who "spent his last years in Chicago employed as a department-store Santa Claus" (128-30)—clearly the son of Will Jennings Brady from *The Works of Love*. Understandably, Jennings's view of life encompasses thinking about the omnipresence of death.

Jennings is putatively in Lone Tree to research the recent rampage of the killer Charlie Munger (based on real-life Charles Starkweather, who ranged across the state and arbitrarily murdered nearly a dozen Nebraskans in 1957-58), as well as one of Scanlon's relatives, Lee Roy Momeyer, who had used his hotrod to revenge

himself on two of his school fellows by running them over. But much on Jennings's mind remains the question of the meaning of his father's life: "What led a boy, born and raised in this soddy," he questions, "to roll down the plain like a pebble to where men were paid to be Santa Claus?" (137).

This return to the material provided in *The Works of Love* suggests that Morris had not put the question of his father's life to rest in that book and that he was seeking a kind of closure in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*. Some revisionism in the text of *Ceremony* hints that this is true. Once again, for example, Menomonee Street is noted, but Morris now claims that the son of Will Brady had *never* lived there; rather, at the age of seventeen, after his father's death, he makes his way *for the first and only time* to his father's cramped apartment. There he finds and reads for the first time the "DEAR SON" letter meant for him and sheds the tears he had apparently not spared for his father in life. Afterwards Jennings helps to convey the coffin of Will Brady back to Indian Bow, Nebraska, and watches as the body is put into the ground behind the original soddy. This appears to be Morris's symbolic farewell to his estranged father—a far cry from reality, which was that Morris apparently knew neither the place nor the time of his father's death.

In one of the final photo-texts in *God's Country and My People,* Morris remembers asking his father what his mother had been like and receiving little useful information. Then he makes the statement: "Thirty years would pass before my father's ghost would put a similar question to his son" (n.pag.). In the works Morris wrote about the heart of the labyrinth, in Chicago, he tried to answer this question in a variety of ways, all involving the mystery of life and the pains of loss, especially those self-imposed losses resulting from insufficient attentiveness to the hidden lives of others. It is understandable that Morris would be inattentive as he made his way confidently into his adult life; it is also understandable that he would later feel infinite regret, calling forth such a series of remarkable literary interventions.

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NOTES

[1]Much of this essay is about Morris's relations with his father. For a thorough discussion of the fictional implications of what Morris made of his *mother,* who died less than a week after she gave birth to him, see my "Dualism and Doubling in Wright Morris's *War Games*," *The Centennial Review* 37.2 (1993): 415-28.

[2]What Morris always calls the Larrabee YMCA was actually the North Avenue-Larrabee YMCA at 1508 N. Larrabee Street, a YMCA branch that worked closely with Chicago Boys' Clubs and the Boy Scouts. In his *Great Enterprises*, Emmett Dedmon writes that "With the aid of an additional $100,000 gift . . . a North Avenue-Larrabee Boys' Club building was dedicated in June of 1916." An illustration picturing "Boys amusing themselves in the North Avenue-Larrabee Boys' Club" (175) provides a view perhaps similar to the one that greeted Morris a decade later—assuming it is this building that he calls the Larrabee YMCA.

[3]On at least two occasions I discussed this novel with Morris and on both occasions—against my protests—Morris reiterated this view about failure of voice in *The Works of Love.* Morris did not go quite as far in his earlier interview with Wayne Booth, but he clearly acknowledged a problem with tone: "The consistence of the tone I seldom depart from is one of the problems of the novel. The ironic departures had to be very carefully muted so as not to question or ridicule the sober tenor of Brady's existence" ("Writing of Organic Fiction" 77).

[4]Readers will recognize that this synopsis of the Lehmann sections of *The Field of Vision* is of necessity truncated for the sake of brevity. But what is also necessarily lacking in the synopsis is how the Lehmann sections interweave with the reports from the other characters, especially Boyd and McKee. There is hardly space to note the novel's focus on transformation and its insistent use of the labyrinth mythology, nor to discuss the roles of Boyd and Scanlon in competing for the allegiance of young Gordon's imagination. Readers are urged to go to the novel itself to fill out these missing parts.

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CINCINNATUS, KRIS COLUMBUS, DAD DETROIT, AND OTHER CARTOON ICONS

GUY SZUBERLA

When booster spirits ran high, and some Midwest cities had as many as six daily newspapers, then there was space and a prominent place on front pages for Cincinnatus, Kris Columbus, Ma Des Moines, Dad Detroit, Chicago's Dad Dearborn, and figures like them. They were cartooned figures, graphic symbols of the city, and emblems of civic identity and pride. To local readers, they were once as familiar as Uncle Sam, the Democratic donkey, and the Republican elephant. By the early 1900s and into the first half of the twentieth century, it's possible that nearly every Midwest city and newspaper of size or consequence owned such an iconic character.

Cincinnati editorial cartoonists drew Cincinnatus as a roly-poly comic Roman and, when circumstances required it, as a heroic warrior carrying a sword and wearing a crown of laurel. John T. McCutcheon (1870-1949) brought Dad Dearborn and Miss Chicago to life for the *Chicago Tribune*. Billy Ireland (1880-1935), with a playful pun or two, created Kris or Chris Columbus for *The Columbus Dispatch*. For Detroit, Percy Cromwell (b. 1878), drew a richly caparisoned "Dad Cadillac" and, on occasion, paired him with a stylish flapper named Miss Detroit. James H. Donahey (1875-1949), long-time cartoonist for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, created Mose or Moses Cleveland, giving him a three-cornered hat and vaguely Revolutionary War garb. And "Ding" Darling (1876-1962) personified his city in Ma Des Moines, a stout and cheerful farm wife living in the city. There were still others, too many to list or consider in a short essay.

If these cartoonists make up a "Midwestern school of cartooning," as some art historians assert, McCutcheon and Ireland stand at its head. A tendency to gentle satire, pen-and-ink cross-hatched drawings, and a recurring nostalgia for the rural Midwest are said to char-

acterize the group. In her introduction to *Billy Ireland* (2007), Lucy Shelton Caswell described the "so-called Midwestern school" in general terms: they "valued the ordinary," "anchored [themselves] in homespun values," and expressed political commentary as "social witticisms" (14). That wit, she adds, was usually expressed in the "folksy" sayings of their cartooned characters and their dialect stories. In dozens of new ways, these cartoonists inserted the traditional rural sage into urban settings and carried his small-town cracker barrel humor to the pages of big city dailies.

Midwest cartoonists were not the first to deploy graphic symbols of a city's character in editorial cartoons. New York's Father Knickerbocker had appeared in papers and humor magazines early in the 1880s, some ten or twenty years before Kris Columbus and Miss Chicago. Still earlier, in the 1870s, came the Tammany tiger and the iconic figures for New York that Thomas Nast (1840-1902) drew. Nast created, in Thomas C. Leonard's words, a new way "to *picture* a corrupt city," and, in doing so, showed the importance of "visual thinking about political power" (97). If we recast Leonard's suggestive terms, it can be argued that Midwestern editorial cartoonists created new ways to *picture* and to *symbolize* their cities.

Midwest newspaper cartoonists, like other artists and illustrators at the end of the nineteenth century, worked toward a simplification of the representational tradition that they had inherited. The important and influential "magazine artists" that had come before them—most notably, Thomas Nast, Joseph Keppler, and Bernard Gillam—had produced cartoons for monthly and weekly publications. From the Civil War down through the early 1900s, *Harper's Weekly, Judge, Puck,* and the old *Life* printed their large, richly detailed, and densely crowded compositions. Nast and other magazine artists working in the 1870s and 1880s had frequently incorporated allusions to Greek and Roman mythology, to Shakespeare, and to classical and respected contemporary literature. Gillam famously satirized the presidential candidate, James G. Blaine, as a seminude Phyrne, the ancient and legendary Greek courtesan; A. B. Frost caricatured a "Gen. Hancock as the Democratic Trojan Horse" (Murrell 79, 77). Every now and then, *Life,* the humor magazine, wrote out cartoon captions in schoolboy Latin. Such studied appeals to upper-class readers did not disappear completely, but at the turn of nineteenth century, newspaper cartoonists faced a new mass audience that had

neither the time nor the inclination to puzzle out obscure literary references.

Stephen Becker, charting the history of the editorial cartoon, contends that in the 1890s newspaper cartoonists learned to prize "quick wit and immediate impact." Editorial cartoonists—Darling, Donahey, Ireland, and McCutcheon, included—learned to simplify backgrounds, thin out crowds, and focus the reader's attention on "two or three primary figures." Winning a quick response, Becker says, required "instantly recognizable symbols," a graphic language that was simple and easily read (302). In his *History of American Graphic Humor,* William Murrell terms the use of such symbols "graphic shorthand" (130). If Midwest editorial cartoonists did not create a unique visual code, they did invent, in the scramble of daily deadlines, their own graphic shorthand. What McCutcheon, Ireland, and others in the Midwestern school created was stamped with regional and local significance, a set of symbolic characters that, within a region or one city, came to be instantly recognizable.

McCutcheon to Ireland

Two cartoons by John T. McCutcheon can help illustrate the historic shift toward simplification, and, in turn, suggest the way that he, Billy Ireland, and other important editorial cartoonists came to represent Midwest cities. On December 13, 1889, McCutcheon drew " . . . Yes, we ARE the People . . ." for the *Chicago Daily News*. His drawing—a massed crowd, moving under a triumphal arch—filled the entire front page (McCutcheon 6). Standing shoulder to shoulder in the front lines were capitalists in top hats, laborers wearing aprons and square printers' caps, a sailor, men in business suits, and, in back of them, a crowd that seemed to extend far beyond the picture's frame. McCutcheon intended this mass to represent Chicago and its voting citizens.

The cartoon was his first for a major paper and inaugurated a career that lasted into the 1940s. In certain respects, "Yes, we ARE the People" looked back to Nast and an older representational tradition. The large scale of the image, the crowded composition, the busy detailing of the front-line figures, and the neoclassical arch— all of these recall the style framing the coliseum crowd in Nast's famous "Tammany Tiger Loose" and other densely packed political cartoons of the 1870s and 1880s (Hess 96-7). McCutcheon's triumphal arch, lined with slogans and names, takes a cue from the old cartoons that

played up references to Plutarch and Roman scenes from Shakespeare's plays. McCutcheon, in short, makes little effort to compress his political maxims into concise symbolic imagery or graphic shorthand.

By April 15, 1907, when he drew "Welcome the Coming, Speed the Parting" for the *Chicago Tribune,* he had turned toward a different set of graphic conventions, simple and spare in form (plate 1). Instead of a crowd, a single figure, Miss Chicago, symbolizes the city and its people. This elegant young woman welcomes a new mayor, and unceremoniously hands the departing Mayor Dunne his hat. Her attributes—a Phoenix crown and stylized breastplate—quickly and unmistakably *identify* her as the city of Chicago. Readers of the *Tribune* and other Chicago papers could be expected to recognize her symbolic significance in her crown and armor, however vaguely sketched. McCutcheon, like Luther Bradley, Harold Heaton, and cartoonists for many Chicago papers had, since at least the World's Fair of 1893, symbolized the city as Miss Chicago or, as she was also called, "I Will." Her gold phoenix crown or a modern tiara with a small flame represented the city's rise from the ashes of the great fire of 1871; her breastplate, for a time, carried the inspirational motto "I Will." But the motto, her breastplate armor, carpenter's square (signifying labor peace), and other attributes came to be drawn in lines that were often faintly visible or almost fully erased (Szuberla 45-6). Chicago cartoonists, in little more than a dozen years, had made Miss Chicago into a symbolic figure, easily recognized and quickly drawn.

Editorial cartoonists for the *Chicago Tribune* also represented the city in the character of Father Dearborn or Dad Dearborn. McCutcheon, who drew Dad Dearborn from time to time, once pointed out that General Henry Dearborn had never been in Chicago and looked nothing like "the cartoonists' conception of Father Dearborn" (McCutcheon 281). More often than not, *Tribune* cartoonists made him look like a shorter, pot-bellied Abe Lincoln. They gave him Honest Abe's chin whiskers, a stovepipe or slouch hat, and a long frock coat, sometimes labeling him "Father Dearborn" and sometimes "Chicago." At election time, McCutcheon liked to draw him in this character, asserting that Chicago expected "every voter to do his duty" (*Tribune* 7 April 1931). Miss Chicago had, in her half-mythological coloring, represented a future city and expressed reformers' high ideals; Dad Dearborn, an imaginary founding father, embodied the frontier spirit of the city's early days. Championing

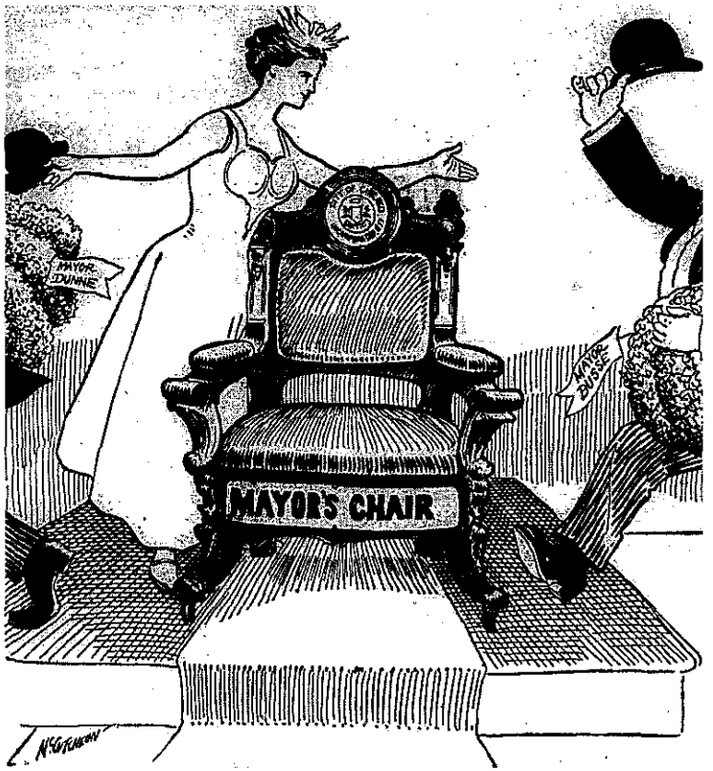

Plate 1: Welcome the Coming, Speed the Parting
by John T. McCutcheon, *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 1907

old-fashioned virtues, he reminded some *Tribune* readers of their roots in the Midwest's farms and small towns. In "Don't Split the Vote," the cartoonist Cary Orr (1890-1967) had an angry Dad Dearborn counsel Republicans to consolidate their vote against the city's German bloc and the "disloyal element" (*Tribune*, 24 February 1919). In still another Orr cartoon, "Woodman, Spare the Tree," a muscular Dad Dearborn wields an axe against three graft-grabbing Chicago mayors (*Tribune*, 6 April 1925).

In "Father Columbus" and "Kris Columbus," Billy Ireland created a city father far more comic and congenial than the *Tribune*'s righteous Dad Dearborn. Ireland, like the older McCutcheon, came from a small town in the rural Midwest. After leaving his hometown of Chillicothe, Ohio, he put in a short stint at the *Chicago Daily News*

in 1897 and in either 1898 or 1899 started work at the *Columbus Dispatch* (Horn 315-6; Caswell 17). There, over the next thirty-five years, he would draw the character Chris or Kris Columbus in the cartoon panels of "The Passing Show" and in daily editorial cartoons.

Ireland's first drafts of "Father Columbus" or "Kris" Columbus did not represent him as markedly boyish or outfit him as a conventional humor character. "Inspecting the Results," a comment on city ordinances, dresses Columbus in fifteenth-century robes, a doublet, and old-fashioned buckled shoes.[1] Though Ireland gives him a sly smile, he also feels obliged to pose him with the solemn air of a wise old counselor (5 February 1901). This cartoon was an early and apprentice effort at converting an historic figure into a local symbol. "Father Columbus," as drawn here and later, reinterpreted a figure that had been fixed in the representational tradition of nineteenth-century Columbus portraits. It's likely that Ireland, at the start, dipped into the flood of Christopher Columbus images then circulating in posters, souvenirs, stamps, coins, and magazine illustrations after the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.[2]

"Kris," as a comic character, came to represent the cheerful spirit and youthful can-do character that Ireland attributed to Columbus, Ohio. If Kris, on one occasion, could characterize the city of Columbus as "a busy little village," he could, in the same cartoon panel, point with pride to its industry and sprawling growth (*Dispatch* 14 April 1912). The character of Kris was defined as the inveterate and happy city booster, at once an average Columbus citizen and a symbol of the whole city. He cheered Columbus's local celebrities, pushed bond levies for its public schools, and talked up the wonders of the municipally bottled water, Ohio State football teams, and the City Beautiful movement ("Getting His Measure Taken," plate 2). Under Ireland's hand, and with the press of local events, he assumed many guises and physical shapes on the pages of the *Columbus Dispatch*. But his character and his virtues held constant: he was wise and witty, boyish in his humor and, above all, a sturdy symbol of common sense. He seemed, in giving out folksy advice, to be a rustic sage in the city, a close cousin to the type-character that George Ade and McCutcheon translated to Chicago stories like *Doc' Horne* (1899).

Ireland, in other words, showed himself happily indifferent to the historic Christopher Columbus. He never comes close to suggesting that his Kris is a mystic visionary, a son of Genoa, or even vaguely

Plate 2: "Getting His Measure Taken" by Billy Ireland, September 23, 1906
Richard Samuel West Collection, Ohio State University,
Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum

Italian. The cartooned "Kris" came to seem more and more a born and bred Buckeye, a loyal booster of Columbus, Ohio and Ohio State. In "The Passing Show"—Ireland's popular full page Sunday feature—Kris touted the local attractions and, in Chamber of Commerce rhetoric, boosted the opportunities for business and industry.[3] In one cartoon, he declared his pride in the many local politicians who "were pounding the politics out of public service" (19 January 1913). On 11 January 1914, a beaming young Chris, holding a large sign, invited other businessmen to do as Henry Ford did: "COME TO COLUMBUS." During World War I, a lanky "Columbus," in fighting trim, punched a boxing bag labeled "Our War Chest Dues" (7 July 1918).

He grew still younger in the 1920s. Though he was to draw the elderly "Father Columbus" figures down through World War I, Ireland was steadily edging toward a younger and livelier character. Up through the end of World War I, despite frequent changes in his clothing and age, Columbus maintained a fairly consistent identity as a city father, gray-haired if sometimes a bit comically grizzled. Ireland used a freer hand with the character's age after 1920, tailoring his boyish appearance to match the day's concerns or some current editorial board stance. "The Passing Show" of 10 October 1920 illustrates this shift in the making. Across the top of the page, Ireland draws an old and dignified Columbus signing a check for his "share" of a new Ohio State University stadium. In a smaller panel, just a bit below, a young and animated Kris races to "SEE . . . THE LAST CIRCUS OF THE SEASON." He pulls along his family, two small children and happy wife. In "The Passing Show" of 17 June 1923, Chris himself seems to have become a little boy. He flies a toy airplane, leading two other boys flying their miniature planes. The three little planes, each driven by a single prop engine, bear the expected names: the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria. (Each carries a superfluous sail). Ireland's cartoon and the corny jokes hold to a booster's serious point: "When the boys dedicate their new flying field . . . . Columbus will become a first class airport."

Ireland's criticisms of the city of Columbus's shortcomings were almost invariably good-humored. He never felt or showed the savage indignation that rolled through Thomas Nast's famous Tammany cartoons. To compare Ireland with Nast is, of course, unfair to both, given the differences between newspaper and magazine work, the periods that they lived and worked in, and the places and people they formed into images of the city. Nast's cartoons, as Thomas C. Leonard has said, marked the "creation of [new] ways to *picture* a corrupt city" (97). The genius of Thomas Nast's cartoons, he argues, was to break with mid-nineteenth-century "conventions of pictorial reporting." These conventions dictated that the city was to be shown in a "gallery of benign urban scenes" and "proud panoramas" (103). Nast made the city into a stage for "melodrama," pitting the forces of corruption against the good (110).

Ireland's cartoons, especially "The Passing Show" Sunday feature, transformed the city of Columbus into a stage for comedy. His

resilient civic pride—and abundant sense of humor—came through his sharpest criticisms of the city's failings. Kris's boyish character and innocent eye, moreover, encouraged comic double takes. Consider the grinning Kris Columbus talking about the thick black smoke hanging over the city's skyline (25 June 1910). In the cartoon, heavy clouds spell out with bold yellow letters the word "INDUSTRY," and Kris tells us that "it's awful dirty, but I must admit I'm rather partial to it." Some five years later, after some problems with the city's drinking water, Kris smiles broadly as he toasts the healthful and "famous Scioto table water [of] Columbus, Ohio" (5 March 1916). Though this Kris is obviously old, and the wrinkles lining his face show it, he is to be seen as vigorous and healthy, his age and ready quips a living testimony to the rejuvenating powers of Scioto water. When, in another "Passing Show," he has a boyish Kris conduct a visiting dignitary through downtown Columbus, Ireland has him block the view of the city's ugly and decaying buildings with an umbrella. Columbus declares that he is "very proud of" the new City Hall and a grand new skyscraper, and then thumbs his nose at the clutch of deteriorating old buildings (31 October 1926; Caswell iii).

City Fathers

Kris Columbus was, finally, a comic invention and a humor character, though Ireland could, when required, bend the character and his own sense of humor toward sharp satire. But Ireland never quite succumbed to a reformer's zeal or to simple savage mimicry. In opposing boss politics, editorial cartoonists of the 1890s and early 1900s typically did. They tended to represent the city's social and political reformers—and the average civic-minded citizens—in outsized, heroic proportions. Figures like Cincinnatus, Mose Cleveland, Detroit's Dad Cadillac, Chicago's Dad Dearborn and "I Will" symbolized the city's so-called "Good Government" forces or some idealized version of "the People." These cartoon heroes faced and fought the Midwest city's growing social and political problems: congestion, crime, blight, and pestilence; crooked mayors, ward bosses and their gangs; greedy money captains and labor strife. Cartoonists like Cincinnati's Claude F. Shafer (1878-1962) flattered reformers and appealed to what many in this period termed "civic patriotism."[4] In drawing these heroic characters and projecting their triumphant actions, cartoonists tried to scale the image of the city's collective spirit to match the titanic size of its problems.

In these partisan and reformist crusades, the character of the City Father—Chicago's Dad Dearborn, Detroit's Dad Cadillac, Father Columbus, Cincinnatus, and others—offered a ready-made graphic symbol. It's possible that the popular images of Uncle Sam and Ben Franklin and even New York's Father Knickerbocker provided irresistible precedents for cartoonists in the Midwest. Jerome Bjelopera points out that Cleveland cartoonists like James "Hal" Donehy (1875-1949) often altered the thin figure of Moses Cleaveland, Cleveland's historic founding father. The cartoon Mose or Moses Cleveland, to play his assigned parts, was given "a Ben Franklin look": "spectacles and . . . a pot-belly, symbolic of the age and wisdom of a father figure" (24). In the early 1890s, the Chicago literary and opinion magazine *America* had cartooned the city as a cowboy, a slanting reference to the city's stockyards and its rough-and-tumble "Western" character. The Chicago cowboy in T.E. Powers's cartoon ridiculed a foppish New Yorker, taunting him about the loss of the 1893 World's Fair (27 August 1891).[5] However fitting a symbol of Chicago, the cowboy was eventually supplanted by Dad Dearborn, who could better fight Capone's gangs and the city's many corrupt politicians.

Cincinnatus was perhaps an inevitable graphic symbol for Cincinnati. If editorial cartoonists nodded to Roman and local history in naming Cincinnatus, in drawing the character, they felt free to vary his form, face, and identifying attributes. These necessarily changed with political circumstance, shifting editorial policies, and the individual talent of the cartoonist. No one representational tradition or mythological framework held these cartoonists to a continuing narrative, much less a consistent characterization. H.T. Webster (1885-1953), creator of "The Timid Soul" and "Caspar Milquetoast," drew a Cincinnatus that sometimes looked as timid, submissive, and middle-class as his "Timid Soul."

Claude F. Shafer drew a Cincinnatus who could radiate an imperial grandeur and, on other occasions, look as harried and belittled as the standard John Q. Public. On October 30, 1915, *The Cincinnati Post* published Shafer's cartoon of Cincinnatus cast as a commuter, a straphanger on board a crowded trolley car. Titled "For the Honor and Glory of Cincinnati, Give Him a Seat!" the cartoon was deemed important enough to be given the top half of the paper's front page. Cincinnatus wears a laurel crown, a tunic with meander trimmings, and boots meant to look ancient and Roman (plate 3).[6] But, if his clothes invoke a storied past, his situation as a disgruntled daily com-

Plate 3: "For the Honor and Glory of Cincinnati, Give Him a Seat" by Claude Shafer
Cincinnati Post, October 30, 1915; Thomas H. Kelly scrapbook;
From the collection of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

muter does not. Standing and struggling to keep his balance, he can barely hold on to the packages marked "High Street Car Fare," "Bad Street Car Service," and so on. He's riding "The Special Privilege Line," where fat seated men, in top hats and spats, laugh at his predicament. Shafer tagged each of these comic plutocrats so that the reader knows they represent the traction company, gas, electric, and other special interests.

The historical Lucius Cincinnatus held a place in legend as a heroic warrior and symbol of unsullied Roman virtue. Shafer and other local editorial cartoonists did on many occasions picture Cincinnatus as a mighty defender of the city, but an ambiguity necessarily shadowed their characterizations of the triumphant warrior. From the 1880s down to what the historian Zane Miller terms "a clear

cut reform victory in the 1920s," Cincinnati voters and a nonpartisan league of reformers and businessmen struggled against the powerful and corrupt rule of "Boss" George B. Cox (108). During election campaigns, Shafer, H.T. Webster, Homer Stinson, and other Cincinnati editorial cartoonists sent Cincinnatus into the field against this political machine. In a series of 1913 Stinson cartoons, Cincinnatus guards city hall against "the gang"; in the concluding panel, he triumphs over Boss Cox, holding a banner with the words: "Efficiency in Municipal Government" (Kelley 135, 137, 138). Since the Cox gang would hold its power for another decade, the triumphs Stinson imagined remained a fanciful vision for the future.

When the nonpartisan Charter party was beating down the Cox-Hyincka machine in 1925, Shafer drew Cincinnatus in a moment of power and glory: "Out of the Fog and into the Sun." His seven-column drawing dominated the front page of *The Cincinnati Post* on the day before a decisive election (2 November 1925). George E. Stevens, in an article on "*The Cincinnati Post* and Municipal Reform," reprints the cartoon and describes it succinctly: Shafer shows "'Cincinnati' escaping the fog of 'Boss Rule' by climbing a mountain labeled 'City Charter Ticket' to look into the sun of 'Good Government'" (238). Stevens does not quite say it, but it's clear that Shafer, in drawing this citizen-soldier, fused the imperatives of political progressivism with imagery from classical mythology. Climbing to the top of this Olympus, Cincinnatus follows steps bearing the names of each of the reform candidates. His quest ends with a conventional spread-armed gesture of victory. If the sword at his side does not look like an iconographic "sword of justice," it nevertheless is drawn to be something more than the toy blades that the earlier cartoon Cincinnatus figures had carried.

At about the same time that Shafer drew Cincinnatus victorious, Percy W. Cromwell (b. 1878) was drawing yet another Dad Cadillac for the *Detroit Times*.[7] Between 1915 and the early 1930s, Cromwell drew more than a hundred editorial cartoons with Dad Cadillac fighting the city's crime, corruption, pollution, and greed. His Dad Cadillac cut a swashbuckling figure, dressed as a cavalier with a sword, gauntlets, and seven-league boots. He represented the city, its civic spirit, commercial drive, and, in this fanciful form, its sense of history. Dad Cadillac was, of course, a revamped and revived version of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the French officer who, in 1701, founded the fort and settlement that became Detroit.

"Use That Trusty Blade Today," a cartoon from the mayoral election of 1927, typifies Cromwell's tendency to fit Dad Cadillac into allegorical frameworks and heroic postures (plate 4). In it, Dad Cadillac unsheathes his mighty sword to put down "Intolerance," a shadowy figure represented as a hairy arm and crooked hand. The action unfolds like a scene in a silent film melodrama. Dad Cadillac steps forward to rescue "Good Government"—personified as a frightened girl—from the grasp of "Intolerance." The rhetorical meaning is inscribed on Father Cadillac's sword and scabbard: "Vote [for the] Smith Administration"— the incumbent and wet mayor, John W. Smith. In an earlier version of Dad Cadillac, Cromwell had drawn him wading through Detroit's garbage-strewn alleys, where "PLAGUE," "PESTILENCE," and "DISEASE" filled the air. He carries no sword, but shoulders a shovel, rake, and a bucket labeled "Clean-up Campaign." Cromwell, if anything, shows him more resplendently dressed than usual for this dirty and disgusting job. "Get on the job, Dad" gives us the strong-jawed Cadillac, wearing a wig, a fur-trimmed three-cornered hat, and an eighteenth-century frock coat. His combined elegance and determination, if they do not call to mind a dandy, symbolize an idealized Detroit lying somewhere under all this dirt and garbage.

Unlike Cincinnatus and Kris Columbus, the character of Dad Cadillac originated in an authentic piece of his city's local history. It's worth recalling that Detroit, in 1912, celebrated the "Cadillaqua spirit" with a pageant and parade in which a leading citizen, dressed to impersonate M. Cadillac, rode in a "white Flanders" auto.[8] And yet, it's hard to swallow whole Cromwell's several comic renditions of Dad Cadillac tied to Detroit's Auto Industry. Making Dad Cadillac the chief salesman and promoter of the "Detroit Auto Motor Industry" in 1928 necessarily involved some flat-footed anachronisms, a comic clash of symbols. In one cartoon, titled "Some Driver," "Detroit" (as Dad Cadillac) bestrides four autos like a colossus. A cape flies from his shoulders as he drives intently toward "PROSPERITY." In another cartoon from 1928, a bewigged and beribboned Cadillac happily drives a car tagged "Detroit's Automobile Industry: 1928" over a dummy named "Pessimism." Again, he's headed toward "PROSPERITY," here cast as a beautiful sunrise. Perhaps the most fanciful reinterpretation, if not the most plainly anachronistic, makes Dad Cadillac the patron of "Rapid Transit." In one grand vision of Detroit's future, he again stands like

Plate 4: "Use That Trusty Blade Today," by Percy W. Cromwell, *Detroit Times*, c 1927; Percy W. Cromwell Cartoon Collection, Bentley Historical Library, The University of Michigan

a colossus, holding in his right hand the reigns of power over "jitneys," "buses," and "all common carriers." In his left, he holds "plans to unify rapid transit in Detroit."

Ma Des Moines and the Monks

On December 9, 1906, Jay N. "Ding" Darling announced his arrival at the *Des Moines Register* by drawing a cartoon of a fat robed monk seated on a small chair smoking an enormous pipe.[9] Across the monk's swelling belly, written in large letters, are the words "Des Moines." The oversize bowl of his pipe bears the label, "Soft Coal"; from its burning embers float thick, cross-hatched clouds of black smoke. According to popular belief, Trappist monks, early settlers in Iowa, provided the name ("the monks" in French) for the Des Moines river and, in turn, for the city.[10] "Ding" Darling, who places himself in the corner sketching "Des Moines," was to repeat jokes about the smoke and coal dust in Des Moines over the years. Within a few months Darling was to drop the monk and put Ma or Mother Des Moines in his place. In inventing Ma Des Moines he casually put aside local legend and history. Ma Des Moines proved to be a more malleable symbol of the city. Despite her imaginary rural roots, she was a more fitting image of the city and its people.

Ma Des Moines was a double character, combining the city and rural Iowa in one ample and fluid figure. When Darling first drew her, he resorted to a conventional usage, making her an aging schoolmarm conducting a "Sunday School Lesson." In that character, in one cartoon, she divides tax funds among a "Model Class" of special interest groups (17 March 1907). A few months later, in "Something Wrong with the Divvy," she appears as Mother Des Moines, seated at the head of a long table. She is trying to portion out school funds to her dozen hungry and demanding children (11 May 1907). Days later she played the part of Mrs. Des Moines—wife to a "no good" husband or "old city government." As she struggles with the laundry in an old washtub, her husband lazily props his feet up on a rickety stove (24 May 1907). With Ma Des Moines, Darling found a suitable symbol and celebratory image for his city. She seems at once a stout farm wife and an iconic representation of Des Moines. Ma, for example, makes a grand and lively entrance in the editorial cartoon, "Come Right In! The Floor Isn't Half-Occupied" (26 August 1907). With her arms wide open, she welcomes her country cousins to the city: "Uncle John! Aunt Nettie! and Paul, and Mary, and all the rest!"They will share her house and sleep on the floor, during the days of the State Fair. Ma Des Moines may symbolize the city, but plainly enough, her family and roots, identity and past remain down home on the farm.

When historians come to group Darling, Ireland, McCutcheon, and other like-minded Midwest cartoonists, it has been customary and mostly correct to stress their rural nostalgia and village morality. In his study of *The Political Cartoon* (1981), Charles Press used these terms and others for "the sunny philosophers of the Midwest," a group he also called the "bucolic fraternity." He summed up their work in a section headed "Small Town Crosshatch Nostalgia" (276-79). Discussing McCutcheon's work and its range, Stephen Becker acknowledged that the most famous of his cartoons "struck that low nostalgic chord always sounded by a nostalgia for something we never really experienced." Though Becker argues against the "erroneous impression" that McCutcheon drew only "ten-year-old Hoosiers," and counters the idea he was limited to rural idylls and small-town life, he never directly demonstrates that McCutcheon drew the city or urban experience into the heart of his work (305-6). His view of McCutcheon, like most views of the larger Midwest group, is understandable, if incomplete. Because so much of their work originated in the values of the Midwest village and farm, in memories of places imagined and real, they often seemed intent on pressing the city into a dim background. But they could not and did not ignore urban reality.

Ma Des Moines, Kris Columbus, Miss Chicago, Cincinnatus, Dad Cadillac and the rest symbolized the early modern city, dramatized its political struggles, and made the complexities of urban experience seem familiar if faintly comic. Thomas C. Leonard, as has already been noted, points out that Nast's cartoons marked the beginning of "visual thinking" in American political reporting on the city (97). It is no exaggeration to add that McCutcheon, Ireland, Darling, and others in the "bucolic fraternity"—in their editorial cartoons and the cast of iconic characters they created—marked another moment in our "visual thinking" about the American city. They visualized, however hesitantly and ambiguously, the urban character in the emerging cities of the Midwest.

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NOTES

[1]Most of the Billy Ireland cartoons discussed here can be found in Lucy Sheldon Caswell's *Billy Ireland* (Columbus: OSU Libraries, 2007). The editorial cartoons—"Inspecting the Results" and "The Passing Show" cartoon panel of 17 June 1923 (Columbus flying a plane)—appear in *The Columbus Dispatch: One Hundred Years of Service* (Columbus: 1971), 45.

Two other cartoons not reprinted in Caswell, and cited here, may be accessed digitally: ""The Passing Show" cartoons for 25 June 1910 and 7 July 1918. See the website of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum (Ohio State University): www.cartoons.osu.edu. The finder numbers, WAI 4 13 and AC E9 68, are keyed to the Billy Ireland collection in the Cartoon Library, where the original drawings can be found.

[2]For a typical nineteenth-century image of Columbus, see the cover of the magazine, *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* (launched in February 1891). It's reproduced in Norman Bolotin and Christopher Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana; U of Illinois Press, 1992): x.

[3]James Thurber, who knew Ireland at the *Columbus Dispatch* in the 1920s, wrote an affectionate chapter on Ireland for *The Thurber Album* (1952) titled "The Boy from Chillicothe." It is reprinted in full as an appendix to Caswell's *Billy Ireland.* Thurber asserted that "The Passing Show" was "largely regional in character, and often purely local" (Caswell 207).

[4]Zane Miller persuasively ties "boosterism" to a "strain of virulence" and "insecurity" to such calls for "heroic action" (86).

[5]T.E. (Tom) Powers (1870-1939) began his newspaper work for Victor Lawson's *Chicago Daily News*, moved to the *Chicago Herald* in 1894, and then on to New York papers in the Hearst chain. His cartoon appears to be an answer to *Life,* the New York humor magazine, and its ridicule of Chicago's bid for the World's Fair. See, for example, "A Suggestion for a That World's Fair Tower in Chicago," a cartoon in its 20 August 1891 issue—published the week before Powers's cartoon.

[6]Though it's possible to view the *Cincinnati Post* editorial cartoons on microfilm, a scrapbook of editorial cartoons, editorials, and campaign literature in the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County rare book room offers more direct and interesting access. The title of the scrapbook: "Clippings on candidates and results of elections in Cincinnati/ from Cincinnati newspapers, 1905-1920." Thomas H. Kelley (1854-1931), a Cincinnati attorney, compiled the material.

[7]The original drawings of the cartoons discussed here can be found in the "Cromwell Cartoon Collection" at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Cromwell worked at the *Detroit Times* between 1918 and 1932.

[8]For an account of the "Cadillaqua" festivals and Cadillac's place in them, see Don Lochbiler, "How Detroit's 211th birthday gala ended with city's aldermen in jail," a *Detroit News* article available through the web: detnews.com.

[9]All "Ding" Darling cartoons cited and discussed here are collected in the "Papers of Jay Norwood 'Ding' Darling," University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections Department. They can be accessed through the web: digital.lib.uiowa.edu.

[10]David L. Lendt, in Ding: *The Life of Jay Norwood Darling,* says that Darling "mistakenly assumed that 'Des Moines' was derived from the French word for monk." Lendt adds that the cartoon enraged Catholics and coal-dealers (23).

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METAFICTION ON MAIN STREET: GARRISON KEILLOR'S *LAKE WOBEGON DAYS*

ROD RICE

When audiences think of Garrison Keillor, words like "postmodernism" and "metafiction" do not immediately come to mind. More often, those who tune in faithfully to *The Prairie Home Companion* or sample his humorous sketches and novels are inclined to conjure images of things like bedrock middle-American values, apple pie, and Main Street. Certainly the vocabulary of traditional or contemporary literary criticism never appears in the pages of *Lake Wobegon Days,* and if highbrow phrases such as deconstruction or master narrative were to rear their forbidding heads, Keillor might wince quietly or exile them to the playful back pages of a Guy Noir radio skit. Still, for audiences willing to give Keillor more than an occasional glance, a fictional world exists in his writings that has much more to offer than just a dreamy, pastoral vision of idyllic life on the Minnesota prairie. In fact, a substantial portion of the Keillor canon is actually metafictional in nature, and his first novel, *Lake Wobegon Days,* contains a recognizable postmodernist tone that sets it apart from the high seriousness of many of his modernist Midwestern precursors.

To be sure, Keillor owes much to his Middle Border literary antecedents. Like many in his profession, he admires giants in the field such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. Keillor spent the better portion of his life as a citizen of St. Paul, and his books, like those of Fitzgerald, often project the heartland of the Midwest as something of a bastion of moral virtue guarding many of the best values America has to offer. In addition, the influence of people such as Hamlin Garland, Sherwood Anderson, and Wright Morris can be detected in his gentle canvas of groping small-town characters, false front stores, and muted rural vistas. Unlike major figures such as Lewis and Fitzgerald, however, who used the language of the con-

temporary world and a concern with everyday life to oppose modern society and subject the events of their day to intense criticism, Keillor is more flexible and hospitable in his treatment of the commonplace. When his distinguished fellow Minnesotans examine popular culture in novels like *Main Street* and *The Great Gatsby*, for example, often their primary motive is to expose such culture in order to mock or improve upon it. By contrast, Keillor is more interested in immersing himself in the popular in order to celebrate and reaffirm it. Less concerned with modernist foci such as elitism, artistic purity, consciousness, experience, and questions about how we can know reality, Keillor seems more preoccupied with using the novel self-consciously to call attention to its own status as an artifact made of an impure blend of fact and fiction through which different ideas, themes, and characters may be given free play to mix, converse, cross over, and sometimes collide with one other.[1]

Interestingly enough, this self-reflexive tendency in Keillor's writings has not gone entirely unnoticed. With the exception of Katherine Fry, who argues that Lake Wobegon represents a "pastoral ideal" situated squarely within the ideological master narrative of the national heritage, most critics argue that Keillor's artistic vision offers more than just a bucolic, naïve reworking of the nation's Midwestern agrarian myth (303-06). John Miller, for instance, notes that *Lake Wobegon Days* teaches a much different lesson about small-town life than that projected by writers such as Sinclair Lewis in books like *Main Street.* Whereas Lewis is an iconoclast, intent on destroying the symbols of tradition, prejudice, and provinciality, Keillor, living in a postmodern world, is in search of "serviceable values and places of repose for people traumatized by a culture in which all fixed values and principles are rendered problematical" (434). Similarly, Charles Larson and Christine Oravec conclude that Keillor's stories fabricate two communities: the fictionalized Lake Wobegon society and the audience, particularly the baby boom generation. As a result, Keillor is able to supply his readers a "self image that is itself pleasant and flattering fiction: that of a community idealistic enough to be nostalgic, but wise enough to never improve" (241). Another critic, Stephen Wilbers, posits that Keillor's work simultaneously attacks pretense and blurs the boundary between imagination and reality. Thus, Keillor obliterates the distinction between high and low culture, and imagined and real space, thereby making it "difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality, subjective per-

ception from objective truth and mythical place from actual place" (13). To these observations can be added those of Judith Yaross Lee and Peter Scholl. Lee argues that the narration in *Lake Wobegon Days* is unreliable, and that Keillor uses doubling and division to create a comic paradox that splits the book into two narratives and produces a number of possible readings that attempt to explore the problem of rural nostalgia (92). Accordingly, the book can be read variously as a love poem to small towns, as the romanticized past of Midwestern small-town America, as a dreamy monologue that never ends, or as an anti-Rockwellian tale of terror and finalities (116). Finally, Scholl's analysis identifies a hybrid narrative structure containing four layers that counteract the potentially sentimental aspects of the novel. Among them are a parodic narrative history of the town, a fictionalized autobiography of Gary Keillor (Keillor's real name), a partial biography of Johnny Tollefson, and a counter-narrative offered by the author of "95 Theses 95" (116).

But if the bulk of these critical observations are valid, in what sense does *Lake Wobegon Days* represent a break with the past and with the imposing modernist vision of middle-American life offered by Keillor's accomplished literary antecedents? Although answering that question fully would require a much broader scope than the confines of this essay allow, it is possible to suggest how *Lake Wobegon Days* fits more appropriately within the boundaries of that slippery and often elusive species known as postmodern literature. Admittedly, doing so requires something of an oversimplification of the term itself, and as those who have studied contemporary literary criticism know, definitions of postmodernism are as varied as the seasons Keillor depicts in *Lake Wobegon Days*. Notwithstanding, a few general assumptions can be made about this concept. To begin with, postmodernism is generally assumed to be, as Jean-Francois Lyotard explains, in some sense a response to the progress-oriented master narratives of the enlightenment-inspired Western empiricist tradition (*The Postmodern Condition*). As Fry suggested earlier, part of that tradition in Lake Wobegon includes pastoral principles such as the notion of the past as a golden age, an affirmation of the Protestant work ethic, glorification of the agrarian farmer, and depictions of urban environments as alien and corrupt (309-15). As well, often postmodernism reflects uncertainty about the possibility that language can truly reflect reality, or that essential, central claims about truth can be made about the world (Waugh, *Postmodernism* 3-6). Accordingly, the central tendency in

postmodern literature is to move, as Ihab Hassan suggests, more in the direction of indeterminacy than determinacy. Thus, time-honored artistic principles such as product, design, purpose, unity, synthesis, and other relevant concepts are commonly subverted to an increased emphasis on process and performance, chance, play, dispersal, antithesis, and a number of other tendencies (267-71).[2]

Put another way, postmodernism is, as Linda Hutcheon makes clear, essentially a "contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts that it challenges" (3). Not surprisingly, postmodern literature often questions the nature of the text and the authority of the author (Waugh, *Metafiction* 5-7). In so doing, postmodern narratives liberally employ a host of devices such as pastiche, nonlinear construction, parody, irony, and, of particular importance here, metafiction.

In the most elementary sense, frequently metafiction is defined simply as fiction about fiction, and a novel is metafictional when it wears, as Glen Ward states, "its artificiality on its sleeve" (31). But metafiction is also much more, and any analysis of the technique should also consider the artistic aims the artist seeks to fulfill. Beyond being a postmodern strategy of internal disruption that may be used to salvage the novel from dominant master narratives or universal theories of truth or justice, metafiction can be viewed also as a systematic and self-conscious form of fictional writing that calls attention to its status as an artifact in order to present questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. As Patricia Waugh states, "in providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structure of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (*Metafiction* 2). Consequently, metafictional writing represents one way of responding and contributing to a fuller sense that reality and history are only provisional (Waugh, *Metafiction* 7).

In the case of *Lake Wobegon Days*, the text becomes a means for Keillor to simultaneously assert and deny the legacy of his literary forebears in order to question and subsequently re-accent their vision of life in the Midwest. In creating his response, however, he reshapes some of the traditional forms that correspond to the realist, modernist literary narratives erected by many of his Midwestern predecessors. Through metafiction, Keillor is able to allow his readers to enter imaginatively the world of Lake Wobegon, yet at the same time become

aware of the illusion of how that world was constructed in part as a reaction to his literary inheritance. Although the devices Keillor uses to project his vision are many, at least four common metafictional characteristics can be traced throughout the course of the novel. Those characteristics include beginning the story by discussing the difficulties of beginning or ending stories; mixing several genres or styles of writing; commenting on (through parody) other fictional works; including an obtrusive voice that interrupts the novel's "naturalistic" flow from outside the fictional frame; and employing characters who read about their own fictional lives (Waugh, *Metafiction*).

Like many American writers, the weight of the mythic past is considerable for Keillor, and in adopting a rhetorical stance in *Lake Wobegon Days*, he has had to locate himself in a precarious position between two worlds: one that involves the expression of admiration and affection for a time long gone; and another that requires breaking new ground through rejection and questioning of the status quo.[3] In metafictional terms, one facet of that dilemma is reflected by anxiety and uncertainty about the creative process, itself. The very act of beginning a story is problematical for Keillor, and as the "Preface" to Lake Wobegon Days makes clear, he is unsure what direction his fictional output will take.

In explaining the genesis of the Lake Wobegon stories, originally entitled "Lake Wobegon Memoir," Keillor relays a brief anecdote about how, in the spring of 1974, he was given $6,000 by *The New Yorker* to write a piece about the Grand Ole Opry. Unfortunately, after using the proceeds to finance a trip west with his wife and son, taken in part to shore up the tattered fabric of his failing marriage, he left the briefcase containing the original Wobegon manuscript in a Portland train station. After realizing his mistake, Keillor made a fruitless attempt to find the missing material and subsequently became paralyzed by the realization that when he tried to reproduce the original, he "couldn't re-create even a faint outline" (vi). Over time, Keillor reports that the lost story "shone so brilliantly in dim memory that every new attempt at it looked pale and impoverished before I got to the first sentence" (vii). As a result, the preface projects *Lake Wobegon Days* in something of a postmodernist framework, not as a finished product, but as a work in progress, which, when compared to the lost manuscript, is "not really so fine," yet "will have to suffice until it returns" (viii).

Of course, such anxieties about the creative process are not unknown in American fiction, and Keillor is not alone in his longing for the great book that forever eludes his imaginative ken. Certainly the plaintive confessional F. Scott Fitzgerald makes in *The Crack-Up* comes to mind. But Sherwood Anderson, a writer more closely aligned with Keillor in terms of subject matter, also uses a preface to describe an unfinished fictional work, "The Book of the Grotesque," which figures as a strong shaping influence in the production of *Winesburg, Ohio*. However, Anderson's classic tale has a more centrally unified structure and tone than that of *Lake Wobegon Days*. Whereas Anderson attempted to fix the fictive boundaries of his little Ohio town through the unities of time and place, as suggested by the Winesburg map he includes, Keillor is much more ambivalent about exactly where Lake Wobegon can be found. Like Winesburg, it, too, is a fiction, but its precise locale is shrouded in mystery (ostensibly the product of an error by dishonest surveyors) and allegedly located in nonexistent Mist County. Although Anderson frequently treats his characters with the same sort of affection, tenderness, and sympathy as Keillor, he filters their stories through the central consciousness of George Willard and makes extensive use of omniscient narration. Keillor, on the other hand, is much more flexible about his narrative devices, and often employs a variety of techniques and voices. And instead of the comic tenor Keillor produces, the tone of Winesburg is somber and tragic, and its solution to the existential angst of small-town life is symbolized by George Willard's escape from its stifling influences. Keillor's protagonists, on the other hand, mostly stay put, and his artistic energies are devoted to telling the tale of those left behind.

But *Lake Wobegon Days* not only begins by expressing uncertainty about the possibility of attaining a sense of finality, it ends inconclusively as well. The book concludes with a short scene set in a prairie blizzard faintly reminiscent of the great snowstorm that consumes the Spring Creek settlement near the end of Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. However, instead of closing his book with the indelible portrait of larger-than-life characters such as Per Hansa, the heroic Norwegian pioneer who freezes to death on a South Dakota prairie after an epic battle with the elements, Keillor provides a diminutive, postmodernist counterpart in the figure of an unnamed, anti-heroic Wobegonian, stranded on a county road, not on a tragic

survival mission to save human lives or procure supplies, but on an abortive trip to the Sidetrack Tap to get a pack of cigarettes.

Keillor also differs from many of his realist and modernist predecessors not only in his frank acknowledgement of uncertainty about the possibility of reaching closure in his fictive output, but also through his reluctance to encase his tales within a single genre or style. Sherwood Anderson and Hamlin Garland, for example, used collections of interrelated stories and unified focus to project conflicting themes of optimism, pessimism, companionship, and isolation. However, in *Main-Travelled Roads*, Garland conjures an image of the rural atmosphere as drab and anti-idyllic, one that is especially demoralizing for the women who inhabit it. Later, Sinclair Lewis would echo many of these themes in *Main Street*, but he would replace Anderson and Garland's tender portrayals of lives of quiet desperation with a more hard-boiled, cynical, satirical, and somewhat snobbish view of Midwestern society. Staying within the conventions of the realistic novel, he bans any vestiges of nostalgia and sentiment to the periphery of his fictive vision and exchanges them for a disturbingly flat, panoramic view of hypocritical and narrow-minded people who are often without dignity or "any hope of greatness" (*Main Street* 42).

Against all this, Keillor represents a refreshing departure. Well aware of his literary heritage, he uses the pages of *Lake Wobegon Days* variously to acknowledge his forebears and then subtly undercut them. Like Gopher Prairie or the sleepy Wisconsin towns Garland describes, Lake Wobegon is a quiet place with a main street, the usual array of local merchants, and the ubiquitous grain elevator. However, unlike Gopher Prairie, Keillor is careful to point out that life in Lake Wobegon, "whatever its faults, is not dreary" (22). What Keillor discovers lurking behind its false front façade is something different and more playful than tragedy and hopelessness. In symbolic terms, it would seem that for him the green light on Daisy's pier at which Gatsby gazes is no longer the transcendent, phosphorescent symbol of hope and opportunity, but rather the immanent, gentle, and never-changing emerald glow of the single stoplight on the streets of Lake Wobegon. In the postmodern world Keillor inhabits, the facts and truths asserted by realist and modernist fiction clearly have lost some of their appeal, and of necessity he has had to find a new way to situate his writings somewhere within the blurry boundaries between hometown nostalgia and nausea. As a result, he shows much

more willingness to experiment with new devices and narrative techniques in refining his raw material into art.

In realist or modernist fiction, textual tensions or conflicts are usually resolved either by plot or by point of view. However, in metafictional texts such as *Lake Wobegon Days*, there is a more pronounced "tension of opposition," which rarely leads to final certainty or the resolution of contradictions (Waugh, *Metafiction* 137). In carrying out his fictive experiments, Keillor uses multiple narratives to express his ambivalent view about life on the Minnesota prairie. In a loosely linear, yet occasionally anachronistic succession, he employs a hybrid structure that combines mock history, mock autobiography, mock biography, and a curious string of footnotes that subvert the main text. Significantly, all of it is fiction, or more properly, fiction *about* fiction.

In "New Albion," for instance, the writing of history is a fictional act wherein the facts prove to be as elusive as the location of Lake Wobegon itself, and what looks like realistic truth is actually a carefully fabricated lie designed to parody elements of American literature and history. In effect, historical reality becomes a whimsical construct. Basile Fonteneau, Henry Francis Watt, and Prudence Alcott do not exist in Minnesota history, nor is there any record of New Albion College. Notwithstanding, by using these fictional characters as a platform, Keillor can burlesque everything from the French explorers' legacy, perpetrated in Minnesota primarily by names left upon the land (in this case, Lac Malheur), to the vestiges of early New England literary forms. The story of Prudence Alcott, for example, loosely echoes Puritan stories such as *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson.* Prudence is not imprisoned by savages, of course, but like Rowlandson, she is transformed by her contact with heathens such as Basile, who teaches her a new appreciation for what at first seems repugnant—native dietary delights such as "half-cooked bear meat," and "lewd practices" like singing bawdy ballads and relieving oneself in the open (27). Elsewhere, in Henry Francis Watt's almost forgotten "Thoughts, Composed a Short Distance Above Lake Wobegon" and "Phileopolis: A Western Rhapsody," Keillor spoofs literary forebears ranging in diversity from Wordsworth and William Cullen Bryant to even John Steinbeck, whose *Cannery Row* is anachronistically parodied in this letter written by Mr. Getchill's brother in the spring of 1856, "New Albion is . . . not so much a City as a trance, a whimsy

built on a swamp, a steeple waiting for its church, a naked man in a fine silk hat" (41).[4]

To these fictive indulgences can be added a number of historical ones, including the fact that Minnesota's very first school was founded by a New England woman, Harriet Bishop, but it was not devoted to converting the Indians to Christianity through interpretive dance. Likewise, the first president of the University of Minnesota was also a New Englander, but his name was William Watts Folwell, not Henry Francis Watt. Finally, Carleton College, one of Minnesota's most prestigious private institutions, was founded, like New Albion College, by Yankees who received a financial boost from Massachusetts benefactors (Lass 121).

Keillor also adds autobiographical and biographical layers to the historical sections to move the story forward. In doing so, he is able to manipulate readers' expectations by further exploiting the indeterminacy of the text, thereby forcing his audience to realign or revise any fixed historical or literary preconceptions they may have had about his subject matter. However, the break from one genre to another is not always a smooth one and Keillor's hybrid mix of history/autobiography/biography/fiction often overlaps. After using the first three chapters to provide a sense of fictive place and historical origin, chapters such as "Protestant," "Summer," "School," "Fall," "Winter," and "Spring" include everything from stories of Fred Manfred (not to be confused with the Minnesota writer) and his two nephews, Roman and Leon to Keillor's religious roots in the Sanctified Brethren and several other tales, including a short biography of Johnny Tollefson and the famous "95 Theses 95" complaint (117). The progression of events is often nonlinear and Keillor sometimes interrupts the sequence of narrative events when he inserts intercalary material such as the "News" chapter between the "Winter" and "Spring" sections. Elsewhere, Keillor also breaks the naturalistic flow by using obtrusive voices such as those found in the footnotes, which provide visual humor and introduce additional burlesques of scholarly and pretentious prose (Scholl 118).

At times, Keillor even questions his authorial identity by projecting himself as a character reading about his own fictional life. At one point, he catches himself dreaming of his own success and fame as a writer and radio personality, only to have it undercut by a short piece his Aunt Flo had written for the *Herald-Star*. The piece calls him by his real name, Gary Keillor, but instead of lavish praise and

acknowledgement of his growing reputation, it only gives him one brief sentence, which mentions his lunch visit at the Crandall home and residence in St. Paul, "where he is currently employed in the radio show business." (272-73).

Throughout these narrative fissures, Keillor discovers that the language of the text produces him just as much as he produces the language of the text. As the *Herald-Star* section attests, readers also come to realize, paradoxically, that the author is situated in the text at the simultaneous moment when he would seem to assert his identity outside it. But even though Keillor may be an artful liar, he can at least lie truthfully. As a result, his autobiographical and biographical accounts come closer than any other sections to bearing the stamp of authenticity. For beyond the humor Keillor sprinkles liberally throughout these chapters, there is an underlying theme of isolation wherein readers learn of a boy who considered himself an outsider, isolated not only by his religion, but also by the tedious, uneventful, and humdrum aspects of small-town life. As Keillor admits, "Life in a small town offered so little ceremony" (124). Yet in a world so diminished that car ownership is an act of faith, lively minds can find compensation in opportunities for creative play, imitation, drama, and other works of the imagination. In "Protestant," for example, Keillor describes his childhood love of role-playing in everything from mock weddings and funerals to the McCarthy Senate trials and the imagined coronation of himself as King Vincent I of Altrusia. In Lake Wobegon, as in Keillor's own 1950s Anoka, larger-than-life heroes are practically nonexistent. Nonetheless, Keillor can use his fiction to invent playfully his own mock heroic icons, including the nondescript Statue of the Unknown Norwegian and the heroic tale of Wally "Hard Hands" Bunsen, who briefly played for the Chicago Cubs, but later quit because he refused to use a glove.

Perhaps for these reasons, metafictional techniques such as parody and playful imitation seem natural for Keillor, apt devices for discovering new communicative possibilities and ways of achieving release from everyday contexts, especially for one whose childhood was marked by starvation for ceremony and longing for notoriety. In the pages of *Lake Wobegon Days*, however, the desire for recognition and the sense of frustrated longing Keillor introduces in his autobiographical sections is reexamined and extended in the fictional biography of Johnny Tollefson and in the blisteringly satirical footnote, "95 Theses 95." Although the Tollefson story is just a fragment

covering fewer than six pages, it is a tale of rebellion and independence wherein young Johnny takes a hilarious journey to St. Cloud to register at the university. Shamed by the family entourage that accompanies him, one that includes Grandma, Aunt Mary, and his uncle, Senator K. Thorvaldson (so named not because he was a real senator, but because it sounded good), Johnny longs for escape and dreams of changing places with the fictional Flambeau family, who live in Manhattan and travel around the world, solving crimes by means of superior intelligence. In the end, readers are left to witness Johnny leave his family behind and march, alone, toward Meister Hall, where he punctuates his defiance by lighting a cigarette and dreaming of becoming a writer for the Saint Cloud State newspaper, *Cumulus*.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this form of mock rebellion against the village is registered in the "95 Theses 95" manifesto, an extended footnote that occupies nearly an entire chapter. Echoing many of the harsh, satirical tones of Sinclair Lewis, it is the alleged product of the Sneslund boy, a pseudonym for someone who originally intended to nail it, Martin Luther fashion, on the doors of a local church. But for fear of being seen, Sneslund sequestered it at his Terpsichore Terrace address until he could find time to secretly slip it under the office door of Harold Star, editor of the not so cleverly named Lake Wobegon newspaper, the *Herald-Star*.

At first glance, the manifesto seems dark indeed, and it contains some of the most damning complaints about small-town life one could imagine:

> 16. You have provided me with poor male role models, including the Sons of Knute, the Boosters Club and others whose petulance, inertia, and ineptitude are legendary . . . (257).
>
> 34. For fear of what it may do to me, you never paid me a compliment, and when other people did, you beat it away with a stick . . . (263).
>
> 62. Bigotry is never a pleasant subject so you didn't bring it up but you stuck by your guns anyway. Indians were drunks, Jews were thieves, and the colored were shiftless . . . (267).

But the voice of an agonized, guilty, and angry individual is in some sense moderated by the realization that this material has been relegated to the subcutaneous level of Keillor's many narratives. Thus, the defiant rant of this disgruntled Wobegonian is offset by the fact that it is only a footnote and an artifice (Scholl 128).[5] As well, the gentle and humorous tone Keillor extends to his wide-ranging cast of other characters, such as his Norwegian bachelor farmers, the Bunsens, and the Krebsbachs, also counterbalances some of the negative strain.

Taken as a whole, then, Keillor is interested in a more eclectic vision of the small Midwestern town than that presented by his literary forebears. For him, the view of the Middle Border is paradoxically more, and less, than that extended by writers such as Garland, Anderson, Fitzgerald, and Lewis. But rather than locking into monolithic expressions of cynicism, frustrated longing, and tragic loss, through his own curious blend of metafictional elements, Keillor establishes, differentiates, and then re-accents inherited notions of his mythic past. For him, life on the prairie as the new millennium approaches is a mixture of many things, good and bad. Like Mark Twain, the towering Midwestern writer to whom he is most often compared, Keillor usually prefers to dwell on the sunnier aspects of life. Unlike Twain, however, he refuses to turn his back on faith in human nature. And even though his narratives are often fragmented, self-reflexive, and a little less than the unvarnished truth, like Twain's, they are invariably interesting and comic.

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NOTES

[1]According to Dentith, novels of this sort locate themselves in the "discursive to and fro" of a particular society at a particular time. As such, they "re-accent" the words of novelists in order to "parody, subvert, overcome, accede to, or argue with that other word in multiple, different, but traceable ways" (*Bakhtinian Thought* 61).

[2]By indeterminacy, Hassan means a host of diverse concepts, including ambiguity, discontinuity, decenterment, displacement, difference, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, randomness, revolt, perversion, and several others (269).

[3]See Morris's *The Territory Ahead* for a fuller explanation of how major American writers such as Fitzgerald, Wolfe, Hemingway, and Faulkner have been affected by the crippling effects of nostalgia. According to Morris, nostalgia is an "inexhaustible, chokingly sweet . . . . limbo land, leading nowhere, where the artist can graze like a horse put out to pasture, feeding on such clover of the past as whets the appetite" (159).

[4]In addition to Steinbeck, in a later chapter Keillor also playfully parodies Hemingway's stylistically brilliant description of skiing in the "Cross-Country Snow" section from *In Our Time*. Instead of setting his narrative in the majestic Alps, however, Keillor uses the ironic contrast afforded by the Lilliputian sledding slope near the Pee Tree on Adams Hill to frame this diminutive description, replete with several signature Hemingway techniques,

including short declarative sentences, polysyndeton (repeated use of the conjunction "and"), and personal pronouns ("you"): "Up at the Pee Tree, you flop on your belly on the sled and push off, down an almost straight drop of twenty feet and fast into the right-hand turn, then hard left, then you see the tree. It is in the middle of the track and will bash your brains out unless you do something. Before you can, you're in the third turn, centrifugal force having carried you safely around the tree . . . you coast to a stop. You stand up and look down and see that you've almost worn the toes off your boots. You had the brakes on and you didn't know it" (221).

[5]Scholl observes that although many readers may find "95 Theses 95" to be the darkest section in the book, others find it the funniest. In fact, Keillor's public readings from the passage often produce some of the loudest laughs. Scholl also explains that Keillor believes footnotes have a place in fiction because he has said that he likes the "'idea of a book being packed and rich and having layers'" and because it "'allows a person freedom of digression'" (qtd. in Scholl 128).

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NO HOMECOMING FOR SOLDIERS: YOUNG HEMINGWAY'S FLIGHT FROM AND RETURN TO THE MIDWEST

JOHN J. MCKENNA

For Hemingway, returning to the Midwest after his adventures in Italy during World War I was a sentence worse than death. During his Italian escapades, the adventure-minded Hemingway was free to a much greater extent than at any time during his adolesence: free to feel and do, to love or to hate, to live or to die. Hemingway's sense of pride increasingly rested on his ability to do the unconventional in large or small ways.[1] His sense of pride was also connected to being bold and spontaneous, even lawless.[2] Whatever he did, Hemingway wanted to make a splash, to be the center of attention, to dominate a social environment. As his later life shows, Hemingway was a sensualist hungry for varied physical experiences. For a person of Hemingway's temperament, the gloomy prospect of losing these strong emotions and the freedom to indulge in them must have chafed him mercilessly. His stories, "A Very Short Story," "Soldier's Home," and "Big Two-Hearted River," are closely linked dramatizations of the estrangement and resentment Hemingway felt on returning to Oak Park, Illinois. These three stories are closely linked—perhaps more so than is generally recognized—by the date of their composition, by their Midwestern location, by their emotional tenor, and by the similarity of response the protagonists make to conflict.

Hemingway's biography shows how tightly intertwined these factors were, and the chronology of Hemingway's creative output reveals how very compact the timeline of composition was. The years of 1923 to 1925 mark the beginning of an impressively prolific period in Hemingway's writing career. He wrote "A Very Short Story" in 1923 (Comley and Scholes 34). By September 14, 1924, he had fourteen stories ready to publish in the book *In Our Time* (1925)

(Reynolds, *An Annotated Chronology* 35). Among these stories were "Soldier's Home," written by April 25, 1924, and "Big Two-Hearted River," finished four months later (with its original ending) by about August 15, 1924.[3] Because he wrote these three stories within about a year of each other, Hemingway was writing them from much the same psychological matrix.

These years were densely packed with events important to Hemingway who, as a beginning writer, was attempting to forge a more self-constructed identity. On September 3, 1921, Hemingway married Hadley Richardson in a ceremony at Horton Bay, Michigan. On December 8, 1921, he and Hadley boarded the *Leopoldina* bound for France (Reynolds, *An Annotated Chronology* 27). In 1923, the Hemingways returned to North America, where Hemingway worked briefly for the *Toronto Star* as a full-time reporter (Reynolds, *An Annotated Chronology* 32). Hemingway made a December trip to Oak Park alone to visit family. Yet he had returned to Canada and the States only to escape again to the freedom of a writer's life in Paris. On January 19, 1924, less than half a year after they left France, the Hemingways set sail on the *Antonia* for Paris (Reynolds, *An Annotated Chronology* 33). With this departure, Hemingway permanently abandoned the Midwest as a place of habitation.

Nonetheless, the geographical setting of these three stories is the Midwest. Moreover, the geographic locations of the stories are more similar than they might appear at first.[4] The Oklahoma setting for "Soldier's Home" might seem an outlier. Yet, the pronunciation of the first syllable of "Oklahoma" is exactly that for the "Oak" in Oak Park and the small-town ambiance recalls Oak Park's insular society. Moreover the last part of Oklahoma, "lahoma" (i.e., the home), certainly could be an additional reference to Oak Park—the home Hemingway was determined to flee after his initial return to the States from Italy.

If Hemingway ever hoped to find a geography of emotional redemption on his return to the Midwest, most likely he would have found it along the trout streams of the upper Michigan peninsula. Nevertheless, he did not. Hemingway's final camping trip of the summer of 1919 "went farther afield, this time to a ghost town called Seney in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, only fifteen miles from the chilly shores of Lake Superior . . ." (Baker 63). The trip gave him the background for "Big Two-Hearted River." But "[h]e later recalled that he was still badly hurt in body, mind, spirit, and morals at this

time" (Baker 63).[5] What Nick, his alter ego, finds on his return to the pine barrens of the Upper Peninsula is a "burned-over" landscape with the town of Seney burned completely. "There was no town, nothing but the rails and the burned-over country. The thirteen saloons that had lined the one street of Seney had not left a trace. The foundations of the Mansion House hotel stuck up above the ground. The stone was chipped and split by the fire. It was all that was left of the town of Seney. Even the surface had been burned off the ground" ("Big Two-Hearted River" 163). The burned-over landscape is a symbol for Nick's emotional landscape. Moreover, to some extent, it represents the emotional landscape of all of the protagonists in these three stories, as well as that of Hemingway himself. All were wrestling with the galling prospect of returning to the irksome restraints and disappointments of everyday life in the Midwest.

In fact, the emotional tenor of the central figures in all three stories is quite similar.[6] All are Americans returned to the Midwest from World War I. All are wounded physically or psychologically. The unnamed protagonist in "A Very Short Story" is twice wounded—by events in war and by betrayal in love. Krebs in "Soldier's Home" is twice wounded, too—not by war, which he enjoyed—but by the indifference of the citizens of his small Oklahoma town to his tales of brave deeds.[7] Their indifference forces him to lie and, by lying, Krebs wounds himself. Nick in "Big Two-Hearted River" clearly is suffering from post-traumatic stress; the title of the story itself suggests a duality of feelings as Nick engages a trout stream that is both enticing and foreboding. Hemingway's portrayal of Nick is a dramatic portrait of a character desperately trying to avoid engaging abstract issues by focusing on the concrete things right in front of him.

Like his characters, Hemingway's estrangement was comprised of a double-vectored discontent. He had seen a larger, more exciting—indeed, enticing—world, and he was not happy to return to the conventional world of Oak Park. He had changed, and Oak Park had not. He had encountered a world that greatly enlarged his possibilities. As Michael Reynolds summarizes, Hemingway had drunk alcohol, which Oak Park railed against. He had fallen in love with an older woman who promised to marry him. "The world, he now knew, was larger than he had imagined: more various than he had dreamed. The moment his foot touched the Jersey pier, he was caught between

two lives—the invented one he had been living and the old one waiting for him in Oak Park. Vaguely he must have known that this was the end of something" (*Young Hemingway* 31-32). Hemingway was resentful that Oak Park's social rules threatened to enmesh him and cause him to lose his connection to a freer, more expressive lifestyle. He looked back on his days in Oak Park with revulsion, even hatred. James Seaton says that "[i]n Hemingway's Midwest the dominant religion is narrow, ignorant and above all inimical to manhood" (15). Hemingway was neither above skewering the Midwest nor above indulging himself in some payback for emotionally disappointing relationships associated with the Midwest.

These difficult and emotionally wrenching relationships principally involved the puzzle of how to deal with women. He hated his critical and domineering mother, and he never got over Agnes von Kurowsky's jilting of him. By almost any measure, Grace Hemingway was an insensitive, domineering matriarch, highly critical of Ernest.[8] The breaking point in their relationship came in the summer of 1920, a week after Ernest turned twenty-one. Ernest's sisters, Ursula and Sunny, had arranged a secret beach party with their neighboring friends, Elizabeth and Bob Loomis, and two young visitors at the Loomis's cottage. Ernest and his friend, Ted Brumback, joined them, and while Grace slept, they sneaked out at midnight to their rendezvous. When Mrs. Loomis discovered her charges missing, she woke Grace, and the partygoers had an unpleasant reception upon their 3:00 AM return. The next morning Grace told Ted and Ernest to pack and leave Windemere, the Hemingways' cabin. She then spent three days composing a scathing letter of criticism to Ernest, using an extended metaphor conflating filial duty and love with assets in a bank account:

> There is nothing before you but bankruptcy: *You have over drawn* . . . This world . . . is crying out for men . . . whose mothers can look up to them, instead of hanging their heads in shame at having borne them. Purity of speech and life, have been taught you from earliest childhood . . . . Do not come back until your tongue has learned not to insult and shame your mother. (qtd. in *Young Hemingway* 138)

Reynolds dryly notes that "Ernest moved out of the cottage" (*Young Hemingway* 138). Ernest wrote in protest to his father, but the Doctor sided firmly with Grace, and when he got a copy of her letter to Ernest, he pronounced it "a masterpiece" (*Young Hemingway* 138).

Thus, his parents presented a unified front of disapproval and even condemnation. However, it was Grace's much labored-over letter that gave voice to their stance and lent it the scathing tone so repulsive and hurtful to the young Hemingway.

A year and a half earlier, on January 4, 1919, the Red Cross had discharged Ernest and he left Italy for the United States. He thought that Agnes von Kurowsky and he were engaged and that a marriage between them depended only on his finding work. But in March of that year, Agnes broke off their relationship, saying that at seven years his senior, she was too old for him (Reynolds, *Hemingway Chronology,* 25). She wrote what must have been a devastating rejection of him and a painful blow to his self-esteem:

> Now, after a couple of months away from you, I know that I am still very fond of you, but, it is more as a mother than as a sweetheart . . . . I am now & always will be too old, & that's the truth, & I can't get away from the fact that you're just a boy—a kid. (qtd. in Villard and Nagel 163; also referenced in Comley and Scholes 35)

Like a number of his mother's painful letters, Hemingway kept Agnes's letter all his life. He revisited these wounds inflicted by women again and again. They represent one of the most important subjects in his fiction.

In fact, in each of these three stories, one of the principal antagonists is a female. On the surface, the nature and presence of the female antagonists might appear to be different in these stories. For example, in "A Very Short Story," the female antagonist is really the woman who writes the protagonist the jilting letter from Italy. She never appears in the story directly, but it is her jilting that drives the protagonist into the arms of a salesgirl infected with venereal disease. The American in "A Very Short Story" has a sexual encounter with a salesgirl while he and she are riding in the back of a cab through Lincoln Park. This working-class girl is just the opposite of the older Agnes, Hemingway's wartime *femme d'coeur*, who was the daughter of a Polish count.[9] The relationships the American has with these two women are diametrically opposite, too. His affair with Agnes is idealized and romantic. His sexual encounter with the salesgirl is a one-cab-ride affair. That his protagonist establishes a relationship with this girl in such a sordid situation is clearly an attempt by Hemingway to salvage some of his ego in the wake of Agnes's jilting of him. Here, Hemingway conflates disease-spoiled sex with the

healthy love he once felt for Agnes. He attempts to avoid the significance of his feelings and the truth of his being jilted by denigrating sexual congress.

In "Soldier's Home," Krebs is at odds with the girls of his generation and with his mother. Both represent a restrictive female force, antithetical to Krebs's desire for the unrestrained ways of a soldier at war. Even though he finds the young women in town attractive, he makes no move to become acquainted with them because their social norms would relegate him to a life of limited experiences. Ultimately, however, the more threatening antagonist is his mother. Hemingway modeled Krebs's relationship with his mother on the combative relationship Hemingway had with his own mother. Seaton points out that Krebs's mother unmans him with her emotional blackmail: "Harold Krebs's mother asks him to pray with her after her tears have reduced him to a small child, assenting to her wishes with 'I know, Mummy . . . I'll try and be a good boy for you'" (15). A few minutes earlier, a resentful Krebs had brutally told his mother he didn't love her to avoid being entangled in her traditional religious convictions or coerced by her emotional blackmail. He has absolutely no interest in her recipes for a conservative, socially acceptable lifestyle.

Even in "Big Two-Hearted River," where no female character appears, the female principle makes its appearance in the guise of the swamp into which the bewitching trout stream disappears. In many philosophical and psychological systems—Zen, Taoism, Freudian, Jungian—water is associated with the female principle. Nick fishes happily where the current is strong against his legs and the channel is clearly discernable. He is capable of withstanding a clearly defined female force. But the stream debouches into a swamp where the channel is less distinct and the interface between land and water, between male and female, is less clearly defined. Nick refuses to be beguiled into an environment where the outcome is unknown and the potential entanglements unknowable. Nick, like the protagonist in "A Very Short Story" and Krebs in "Soldier's Home," avoids entanglements.

A remarkable similarity in the three stories is that Hemingway's characters react to stress by avoiding the causes or sources of it. For Hemingway, avoidance was the antipathy of experiencing life to the fullest. But his unpleasant experiences, battles actually, with his father and mother had taught him as an adolescent the utility of simply avoiding difficulties. Thus, all three of the characters in these stories play out variants of avoidance behaviors—not because avoidance is a preferred approach but because it works as a backup strategy of utilitarian nature sufficient to meet the vexations of the moment.

Hemingway's characters, like Hemingway himself, generally try to avoid entangling emotions. They avoid abstractions like emotions by speaking mostly about what they see right in front of them, about what they can get their hands on. In "Big Two-Hearted River," Nick concentrates with desperate intensity on the specifics of trout fishing. He is a keen observer of nature, but he does not focus his attention specifically on his underlying emotional troubles.

Similarly, the central character in "A Very Short Story" attempts to avoid confronting the emotional pain of losing his "true" love by engaging in sex with a salesgirl while riding in a taxicab. He substitutes casual sex for love. He chooses what he can get his hands on over what he cannot get his emotions around. Ironically, his choice of the concrete and the utilitarian is without practical costs (venereal disease) or emotional costs. The central character plays out a vengeful, juvenile response to being jilted that is more self-laceration than satisfying revenge.

At the end of "Soldier's Home," Krebs avoids reconnecting to the social life of his hometown. He prefers to keep himself on the sideline while reading about the war through books borrowed from the local library. Having lied about his participation in the war, Krebs knows all too well how slippery words can be. In general, the Hemingway protagonists avoid words, avoid talking. In "Soldier's Home," Krebs cuts short a painful confrontation with his mother by lying: "'I didn't mean it,' he said. 'I was just angry at something. I didn't mean I didn't love you'" (116). At the end of the story, Krebs intends to skip an interview with his father that would almost certainly not be to Krebs's liking: "He would not go down to his father's office. He would miss that one" (116). At the end, he opts to watch his sister play indoor baseball as he has similarly chosen merely to watch the young girls with their uniformly short hair, Dutch collars and sweaters with shirtwaists (112). He will miss all of that, miss it by avoiding it, and retreat from a life that makes him lie and offers nothing but bondage. He will settle for being an observer because at that moment that is the best he can do.

At the end of "Big Two-Hearted River" Nick employs essentially the same defense mechanism. Presented with an idyllic day on an enchanted trout stream, given a harvest of two magnificent trout—

sufficient for his evening dinner—he decides not to pursue the stream further, which would mean going into the murky, enveloping terrain of the swamp: "He climbed the bank and cut up into the woods, toward the high ground. He was going back to camp. He looked back. The river just showed through the trees. There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (180). He will take the "high ground" safely away from the murky debouchments of emotions into an uncertain emotional landscape—a landscape that is abstract, irksome, unneeded, unwanted.

After the summer of 1920, Hemingway never returned to the Midwest for any length of time.[10] Nevertheless, he did look back on the years of his late adolescence and early manhood for important sources of his fictions. These three stories are impressively similar. The protagonists are all young men who have returned to the Midwest and are trying to work through difficult emotional entanglements. The principal antagonists are similar, too, females or female factors that force the protagonists to avoid a healthy engagement on their returns to the Midwest. The stories share nearly the same moment of conception and are highly autobiographical. As a result, they are a consistent and reliable guide to Hemingway's feelings about returning to the Midwest after his stint as a Red Cross ambulance driver during World War I. He and his characters chafed under the moral and social conventions of Oak Park society and the disappointment of giving up the excitement of combat and the passion of adult love. These stories dramatize those resentments and frustrations—feelings that would goad Hemingway through all his years.

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NOTES

[1]Baker (61) cites Hemingway's taste in somewhat exotic cigarettes—a Russian brand, with dark brown paper, "very slimy looking," that cost 30 cents for a packet of 10. That price correlates to about $4 in today's prices, or about $8 for the conventional pack of 20.

[2]The summer he was sixteen, Hemingway illegally shot a blue heron and ran away from the game warden. Finally, he faced the judge and paid a $15 fine (Baker, *Hemingway* 20-21; Reynolds, *An Annotated Chronology* 21). The fine would be more than $315 in today's dollars. Hemingway planned a weeklong fishing trip during the summer of 1919 with friends Bill Smith, Fever Jenkins, and Larry Barnett. According to Barnett, as the bearded foursome passed through Boyne City, Michigan, Hemingway "'thought it would be good clean fun to shoot out the overhead street lights as we passed under them'" (qtd. in Baker 63). Although stopped a few miles later by a cop on a motorcycle, the four were let go after their rough appearance apparently unnerved the officer.

[3]Reynolds's chronology: By April 25, 1924, Hemingway had written "Soldier's Home," "Mr. and Mrs. Smith [Elliot]," and "Cross Country Snow"; by the middle of May he had begun "Big Two-Hearted River"; by July 19 he resumed writing "Big Two-Hearted River"; Hemingway finished "Big Two-Hearted River" with its original ending, circa August 15, 1924 (*An Annotated Chronology* 34-36).

[4]Admittedly, the three stories have some important differences. First, the location of each is superficially different—the big cities of Padua, Milan, and Chicago in "A Very Short Story," a small town in Oklahoma in "Soldier's Home," and the relative wilderness of northern Michigan in "Big Two-Hearted River." Second, the central characters do not share the same "name," unlike the protagonists in the several so-called Nick Adams stories. The central character in "A Very Short Story" is unnamed; the protagonist in "Soldier's Home" is Harold Krebs; and the hero of "Big Two-Hearted River" is the archetypal/eponymous Nick Adams.

[5]When he got off the train at Seney, said he, the brakeman told the engineer to pause longer than usual so that Ernest could get down. 'Hold her up,' the brakeman said. 'There's a cripple and he needs time to get his stuff down'"(Baker 63). Hemingway shrank from this third-party assessment, and as Baker says, "After that, said he, he stopped being one [a cripple] in his mind" (Baker 63).

[6]The fact that the three main characters do not share the same name is less significant than it might be given Hemingway's penchant for naming his characters. Carlos Baker notes that Hemingway had a penchant for mining the names of acquaintances for names of his characters—sometimes embarrassingly so (585). See also, Marcelline Hemingway, *At the Hemingways* 216; also qtd. in Reynolds, *The Young Hemingway*: "It was Ernest's apparent lack of any decent consideration for the feelings of the people whose names and detailed descriptions he had used in the story ["Up in Michigan"] that horrified me" (247). Baker speculates that Harold Krebs's name was "probably compounded from the first names of Harold Loeb and Krebs Friend" (Baker 585). As a result, Hemingway's repeated use of the name "Nick" as the protagonist in several stories is counterbalanced by his tendency to opportunistically appropriate combinations of the names of friends for many of his characters.

[7]Long after his return home, Hemingway continued to traipse around Oak Park in his military get-up. "When the village gossips began to talk, Marcelline told them he needed the boots to support his wounded leg" (Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 40).

[8]Grace was similarly critical of Ernest's literary efforts. "In 1924, five copies of *In Our Time*, ordered by the Hemingway family, were returned to Paris without explanation" (Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 53). Hemingway was understandably upset. After *The Sun Also Rises* appeared in 1926, Grace wrote a scathing letter to Ernest, berating him:

> Have you ceased to be interested in loyalty, nobility, honor and fineness in life . . . surely you have other words in your vocabulary besides "damn" and "bitch" - Every page fills me with a sick loathing - if I should pick up a book by any other writer with such words in it, I should read no more - but pitch it in the fire. (Qtd. by Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 53; Reynolds's source was a letter from Grace Hall Hemingway to Ernest Hemingway, December 4, 1926, Hemingway Collection, Kennedy Library, ellipses in original)

As Reynolds dryly observes, Ernest kept this letter all his life (*Young Hemingway* 53).

[9]A version of Hemingway's aborted romance became 'A Very Short Story,' written in 1923, soon after Hemingway had married Hadley Richardson, who was eight years older than he. Early drafts of the story are written in the first person, and the nurse's name is Ag" (Comley and Scholes [34]). Agnes was seven years older than Hemingway was.

[10]Hemingway returned to Windemere only twice and only for a few days. Grace willed him the cabin; although he paid the taxes, he "never opened the doors, not for himself, not for any of his siblings" (Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 140). On his forty-fourth birthday, Ursula wrote, reminding him of the good summers at the lake, but he replied that he could not go back because Windemere was still the clearest part of his life (Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 140).

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RAY BRADBURY'S TALE OF TWO CITIES: AN ESSENTIAL MESSAGE FOR A TECHNOLOGICALLY DOMINATED SOCIETY

LOREN LOGSDON

After the success of *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), Doubleday advertised Ray Bradbury, on the cover of the twelfth printing of the book in 1967, as "The World's Greatest Living Science-Fiction Writer." Bradbury has always been uneasy with the science-fiction label,[1] which he considers too limited to capture the essence of the entire body of his work. Furthermore, the science-fiction label has led many readers and critics to believe that Bradbury is a prophet since, according to Isaac Asimov, a concern for the future is the defining characteristic of science-fiction (284-5). While there are science fiction writers who engage in prophecy, Bradbury has consistently resisted being called a prophet, maintaining that he is not a predictor of the future but rather a "preventor" of undesirable futures (*Interview* 24). Through his works he seeks to warn us about wrong directions we are taking in our use of technology and the consequences that will result from them.

One of the major concerns about the future that we find in Bradbury's works is the tendency to place our blind faith in machines and the technological progress that accompanies them. Notorious for being skeptical about machines, Bradbury himself never learned to drive an automobile and for a long time refused to fly in an airplane. While Bradbury is fully aware that if we explore outer space we must depend on the machine, he warns us that we must never define human happiness in terms of technological progress or allow the machine to determine to what ends we should live. Bradbury would agree with the French sociologist Jacques Ellul, who explains in *The Technological Society* (1964 edition) that the end of technology is efficiency, not human happiness. According to Ellul, "No social, human, or spiritual fact is so important as the fact of technique in the

modern world. And yet no subject is so little understood" (3). Technology has conditioned us to accept the concept of technique as having great importance in human affairs, but few people realize that technique now dominates all of human culture, not just the industrial world. Ellul explains the relationship of technique and the machine in the following passage: "[T]he machine is deeply symptomatic: it represents the ideal toward which technique strives. The machine is solely, exclusively technique; it is pure technique, one might say. For wherever a technical factor exists, it results, almost inevitably, in mechanization: technique transforms everything it touches into a machine" (4). Ellul observes that evolution in machines is directed toward efficiency: each new machine must be more efficient than the previous one. His insights into the complex relationships of the machine, technique, and efficiency provide a useful perspective for understanding Bradbury's vision, a vision that consistently reminds us that technological efficiency and human happiness are not necessarily compatible.

Bradbury's concern about technology can be highlighted by a careful reading of what I call his tales of two cities. Like Saint Augustine and his Heavenly City and Earthly City and Charles Dickens in his novel about London and Paris, Bradbury has two cities that represent contrasting values. Green Town, Illinois, in *Dandelion Wine* represents the fullest and most comprehensive picture of human happiness in all of Bradbury's works. The unnamed city in *Fahrenheit 451* represents the undesirable future that we must avoid, a future characterized by efficiency, a vast spiritual emptiness, and human beings who are isolated from nature and from meaningful contact with each other. Green Town is life-affirming in its spiritual richness; the city in *Fahrenheit 451* is life-denying in its impoverishment of the human spirit for the sake of comfort, convenience, and a very narrow definition of happiness, an impoverishment whose logical conclusion is destruction and death. A visit to those two cities will enable us to understand Bradbury's vision and how the city in *Fahrenheit 451* has gone so completely wrong.

A major difference in the two cities can be seen in terms of community, especially the personal relationships that define the nature of a society. Green Town has a rich and complex social fabric that the city in *Fahrenheit 451* lacks. Doug Spaulding's family is truly an extended family, in which a living great-grandmother has a place of respect and honor. Similarly, neighbors are important. Elderly people are a source of wisdom and guidance. Children have a special place in the society as well. The so-called generation gap,[2] so divisive in the America of the 1960s, is not important in the Green Town of the 1920s, except for the children's encounter with Helen Bentley and, later, Tom Spaulding's whispered comment to Doug that "Old people never *were* children" (79). Personal relationships and friendships are valued in a true sense of community in Green Town.

By contrast, human relationships in *Fahrenheit 451* are distinguished by what is missing. Montag and Mildred are married, but their relationship seems to lack any semblance of the love that most married people share. There is no felt experience of sharing or emotional intimacy. It is very significant that Montag and Mildred have no children; indeed, Montag tells us that Mildred did not want children. There is a mention of children, but it is by Clarisse McClellan, Montag's young neighbor: "I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always used to be that way? My uncle says no. Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid. My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. They believed in responsibility, my uncle says" (30).

Those who would call Bradbury a prophet could say that Clarisse is describing the present and point to Columbine and other schools where young people have killed each other, as well as to the numerous reports of young people killed in automobile accidents and bizarre behaviors aimed at getting high. The children in Montag's city reflect the culture at large; a culture of emotional emptiness and death. Other than Clarisse's reference to her family, there is no mention of any extended family except Mildred's superficial family of the parlor walls (television). But that family, in its inane conversations, merely confirms Clarisse's statement that "People don't talk about anything" (31).

People in *Fahrenheit 451* are isolated; they seem to be confined to their homes, coming out only to witness the spectacle of a book burning. The only example of friendship in the city is the brief relationship of Clarisse and Montag early in the book. Clarisse has a family, but it is officially regarded as dangerous because of its nonconformity. Of the elderly people who could provide guidance to the city, Beatty has sold his soul to the city's technology and defends it; Faber, the elderly professor of literature, is hiding and living in fear; and

Granger is out in the woods with the book people. Technology has taken over in the sense that Thoreau remarked in *Walden,* "Men have become tools of their tools" (1650).

One of the most important questions that mankind has had to answer since the beginning of time is what is our proper relationship to nature? In Green Town nature is an essential part of the human consciousness, especially for Doug Spaulding, who discovers one June morning that he is alive. He is picking fox grapes and tiny wild strawberries with his father and brother when he senses a strange presence lurking near, waiting to leap on him. The presence turns out to be Doug's awareness that he is alive, and this discovery is conveyed in terms of Emerson's transparent eyeball: "The world, like a great iris of an even more gigantic eye, which had also just opened and stretched out to encompass everything, stared back at him" (9). It is significant that Doug's discovery takes place out in the natural world, not in the town. Doug realizes that he is alive and that he is a part of the great Creation that encompasses him. His "birth" occurs with a sense of mystery, and he begins to look carefully at the world around him. But like life itself, nature is complex. Bradbury uses the sinister ravine in Green Town as a metaphor for the darkness in life and those moments when fear grips the soul. And throughout the book he uses the sea as a metaphor for life itself, for its constant motion and for the impermanence of human beings. One of the sources of spiritual wisdom in the book is the notion that while human beings are a part of nature and must live in it, we cannot control it. The worst mistakes in the book are made by characters who attempt to control life.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag is oblivious of nature, of the rain, the moonlight, and the flowers. The city has managed to control nature, and human beings live in mediated environments that have excluded nature and in which actual families have been replaced by the superficial family of the parlor walls. When we see Montag at the beginning of the book, he seems more like a machine, an efficient part of the city, instead of a human being. His life is mere routine and he seems as dead as his bedroom. "It was like coming into the cold marbled mausoleum after the moon has set" (11). His marriage and his life are joyless. It never occurs to him to be concerned about happiness until Clarisse asks him if he is happy. Mildred, however, is the best example of what the city has done to the human being: "Mildred stood over his bed curiously. He felt her there, he saw her without opening his eyes, her hair burnt by chemicals to a brittle straw, her

eyes with a kind of cataract unseen but suspect far behind the pupils, the reddened pouting lips, the body as thin as a praying mantis from dieting, and her flesh like white bacon. He could remember her no other way" (48).

Bradbury is describing a person who looks skeletal and unhealthy; one is reminded of fashion models who are so emaciated that they resemble refugees from concentration camps. Early in the novel, Montag comes home to discover that Mildred's suicidal impulse has led her to overdose on pills. In her physical appearance and her fast driving, Mildred, like the children Clarisse was afraid of, reflects the culture of death. Montag himself seems dead-alive, awakened only by Clarisse's perplexing importuning and persistent questions.

The human being's isolation from nature in Montag's city is succinctly explained by William Touponce in his profound book *Ray Bradbury and the Poetics of Reverie.* According to Touponce, each new technology serves to remove the human being further from any sense of connection with nature. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury

> . . . makes vivid for the reader the whole problematic course of Western enlightenment that culminated in technology and the positivistic processes of thought its world-wide dominance have brought about. In order to know nature objectively we in a sense misrecognize or forget ourselves as a part of nature. The price of progress is brought about by a kind of oblivion, like that of a surgical operation on our bodies during which we were unconscious or anesthetized. Consciousness once more restored, we find it difficult to bridge the gap between our present and our past . . . (82).

Touponce's analysis identifies the two related problems in Montag's city: the elimination of books prevents knowledge of the past, and the advanced technology has obliterated any meaningful connection with nature. Ironically, the advance of technology carries with it the forces for destruction. As Neil Postman observes in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*,"The uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of humanity" (xii).

A central point of comparison between the two cities is the attitude toward machines. Although every machine in *Dandelion Wine* fails, especially the Happiness Machine that Leo Auffmann tries to build, Bradbury devotes an interesting part of the book to the visit of Aunt Rose, who is human but who thinks like a machine and whose attitude exemplifies the values of a technological outlook on life.

As Neil Postman observed in *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology,* "The uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of Humanity" (xii). Ellul emphasizes that technology places total emphasis on technique, whose goal is efficiency. Aunt Rose believes that Grandma Spaulding's excellent but disorganized cooking can be improved through technique and efficiency. Hence, she buys Grandma a cookbook and new spectacles and puts her kitchen in order. The problem is that Grandma's cooking is a miracle that cannot be improved by technique. On the contrary, Aunt Rose's emphasis on efficiency destroys Grandma's cooking, and Doug intervenes to restore Grandma's kitchen to its previous disorder to save the mystery. Bradbury's point here is very important: so much of life is mystery and miracle, and the application of technique and efficiency to mystery will serve only to destroy the miracle. Aunt Rose's intrusion represents a serious threat to the welfare of the community, and Doug's actions are heroic in defending the community. The proper response to a miracle is to enjoy it, not to try to improve it.

Aunt Rose's mistake in applying technique and efficiency to life is made more vivid in the Mechanical Hound in *Fahrenheit 451.* Bradbury has been criticized for the mechanical hound because it seems so farcical, but the hound is really the logical upshot of the technology of the city. To take all of the attributes of a living animal and reduce them to only two—hunting and killing—is to fulfill the highest expectations of efficiency. The Mechanical Hound is thus the perfect mechanism to serve the city and is the logical upshot of the Aunt Rose mentality. The mystery and complexities of the living creature are eliminated for the sake of efficiency. The Mechanical Hound's sole purpose is to hunt and kill. In both Aunt Rose and the Mechanical Hound, Bradbury attacks the ideas of efficiency and an overemphasis on technique.

Green Town is notable for its interesting people and their various stories and especially for a sense of history and ritual. Every human culture has stories and rituals that provide meaning and guidance for human beings. Doug and his friends quickly recognize the value of Colonel Freeleigh, whom they fondly name the Time Machine. The Colonel is actually a first-rate storyteller whose stories of the Civil War, Pawnee Bill, the last great buffalo herd, and the tragic death of Ching Ling Soo are not only fascinating but helpful in providing a sense of history, an awareness of the past that is important. In Green Town, much richness in life is conveyed through ritual. In fact, one

of the most important ways that the elderly communicate what is important to young children is through participation in ritual. Consequently, Doug Spaulding is so keenly aware of rituals that he resolves to record them in his notebook. The list is long: the gathering of the fox grapes, putting up the porch swing, the new tennis shoes, the front porch on a summer night, the making of dandelion wine, the rug beating, the first sound of the lawn mower, to name a few.

Since reading books is officially banned, there are no stories in *Fahrenheit 451* and no sense of history. The rituals are primarily negative ones—the ritualized but empty conversations of the parlor walls and the destruction of books by the firemen. Montag is not even aware that in the past, firemen were called to put out fires, not set them. The people who live in the city have no knowledge of the past and obviously little knowledge of the present. Although they know a war is imminent because of the thunderous noise of bombers and fighter planes, they have no knowledge of the causes of that war or anything else about it. What explains this lack of awareness is what Postman tells us happens in a technopoly: Major decisions are turned over to experts, and ordinary citizens are excluded from any participation in those decisions (50).[3] As Beatty says, don't confuse people with two points of view; don't give them any point of view. Simplify everything.

Without books, the citizens are also denied those stories that could serve as cautionary tales. Three such stories, all from Greek mythology, are central to Bradbury's vision because, taken together, they provide an explanation for the city's destruction at the end of *Fahrenheit 451.* The first, told by Faber, is the story of the giant Antaeus and his fight with Hercules. Antaeus draws his strength from the earth, and every time Hercules throws him down, Antaeus comes back stronger than before. Finally, Antaeus can be defeated only when Hercules holds him aloft so that he has no contact with the earth. The second is the story of Daedalus and his son Icarus, who flies so close to the sun that the heat melts the wax on his wings, and he falls to his death. The third is the story of the mythical Phoenix, the bird that builds a funeral pyre and then burns to ashes with a new bird rising out of the ashes.

These stories pass on traditional wisdom and provide a succinct summary of what has happened in the city. Technology has removed human beings from any meaningful connection with the earth; the city, in its dedication to technology, has flown too high, losing con-

tact with the earth, and, like the Phoenix, has built itself a funeral pyre of destruction. Without books, the wisdom of these stories is lost.

For the perceptive reader, the stories of Antaeus, Daedalus and Icarus, and the Phoenix are cautionary tales emphasizing the importance of human connection with nature and the consequences if that connection is missing. Two contrasting scenes illustrate the importance of connection for human beings: one in *Dandelion Wine*, which is positive and one in *Fahrenheit 451*, which is negative. The summer night porch scene in Green Town is lyrical in richness, an example of "those rituals that were right and lasting" (31). Sometime during the evening neighbors come by to visit and children gather to play, but most important is Doug's sense of well-being: "Oh, the luxury of lying in the fern night and the grass night of susurrant, slumberous voices weaving the dark together. The grownups had forgotten he was there, so still, so quiet Douglas lay, noting the plans they were making for his and their own futures. And the voices chanted, drifted, in moonlit clouds of cigarette smoke while the moths, like late apple blossoms come alive, tapped faintly about the far street lights, and the voices moved on into the coming years . . ." (31-2).

This feeling of well-being that Doug experiences with the family on a summer night is missing in Montag's life. In fact, Montag observes that houses no longer have front porches or rocking chairs where people may converse or contemplate. Clarisse's uncle had told her that people had too much time to talk and think, so the architects removed the porches for so-called aesthetic reasons. Instead of the front porches in Green Town, we have the scene where Montag and Mildred are watching the parlor walls: "A great thunderstorm of sound gushed from the walls. Music bombarded him at such an immense volume that his bones were almost shaken from their tendons . . . . He was a victim of concussion. When it was all over he felt like a man who has been thrown from a cliff, whirled in a centrifuge, and spat out over a waterfall that fell and fell into emptiness and emptiness and never—quite—touched—bottom . . . never . . . quite . . . touched . . . anything" (45).

The dislocation of the human being in the above passage is further intensified by a scene later when Mildred's friends come to visit and watch the parlor walls:

> On one wall a woman smiled and drank orange juice simultaneously. How does she do both at once? thought Montag, insanely. In the other walls an x-ray of the same woman revealed the contracting journey of the refreshing beverage on its way to her delighted stomach! Abruptly the room took off on a rocket flight into the clouds, it plunged into a lime-green sea where blue fish ate red and yellow fish. A minute later three White Cartoon Clowns chopped off each other's limbs to the accompaniment of immense incoming tides of laughter. Two minutes more and the room whipped out of town to the jet cars wildly circling an arena, bashing and backing up and bashing each other again. Montag saw a number of bodies fly in the air. (93-4)

The complete distortion of reality in this scene is alarming. The lack of connection and the violation of sequence and cause-effect illustrate why television can be a dangerous influence on human beings. What Montag and Mildred are viewing is, according to Jerry Mander in *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, reflective of a bias in television to substitute technique for content, especially in regard to imagery (302-10). Unconnected imagery (or "television tricks") coming at us at alarming speed and the disregard for cause-effect and the noise make life seem like a centrifuge where we touch nothing—there is no sense of connection, no grounding in life.

A focus on the two protagonists, Doug Spaulding and Montag, in terms of what they learn and how they change is instructive in understanding Bradbury's message about life and human happiness. Bradbury's wisdom can be clarified by tracing the development of the two central figures. They both end up affirming the same values. When he is twelve, Doug Spaulding discovers that he is alive. He looks around and sees so many good things in the world, and his impulse is to keep those good things. But when he discovers that he is alive, there is a corollary discovery that he must face—that he will someday die. As Doug experiences the loss of many good things in the summer, he is brought to face his own mortality. When his great-grandmother dies at the end of a long list of losses, Doug takes stock by writing in his notebook that you can't depend on people or machines because they go away or die, and he is brought to the point of acknowledging that he also will die. However, Doug resists this truth and seeks a means of controlling life so that he will not die. He constructs an elaborate fantasy about the Tarot Witch, believing that inside this arcade machine is a beautiful woman who has been imprisoned by a wicked magician. In his desperation, Doug believes that if he frees her, she will be so grateful that she will grant him immortal-

ity. Doug is, of course, placing his reliance on a machine as a means of controlling life, and the machine fails him—as it must. Doug becomes ill, suffering from a sickness of the soul which Doug's mother and the doctor are unable to diagnose.

Doug's life is saved not by a machine but by a human being, a junkman named Mr. Jonas, who understands what ails Doug and comes in time to save Doug's life. Because he is open to life as mystery and miracle, not life as technique and efficiency, Mr. Jonas realizes that Doug is suffering from an illness of the soul—he has lost the will to live—and that what he needs is the reassurance of love and friendship to heal his spirit. Jonas provides the only medicine that will work in this situation: the reassurance of a friend. Doug's life is saved and his impulse is to want to repay Mr. Jonas. As a mark of his new-found maturity, Doug realizes that there is nothing he can do to pay back Mr. Jonas, but he can, as Catherine Ryan Hyde's novel suggests, "pay it forward." Doug then saves Grandma Spaulding's life when it is threatened by Aunt Rose's meddling. What is really important at the end of *Dandelion Wine* is where Doug locates himself. He has realized and accepted impermanence as the essential truth of life, but this acceptance leads not to despair or isolation but rather to joy. As Doug says to his brother Tom at the end of the book, "Next year's going to be even bigger, days will be brighter, nights longer and darker, more people dying, more babies born, and me in the middle of it all" (235-6). That is where we all should be—"in the middle of it all." Life is to be lived, not controlled.

Bradbury's idea of being "in the middle of it all" is a rather complex concept but one that is essential to understanding his vision. Essentially it means what Henry James called the life well lived. It involves, as Doug Spaulding discovers in the course of the summer, achieving a maturity that enables us to accept the impermanence of our life and yet still live as fully as we can during the time we have. To live fully, we must use imagination, creativity, and the ability to love deeply and energetically, both people and the things that we find in the world. As Bradbury has said, "I have the ability to love many things" ("Interview," November 19, 2008). The tragic mistake in *Fahrenheit 451* has resulted in a loss of texture and rich complexity in life, a superficial emotional life, and lack of respect for nature and its role in human well-being. To be "in the middle of it all" means to have the wisdom to realize that life is to be lived fully and that nature is a source of beauty and truth.

Like Dante at the beginning of *The Inferno*, Montag in *Fahrenheit 451* discovers at the age of thirty that he is lost in his own dark wood and he has spent ten of those years as a fireman who burns books. His awakening begins when Clarisse asks him if he is happy. Clarisse, who is much like Dante's Beatrice, admits that she rarely watches the parlor walls but instead likes to walk in the moonlight and the rain and listen to people. Montag begins to wonder about life when he discovers that his wife has overdosed. He is disturbed that the Mechanical Hound growls at him. And he is really upset when the woman chooses to die with her books. When Clarisse uses the dandelion test on him to reveal that he does not love anyone, Montag is finally brought to a crisis: "How do you get so empty? he wondered. Who takes it out of you? And that awful flower the other day, the dandelion. It had summed up everything, hadn't it? 'What a shame! You're not in love with anyone!' And why not?" (44)

In asking "Why not?" Montag begins to search for the reasons that his life is empty. In attempting to account for the limitations of technology, Athanasios Moulakis observes, "We are reminded that human personalities do not mature against a background of abstract rationality but within the context of a way of life . . ." (31). The way of life of the city does not call for a healthy respect for diverse personalities but rather a sameness of people and a conformity to a technological value system. The city does not provide Montag with a rich context of resources to help him understand the emptiness of his life, let alone the means to fill it. The city has no respect for individual human freedom; rather, as Beatty explains, technology imposes a totalitarian spirit on its citizens in the name of happiness, comfort and security. Montag must find someone to help him, and his search leads to Faber, who explains what has happened to life in the city and, especially, why books are needed for the quality of life.

Montag's response to meeting with Faber is to want to alert Mildred and her friends and spread his new-found knowledge to others. Significantly, he chooses Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" to read to them. The poem is perfect because of its description of a world in which faith is missing and ignorant armies are clashing by night. Arnold's poem is prophetic in describing the city's destruction in a war that its inhabitants know nothing about. Instead of awakening the women and enlightening them, Montag frightens them, and later Mildred turns him in for having books in their home. Beatty orders Montag to burn the books. First Montag destroys the bedroom,

then the books, the parlor walls, and finally Beatty himself. After killing Beatty, Montag has to escape the city, and after an encounter with the Mechanical Hound, Montag is able to reach the river.

As he floats down the river away from the city, Montag is reborn. Gradually he is purged of the city and its deathlike qualities: "He was moving from a reality that was frightening into a reality that was unreal because it was new" (140). Montag's floating down the river leads him to important self-knowledge as nature comes alive to him. He realizes the destructiveness of his work as a fireman and resolves to stop his part of the burning. He has a vision of Clarisse's face in a window and imagines a gift of a fresh glass of milk, some apples and pears awaiting him. "This was all he wanted now. Some signs that the immense world would accept him and give him the long time he needed to think all the things that must be thought" (143). Montag's trip down the river is one of the most eloquent passages in all of Bradbury's work, for it conveys Montag's rebirth in such a compelling fashion that the reader identifies with Montag. It is miraculous, as if Montag had returned from the dead. And he has indeed. In a reversal of Dante's *Inferno,* Montag crosses the river not into Hell but into life. And there is one more dramatic and mythic moment: when Montag steps out on the riverbank, he hears a noise and thinks it is the Mechanical Hound. To his relief and delight he discovers that it is not that technological Cerberus, the modern guardian of Hell, but instead a deer, a living animal. Montag is finally free of the city.

At first Montag is overwhelmed at being free in the natural world, but he traces the railroad tracks to the book people in the forest; thus, he is safe from harm when the city is bombed and destroyed. Granger continues Montag's education and welcomes him to the community of readers. Granger's advice is that we must live in such a way that our lives touch the earth and leave something of ourselves behind when we die. Even more important is Granger's advice to Montag that he live fully: "'Stuff your eyes with wonder . . . live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories. Ask no guarantees, ask for no security, there never was such an animal. And if there were, it would be related to the great sloth which hangs upside down in a tree all day every day, sleeping its life away'" (157).

Montag has been sleeping for thirty years, but now he is fully awakened and—to borrow Bradbury's language from *Dandelion Wine*—locates himself right where he should be: "in the middle of it all," out in nature in a human community of people who are truly alive, away from the destroyed city in which he had lived as one dead-alive, a machine serving a technological city that sought to control human life. The community of book people constitutes what Eller and Touponce call "a new kind of folk culture" (166), one dedicated to life. In contrast, by seeking to provide security, comfort, and convenience, the city ultimately was dedicated to a form of suicide, for as Mander explains, "Life . . . is fluid, ambiguous, process-oriented, complex, multileveled, sensory, intuitive" (328). Life is not to be driven into narrow areas of experience, and happiness cannot be captured by a machine, by efficiency and technique; life is mystery and miracle. To live fully, one must participate directly in the Creation, live in the middle of it all, and recognize that happiness is defined in terms of human dreams and human relationships.

Bradbury's vision does not call for a blanket rejection of machines, and Bradbury cannot be dismissed as a Luddite. After all, he did make use of television for his *Ray Bradbury Theater*, and he has always had great respect for movies as a legitimate art form. He realizes that to oppose technology would be as futile as opposing a tidal wave. Bradbury, like Ellul and Postman, finds danger in the blind acceptance of technology because it may lead to a catastrophe, to a future that is undesirable. As Moulakis observes, "Ingenuity itself cannot furnish its own sense of direction, and the very success of our technological cleverness forces us to come to terms with the possibility of ingenious blunders" (1). In short, regarding technology, we need to live as Bradbury's Clarisse lives and pay more attention to the "why" than we do to the "how." Further, Moulakis recommends that in our universities we need "to teach the students to think and express themselves by reading and discussing well-chosen texts that explore the ever-recurrent issues of meaning, aesthetic sensibility, and morality" (2). In Bradbury's tales of two cities, we have two texts that engage our critical thinking by presenting a vision that embraces the artistic, moral, spiritual, and technical dimensions of human experience. *Fahrenheit 451* was an important book when it was published in 1953, and perhaps it is even more important today. But is its warning too late?

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NOTES

[1]In an interview on November 19, 2008, Bradbury further explained that he does not consider himself among "the greatest Science-Fiction writers." He named the three greatest: H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. He commented further that he considers himself a writer of fantasy.

[2]Jonathan Eller and William Touponce in *Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* point out that in many Bradbury stories children resent adults and view them as the enemy. The best example is "The Small Assassin," in which the baby kills its parents as well as the doctor who had assisted at its birth. Such resentment is not the case in *Dandelion Wine* because the movement of the book is toward Doug's maturity. In fact, one of the strongest messages of the book is that it is dangerous for adults to act like children. Miss Fern and Miss Roberta in the story of the Green Machine and Elmira Brown in her attempt to triumph over Clara Goodwater are examples that illustrate the truth about maturity as a positive goal.

[3]Postman lists the characteristics of a technopoly. In addition to an emphasis on efficiency and the rule by experts, Postman lists the beliefs that technical calculation is superior to human judgment because "human judgment cannot be trusted, because it is plagued by laxity, ambiguity, and unnecessary complexity; that subjectivity is an obstacle to clear thinking; that what cannot be measured does not exist or is of no value ..." (50).

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"WE REPRESENT THE END OF RACE": UNCOVERING LANGSTON HUGHES'S JEREMIADIC DISCOURSE

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This is my land America. Naturally, I love it—it is home—and I am vitally concerned about its mores, its democracy, and its well-being.
—Langston Hughes, "My America," 1943

This is my home, the U.S.A. I was born in the very middle of it. It is mine—faults and all—and I had rather . . . help my country get rid of its faults—race prejudice, economic inequalities . . . .
—Langston Hughes, "Faults of the Soviet Union," 1946

When David Howard-Pitney wrote *The Afro-American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America*,[1] there was little discussion on the effect the jeremiad had on African American writers and intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance. In fact, the only mention of the Harlem Renaissance appeared in reference to W.E.B. DuBois, who, as Howard-Pitney suggests, assisted in introducing "many young black writers and artists to the public and otherwise encouraged and contributed to the artistic movement of the 1920s known as the Harlem, or Negro, Renaissance in which black writers and artists drew inspiration from black folklife" (105). Scholars of the African American jeremiad, such as Howard-Pitney, have avoided considering its political importance that materialized throughout the period known as the Harlem Renaissance.[2] The political culture which sustained jeremiadic rhetoric during this flowering of African American arts and letters was mainly an outcome of blacks seeking empowerment and self-consciousness. Regarded as the "poet laureate of the Negro race," James Langston Hughes exceptionally utilized the jeremiad, although he deviated considerably from its basic pattern, to empower African Americans to a consciousness concerning their heritage and racial pride and to question the ills of racial prejudice in

America and abroad. He determined his rhetoric through the distinctiveness of the African American jeremiad and embedded its tenets throughout his moralistic messages.

This essay investigates the prose of one of America's most intellectual African American literary minds to uncover the jeremiadic rhetoric beneath his work and challenge readers to revisit it for its contribution to the African American jeremiadic tradition. Hughes's aspirations to achieve equal status for African Americans as citizens of a purportedly democratic America and people of color globally flowed intermittently through his jeremiads. In his jeremiadic imagination, there existed both criticism and a call to action as he uncompromisingly confronted America's democratic principles because he felt that they sought to oppress continuously the African American community. Therefore, in his unprecedented way, Hughes participated in and appealed to the growing consciousness of African American jeremiadic discourse and augmented its development in a number of ways. First, when he voiced the rhetoric of resistance, Hughes doggedly attacked the forces that silenced the voices of African Americans and the traditional hegemonic practices of White America. Second, Hughes's commitment to representing the oppression of African Americans surfaced as he structured his jeremiads to aid in defining the experience and aspirations of the "Negro." Finally, Hughes's jeremiads demonstrate his views on the globalization of racism, which he believed would represent the end of all races.

Scholarship has contextualized the jeremiad as a significant development in American literary history.[3] Jeremiads incorporate an ever-increasing criticism that tinge with opportunism and include a peculiarly introspective view. They focus both on the miseries of the victims and on the wickedness of the victimizers and include elements of prophecy, a warning of things to come. Although the jeremiad illustrated extreme religious significances, African Americans adapted it to construct a consciousness concerning race relations and to critique public life. Their discursive discourse emerged during the early Republic amidst America's backsliding from a democratic society. Through their employment of the jeremiad, African American activists such as James Forten, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, Sojourner Truth, Maria Miller Stewart and Frederick Douglass transformed racial prejudices into ideas concerning egalitarianism, humanitarianism, and justice. The groundwork established by these leaders continued well into the twentieth century. The fertile grounds

seeded with the inequalities of racial discrimination of the 1920s created a forum through which many African American intellectuals sought justice, social equality, and the end of racial prejudice and discrimination. The jeremiad became a useful vehicle to trek the grounds of inequality not only in America, but also abroad.

The authority connected with jeremiadic discourse initiated a "motivation for generic modification" and created a variation that formed a "fundamentally positive" outlook (Jones and Rowland 158). As one of the most extremely sought after intellectuals of his time, Hughes's adaptation and modification of the African American jeremiad claimed and sustained his standing as the pre-eminent Jeremiah of the Harlem Renaissance. Grounded in racial pride, Hughes positioned his jeremiads to appeal to the common theme of reformation in America's democratic agenda. In many of his essays, Hughes illustrated the prevalent discourse of the jeremiad when he criticized society for its immorality. For example, in his article "Sorry Spring," Hughes wrote: "Four Hundred Million Dollars to build up the Grecian and Turkish armies as a bulwark for 'democracy' when in our own armies colored Americans are segregated and humiliated and denied enlistment rights and officers' promotions and march in dark ranks alone and apart from the pure white representatives or our democracy" (33). Hughes condemned the American government for not supporting black education and for not assisting in the anti-lynching crusade. Perhaps a more appropriate title for the essay would have been "Where is 'Democracy' in America?" Meanwhile, however, Hughes challenged African Americans to strengthen the richness of their culture and communities through various artistic measures (De Santis 1). In his 1935 lecture delivered at the First American Writers' Congress held in New York, for example, Hughes recognized several measures African American writers, through their literary aptitude, could employ to advance black America's cultural visibility. He challenged the younger African American writer to confirm African Americans' "potential power to transform" the South "into a region of peace and plenty"; to illustrate to white America that African American attributes "go beyond the mere ability to laugh and sing and dance and make music"; to "unite blacks and whites" in America on the *"solid* ground of the daily working-class struggle to wipe out . . . all the old inequalities of the past"; to expose the "sick-sweet smile of organized religion"; and to expose the "false leader-

ship that besets the Negro people" ("The American Writers' Congress" 135-136).

Hughes's jeremiads called his fellow African American writers to a consciousness concerning the role they had to play in the uplift of the race. For example, on June 16, 1926, George Schuyler's "The Negro Art-Hokum" was published in *The Nation*, a weekly journal of opinion featuring analysis on politics and culture founded in 1865. Schuyler opened his essay by maintaining "Negro art 'made in America' is as non-existent as the widely advertised profundity of Cal Coolidge, the 'seven years of progress' of Mayor Hylan, or the reported sophistication of New Yorkers" (662). Since African Americans were "subject to the same economic and social forces that mold the actions and thoughts of the white Americans" (662) according to Schuyler's assessment, African American artists were as equally diverse as white artists and should be expected to produce art and literature analogous to that of the white Americans. Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," solicited by *The Nation* in response to Schuyler's "The Negro Art-Hokum" (Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem* 75),[4] reproached African American writers who, according to Hughes, "would surrender racial pride in the name of a false integration" (56). Sympathetic toward what he believed to be the most complex problem the young African American writer confronted, Hughes lamented:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (56)

As biographer Arnold Rampersad argued, in "the finest essay in Hughes's life," Hughes lamented "the need for both race pride and artistic independence" (I: 130, 131). According to Hughes, when talented African American poets preferred to be considered a poet, instead of an African American poet, they subconsciously sought to write like white poets. Therefore, he urged African American artists to free themselves of the artificial standards set by white America. Arguing that "no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself"

(56), Hughes had no "literal desire to be white"(Rampersad, *"Hughes's Fine Clothes to the Jew"* 55). His jeremiadic lexis, however, became the premise for many of the younger Harlem Renaissance artists and thus helped shape American literature and politics.

As Hughes's jeremiads reflected his outlook on society as a whole, he lamented the socio-political and socio-economic conditions of African Americans. Of American prejudice, Hughes wrote: "Neither of the major political parties, no matter what their promises of Civil Rights, can really solve our problems. Our basic problems are not color, but poverty" ("U.S. Likes Nazis" 34). When Hughes used his jeremiads to advance race relations and to advance the social betterment of his people, a "democratic voice"—a voice of reflective devotion to American democracy—resonated through his jeremiads (De Santis 1). Profoundly dedicated to the idea of social equality in America (De Santis 1), Hughes associated himself with being "both Negro and poor," and felt that he had the right to criticize American democracy by speaking for the "most oppressed group in America . . . the fifteen million Negroes" who lived within the so-called egalitarian borders of the American prejudicial system ("Too Much of Race" 102). Hughes lashed out at American democracy when he declared that America's declension from its democratic ideals had become more and more inhospitable:

> We Negroes of America are tired of a world divided superficially on the basis of blood and color . . . are tired of a world in which it is possible for any group of people to say to another: 'You have no right to happiness, or freedom, or the joy of life' . . . are tired of a world where forever we work for someone else and the profits are not ours . . . are tired of a world, where, when we raise our voices against oppression, we are immediately jailed, intimidated, beaten, sometimes lynched. ("Too Much of Race" 102)

The power of Hughes's jeremiads stems from their ability to defy "a nation that sought to keep the African American community in perpetual bondage through legal segregation and the fostering of racial prejudice" (De Santis 1). Thus, his jeremiads argued against African Americans yielding racial pride to white America.

When Hughes promoted black empowerment and consciousness, he warned white America that blacks were not willing to tolerate circumstances of racism and second-class citizenship any longer.

However, in "The Need for Heroes," Hughes's African American jeremiad highlighted not self-determination but ethical conscientiousness linked with African American self-importance. As a warning of a new democracy in American culture, he wrote:

> The written word is the only record we will have of this our present, or our past, to leave behind for future generations. It would be a shame if that written word in its creative form were to consist largely of defeat and death . . . We have a need for heroes. We have a need for books and plays that will encourage and inspire our youth, set for them patterns of conduct, move and stir them to be forthright, strong, clear-thinking and unafraid . . . It is the social duty of Negro writers to reveal to the people the deep reservoirs of heroism within the race . . . We need in literature the kind of black men and women all of us know exist in life; who are not afraid to claim our rights as human beings and as Americans . . . (qtd. in Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem* 299).

Hughes's choice to shape his jeremiads in this fashion was clearly a calculated one. Although his jeremiads criticized American democracy for its treatment of blacks, the putative view of his lamentations was profoundly optimistic. In his 1943 essay, "My America," for example, Hughes wrote "American is a land, where, in spite of its defects, I can write this article" (335). "My America," demonstrated the patterned jeremiadic structure that Howard-Pitney set forth in *The Afro-American Jeremiad.* In it Hughes held out hope that blacks had the power to forge social change in America, although that hope was often unsettled. "My America" also illustrated Bercovitch's analysis that the jeremiad was a "political sermon—what might be called the state-of-the-state-covenant address" (4). "America is a land in transition," Hughes lamented: "And we know it is within our power to help in its further change toward a finer and better democracy than any citizen has known before. The American Negro believes in democracy. We want to make it real, complete, workable, not only for ourselves—the thirteen million dark ones—but for all Americans all over the land" ("My America" 336). Increasingly optimistic about developments in American democracy, the most poignant proof of the remarkable doggedness of Hughes's hopes for America existed in "My America." Written to express his expectation for democratic change, this extremely political essay exhibits an increasingly well-defined condemnation of white hegemony in America.

Hughes's jeremiads further assail the racist attitudes that some Americans generated towards blacks. He believed that some Americans, particularly those who "cannot speak English—so recent is their arrival on our shores," are oftentimes targeted by American prejudice: "May repeat the Oath of Allegiance with its ringing phrase of 'liberty and justice for all,' with a deep faith in its truth—as compared to the limitations and oppressions they have experienced in the Old World. I repeat the oath, too, but I know that the phrase about 'liberty and justice' does not fully apply to me. I am American—but I am a colored American" ("My America" 335). In his travels, however, Hughes discovered that "Greeks, Chinese, Italians, Mexicans, anybody can say to us Negro Americans 'Sorry, no can serve!'" and will take every advantage at closing the doors of democracy. "American democracy," he lamented, "has a long way to go in learning human kindness and decency" ("Adventures in Dining" 55).

"THE CAMEL'S BACK BROKE DOWN": HUGHES'S ANTI-JIM CROW JEREMIADS

Hughes's opinions concerning the harshness of American democracy toward African Americans were profoundly illustrated in his anti-Jim Crow jeremiads. For African Americans, the existence of Jim Crowism in American culture was anarchic and tumultuous.[5] By the 1870s, however, federal law provided civil rights protection in the South for freedmen—the African Americans who had formerly been slaves—but this protection did not come without its price. By the turn of the century, Reconstruction had long ended, leaving many blacks in America at the mercy of their own designs to wage war against racism. Hughes, a light-complexioned African American, fell victim to many of the structures created by Jim Crowism; therefore, he fashioned his anti-Jim Crow jeremiads as a way to elicit discussion about the many evils of Jim Crowism and to offer alternative measures to its mandated "separate but equal" ideology. "White folks definitely would not like it if Negroes were to Jim Crow them," Hughes argued. "Therefore, why not write about the stupidities of Jim Crow each and every day in each and every issue of each and every Negro paper?" ("MacArthur Lives" 63).

Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads reveal an assessment not only of his experiences and various structural approaches to easing tensions between the races, but also of the experiences of other ethnici-

ties throughout his travels; evocations toward the decentralization of Jim Crowism on the oppressed; and opportunities for African American pluralism under the current Jim Crow statutes. Hughes's invectives against Jim Crowism were sincerely determined in his blistering attacks on social misdeeds and dogged assertions of faith in democracy's eventual triumph. Although Hughes articulated his own altruism toward white hegemony, he attempted to move white America to action when he stimulated its own self-interest. No one, he argued, escaped the authority of Jim Crowism. The evils of Jim Crowism, Hughes lamented, have to be eradicated in order to develop a truly American democratic system: "[Jim Crowism] puts a cloud over all the land, all the people. Evil begets evil—and an evil mist is rising out of the Jim Crow South, seeping across the nation, seeping across the world of democratic relations, seeping into the halls of Congress, into the Department of State, into the rooms where treaties are written and diplomacies are planned, making the papers stick together and the ink blur" ("The Sunny South" 87).

One way to facilitate the end of Jim Crowism, Hughes believed, was through psychoanalysis: "Until we correct the racial defects in our current social system," he wrote, "psychoanalysis might make a study, with a view toward correcting, the symptoms" of Jim Crowism ("Doc, Wait! I Can't Sublimate!" 52). According to Hughes, some blacks dealt with Jim Crowism in resourceful ways: Richard Wright "sublimated his Jim Crow" into one of the most remarkable novels on American racism and prejudice to date, *Native Son*. Hughes did not suggest that Wright accepted Jim Crowism's policies; rather, Wright presented his contextualizations of Jim Crowism's structures in a socially acceptable way. Hughes echoed the sentiments in his poem "Harlem,"; others, however, who remained silent about the atrocities of Jim Crowism, lamented Hughes's use of the word "explode" in that poem ("Doc, Wait! I Can't Sublimate!" 52).

Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads also provided African Americans with the endurance needed to force Jim Crowism from American democracy. After traveling by train through Texas in 1945, Hughes wrote: "I would advise Negro travelers in the South to use the diners more. In fact, I wish we would use the diners in droves—so that whites may get used to seeing us in diners . . . So, folks, when you go South by train, be sure to eat in the diner. Even if you are not hungry, eat anyhow—to help establish that right. Besides, it will be fun to see how you will be received" ("Adventures in Dining" 56).

Obviously, Hughes believed that forging this kind of revolution against prejudice was needed to help fashion a consciousness about the evils of Jim Crowism. For example, to desegregate the service counter at Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri, Hughes called African Americans to action: "So I suggest that ALL Negro travelers going through Kansas City make it a point to eat in the big Harvey House Restaurant and sit dead in the middle and get those provincial folks accustomed to seeing colored people in that dining room" ("Encounter at the Counter" 57). What his anti-Jim Crow jeremiads did not consider, however, was the consequences that African Americans would have suffered had they answered his call with action. America later watched in horror as the freedom fighters of the Civil Rights Movement were attacked by police dogs, sprayed with fire hoses and jailed for their participation in such peaceful demonstrations that Hughes attempted to initiate. All throughout the South, African Americans who were brave enough to contest Jim Crowism were beaten, tortured, burned at the stake, and lynched. Throughout his travels, though, Hughes witnessed the construction of Jim Crowism's embryonic visages and the many problems it created for the American public. Sometimes being "the darker brother" was advantageous, and Hughes became "vastly amused at the lengths to which Southerners go to preserve Jim Crow." When Jim Crowism surfaced on Southern trains in the 1950s, Hughes lamented, those who supported its policies would rather provide African American passengers with a "roomette, drawing room, or bedroom without extra charge" rather than seat them with white passengers ("From Rampart Street to Harlem" 63). Hughes "preferred the Jim Crow car on the train," while at the same time, he "loathed the Jim Crow car" (Rampersad, II: 100). However, there was "some advantage in being colored," Hughes applauded, "when the accommodations given are separate but better than whites receive for the same money." Hughes revealed that Jim Crowism manifested in the "finest accommodations" and "the democracy of the open coaches" of Southern prejudice and bigotry ("From Rampart Street to Harlem" 64).

According to Hughes, it was "Southern White folks" who were responsible for the spread of Jim Crowism: "You come up here and start spreading the ugly old Jim Crowism you have down home all over Manhattan Island," Hughes proclaimed, "you are not satisfied to keep segregation down South" ("Letter to the South" 75). However, he revealed that white America was essential in his proposal to rid

the nation of Jim Crowism: "We need their decency to save America," he lamented. Hughes was convinced that the "snake of race hatred" had set out to "wreck national unity" and annihilate the "decency of the peace in America" ("The Snake in the House" 103). Therefore, he offered Americans a place to institute this racial conundrum: "One way of helping to solve it is to talk about it, write about it, and continually bring its various facets to the attention of every citizen who can be reached, in hope that action will be taken toward a prompt solution ("MacArthur Lives" 62).

Jim Crowism's presence was felt, however, not only in the American South, but also in Harlem and as far away as China. Hughes heatedly attacked white Americans who "have the nerve to run night clubs with all Negro bands and entertainers—like the Zanzibar in New York—and then Jim Crow Negro patrons" ("Nerve of Some White Folks" 105). His lamentation revealed that the Zanzibar Club, a popular night spot for both white and black New Yorkers where players such as Cab Calloway made appearances, "mourns about the Negro problem—by seating its Negro patrons all around the edges" of the club. In an effort to desegregate the Zanzibar Club, Hughes suggested that management should "let people of any color sit anywhere, and stop putting that chocolate band of humanity all round the walls" ("Theaters, Clubs, and Negroes" 53-54). The globalization of Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads championed rights not only for blacks, but for other ethnicities. Hughes's lamentations called to consciousness Jim Crowism's racial prejudices by suggesting that they were a deep-seated problem engrained in society. In China, for example, Hughes witnessed the traveling walls of bigotry in "buildings for whites and a kind of 'Harlem Branch,' separate and elsewhere, for Chinese and other colored persons." With the expansion of European colonialism in China, many businesses were "for EUROPEANS ONLY, which meant WHITE ONLY" ("With the Crumbling of Old Chain" 60). When he called the Chinese to consciousness concerning Jim Crowism, he urged the Chinese masses to sever "the chains of foreign domination" (Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem* 194). The preponderance of the Chinese, Hughes lamented, as with blacks in America, "did not like Jim Crow." Witnessing segregation in China led Hughes to rejoice that "each time an old bastion of white supremacy crumbles its falling weakens the whole Jim Crow system everywhere" ("With the Crumbling of Old Chain" 61).

The idea of fighting for democracy was a motivation for Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads. For blacks in America, the country's involvement in World War II represented a period of expectation and optimism as some held out hope that the war would generate better race relations. After the war ended, Hughes prophesized, "there won't be any more Jim Crow in Washington." He believed that Jim Crowism would regress: "The capital of a great democratic nation will no long permit segregation in the very departments of the government itself, not in its restaurants, not on any of the buses or trains" ("America after the War" 121). Sadly, however, Hughes's democratic dream was not to become a reality until the rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement assailed Jim Crowism. Yet, Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads reached their pinnacle through "Jim Crow's Epitaph" which is half poem and half essay. In this political tract, Hughes adhered to the traditional jeremiadic structure: he amalgamated lament and pride while reiterating America's democratic mission:

> You will never again drink
> From no WHITE water fountain
> Whilst I go dry.
> Never gain, Jim Crow,
> Will you set up in front of the buses
> From Washington to New Orleans
> Whilst I ride in the back over the wheels. ("Jim Crow's Epitaph" 70-71)

Providing access to his often understated humor, Hughes's anti-Jim Crow jeremiads deconstructed the system of government-sanctioned racial oppression and segregation that upheld racism in the South. They were also patterned to reveal Jim Crowism's declension not only from the country's Founding Fathers' decree that "all men are created equal" but also from God's directive since, as Hughes revealed in his epitaph, when judgment day arrived "God will say, 'Jim Crow! Get away! / Away! Hie yourself hence! / Make haste—and take your place in hell!'" (71).

"ARISE, YE SLAVES NO MORE IN THRALL": HUGHES'S COMMUNIST JEREMIADS

Hughes furthered the development of his jeremiads when he advocated the political philosophies—social and economic equality and

collective decision-making—of Communism. After he developed an interest in socialism in the latter 1920s, Hughes began to publish his views in *The Nation*. Rampersad argues that although Hughes had "attempted to speak loudly against racism, he made no similar effort on behalf of the far left" (II: 39). According to Faith Berry, Hughes was "never a member of the Communist party" (*Good Morning Revolution* xxi). However, his identification with Communism's socialist ideas gravely affected his jeremiadic discourse. Hughes lamented that because he was "Negro," he had struggled "for the emancipation of the Negroes and of the oppressed masses" and would forever continue that struggle. Communism, he believed, proposed the "emancipation of the oppressed masses." However, Hughes doubted "whether or not complete freedom can be secured through the realization of Communism" (qtd. in Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem* 197). During its zenith in the America of the 1930s and 1940s, Communism played a significant role in protecting the civil liberties of African Americans. From the early 1920s forward, Communism fought against Jim Crowism's racist designs and made the struggle one of its uniform principles. With a strong position against white supremacy, Communism used its position to coordinate African American miners in the strikes led by its National Miners Union in western Pennsylvania in 1928, while at the same time, it led strikes of almost solely white textile workers in the Carolinas and Georgia in 1929 and coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky in 1931 (Howard 93). During its years of greatest influence, however, Communism's associations with African American communities, organizations and leaders faced many difficulties because the sharp focus in the Party's procedural doctrines often divided many of its supporters. It was because of these shifts that African Americans had divergent attitudes toward Communism's purposes in America.[6]

Hughes visited Russia to rewrite dialogue for a proposed film, *Black and White*, which was purportedly a film for the "advancement of certain ideas of social betterment" ("Moscow and Me" 72). On the eve of his visit to Moscow, Hughes revealed that some African Americans felt that Russia "only want[ed] to make Communists" of them all. It was because of his visit to Russia's Red Capital and his witnessing that "their laws against race prejudice really work" ("The Soviet Union and Color" 88) that Hughes championed Russia as a place where "the dream of all the poor and oppressed—like us—come true" ("Moscow and Me" 74). Hughes was sensitive to

Communism because he felt its main concern was the well-being of all oppressed people regardless of national origin or race. He praised Russia for not tolerating many of the indecencies and prejudices other countries, like America, propagated: "There is one country in the world that has NO JIM CROW of any sort, NO UNEMPLOYMENT of any sort, NO PROSTITUTION or demeaning of the human personality through poverty, NO LACK OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES for all of its young people, and NO LACK OF SICK CARE or dental care for everybody. That country is the Soviet Union" ("The Soviet Union and Color" 84).

The development of Hughes's Communist jeremiads, then, approached several concerns: a heightened awareness that Jim Crowism did not exist under Russia's red flag; a visible criticism of American prejudices versus the nonexistence of prejudice in Russia; and an examination of economic and democratic principles in Russia versus those that existed in America. To give authority to his Communist jeremiads, Hughes assured readers that he had visited "the Soviet Union"; therefore, he was not "speaking from theory or long distance information read in books." Since he was not a Communist, "as some may be inclined to accuse," he was not speaking from "political basis." Even though the Soviet Union was no "paradise," the country had taken the necessary greater "steps toward an earthly paradise" than America. The Soviet Union's future, Hughes lamented, was established on more concrete modern social achievements than that of any other existing state." Since there was "NO Jim Crow, no anti-semitism, and NO racial prejudice" in Russia, Hughes questioned why "sympathies of colored people the world over" are not attracted to the country's egalitarianism ("The Soviet Union" 84-85). Hughes's Communist jeremiads were associated, then, with desensitizing whatever perceived flaws in Russia's moral fabric Americans, particularly African Americans, had previously consigned. Although he admitted that the Soviet Union was "not a perfect country," Hughes's Communist jeremiads did indicate that many of the atrocities African Americans and other ethnicities are faced with in America on a daily basis do not exist there. Again revealing his understated humor, Hughes wrote: "Nice juicy murder and big black brutes are both missing" from the country's headlines ("Faults of the Soviet Union" 95).

Although the vision of an egalitarian society established on collective rights of property and wealth had existed in Western thought

for centuries, the Soviet Union, according to Hughes's Communist jeremiads, was "far from being a communist country in a theoretical or practical sense. At the moment," he admitted, "socialism is what they have achieved" ("Faults of the Soviet Union" 95). Within the confines of socialism, many of the prejudices suffered by minorities in Russia dissipated for the betterment of race relations. If the Soviets were able to "rid [themselves] of the Jewish problem" ("The Soviet Union and the Jews" 87), Hughes proclaimed, America should follow their example by formulating and enforcing laws against racial prejudice to rid themselves of their so-called "Negro problem." Furthermore, Hughes's Communist jeremiads attempted to force Americans to face their biases when he aligned those prejudices with those of the Soviet Union:

> So from Jim Crow cars to freedom, from helplessness to the ballot, from ignorance to schools, from scorn—'sarts'[7]—to decency and respect as Soviet citizens, from being nobodies, serfs and semi-slaves to having a part in their own government—that is how far the colored people of the Soviet Union have come in a little over twenty-five years. So there is a clear example in the world to prove to our American 'experts' in race relations that it DOES NOT TAKE A HUNDRED YEARS, it does NOT take generations to get rid of ugly, evil, antiquated, stupid Jim Crow practices—if a country really wants to get rid of them. ("The Soviet Union and Color" 90)

Because of the Soviet Union's commitment to socialism, Hughes's Communist jeremiads reached their apex when he lamented that "America can learn some good things about race relations, democratic education and health programs, and insurance against poverty from the Soviet people" ("Faults of the Soviet Union" 96). According to his critique of Russia's socialists' ideologies, the country was on its way to being a seventh heaven, a model for race relations worldwide.

However, Hughes fulfilled his Communist jeremiads with a warning to African Americans. In October of 1949, "12 Communists in New York City" were convicted and sentenced to prison for violating the Alien Registration Act, also known as the Smith Act of 1940, which banned American citizens from intentionally or deliberately advising or teaching "the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying the government of the United States or the government of any State, Territory, District or

Possession thereof." Hughes informed African Americans of the importance of the proceedings: "It is your trial—all who question the status quo—who question things as they are" because "all poor people, Negroes, Jews, un-white Americans, un-rich Americans are on trial." Especially enlightening was his stress on the trial as Hughes reminded African Americans of the threat that lay before them. Hughes warned—although he exclaimed he was "no prophet"—that if the twelve Communist activists were jailed, American democracy would "send Negroes to jail for simply being Negroes and to concentration camps just for being colored." He warned blacks that their disdain for "Reds" should not hinder their interest in the trial because it was "only a sign of what can happen" to them. After African American leaders, Hughes prophesized, "come the ordinary folks" ("A Portent and a Warning" 185).

"SPAIN TORN BETWEEN FASCISM AND DEMOCRACY": HUGHES'S ANTI-FASCIST JEREMIADS

Hughes's journey to Spain would also help to shape his radical racialism and jeremiadic discourse. When he wrote, for example, that Spain was "torn between Fascism and Democracy," he illustrated two of the prevalent characteristics of a jeremiadic discourse: peril and hope. Hughes's criticisms of Fascism's design led him to the conviction that "Fascism preaches the creed of Nordic supremacy and a world for whites alone" ("Negroes in Spain" 107). With this in mind, Fascism (peril) had existed in Spain since 1933 when José António Primo de Rivera, son of the former Spanish dictator, founded the Falange Española political party. When Primo de Rivera's party joined forces with General Francisco Paulino Hermenegildo Teópdulo Franco Bahamonde's militia in 1937, the association was renamed Falange Española Tradicionalista and became the official party of the Nationalist federation (Nolan 1). Franco, who was not a very tyrannical ruler—although he did limit the freedoms of his people—ruled Fascist Spain as a dictatorship.[8] Hughes acknowledged that "Spain once belonged to the Moors, a colored people ranging from light dark to dark white" ("Franco and the Moors" 104). By the time he arrived upon the tumultuous scene in 1937 to cover "black Americans in the International Brigades on the front lines of the Civil War" (Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem* 254), "the new democratic Spain" was, of course, in the midst of a civil war ("Franco and the

Moors" 105). Valencia, the ancient Mediterranean seaport, was now the seat of the Spanish government. The people of Spain were "in power and democracy prevails." However, the Fascists were trying to crush the democratic system and "hired Franco to put the country back in chains again" with the aid of specialized military, "Italians, Germans, and Moors," whose purpose was to trounce the "duly elected government" ("Franco and the Moors" 105, 106). Thus, Hughes's anti-Fascist jeremiads lamented the problems of Fascism in Spain as he simultaneously set out to evaluate the prejudices that distressed the colored people of the country.

Many African American writers and intellectuals were concerned with the "economic depression in America and the rise of Fascism in Europe" and "disillusioned by the values of capitalist society as a whole" (Berry, *Good Morning Revolution* xx). Hughes's six-month stay in Spain as a writer for African American newspapers in America during the Spanish Civil War, however, "enabled him to draw on connections between the situation of black people in America and the ways of life of oppressed people throughout the world" (De Santis 6). According to Rampersad, Hughes's spirit, "dulled and blunted by poverty and disappointment in America, became honed again under the press of the antifascist struggle" in Spain (I: 341). His anti-Fascist jeremiads, then, became more of an internal search for human civility as he mourned the plight of the Moors—"an oppressed colonial people of color being used by Fascism to make a colony of Spain," ("Negroes in Spain" 108)—rather than a call to consciousness. "In the Civil War in Spain," Hughes lamented, "I am a writer, not a fighter. But that is what I want to be, a writer, recording what I see, commenting upon it, and distilling from my own emotions a personal interpretation" (qtd. in Rampersad, I: 344).

Fascism, however, a totalitarian political creed that regarded individualistic and societal interests secondary to the needs of government, stressed national or racial regeneration after a period of degeneration or devastation. Fascists' ideas heavily influenced Hughes's anti-Fascist jeremiads; the threat of Fascism's global proliferation led Hughes to prophesy that if "Fascism creeps across Spain, across Europe, and then across the world, there will be no place left for intelligent young Negroes at all" ("Negroes in Spain" 107). Fascism considered politics to be both elitist—regarding the people's will as personified in a elite group, or often one totalitarian leader, from whom power ensues downward—and populist, in that it sought to mobilize

the citizens as a whole against supposed oppressors (Ottanelli 13). Hughes lamented that African Americans have long since felt the undemocratic and biased ideological framework of Fascism "for the American attitude toward us has always been one of economic and social discrimination." At one point, however, his anti-Fascist jeremiadic discourse indicates that there was no place for racism in Fascism's design; Hughes concludes that race was an invaluable commodity "when the Fascists of the world use it as a bugaboo and a terror to keep the working masses from" assimilating ("Too Much of Race" 102, 103).

Fascism encouraged—although not always—racial supremacy, ethnic discrimination, imperialist growth, and genocide. At the same time, however, Fascists oftentimes supported a type of internationalism built on either racial or ideological cohesion across national boundaries (Nolan 15). Hughes lamented that the indoctrination of Fascism in the mindset of mankind had played a major role in racial prejudice in not only America, but worldwide:

> And now we view [Fascism] on a world scale: Hitler in Germany with the abolition of labor unions, his tyranny over the Jews, and the sterilization of the Negro children of Cologne; Mussolini in Italy with his banning of Negroes on the theatrical stages, and his expedition of slaughter in Ethiopia; the Military Party in Japan with their little maps of how they'll conquer the whole world and their savage treatment of Koreans and Chinese; Batista and Vincent, the little American-made tyrants of Cuba and Haiti; and now Spain and Franco with his absurd cry of 'Viva España' at the hand of Italians, Moors and Germans invited to help him achieve 'Spanish Unity.' Absurd, but true. ("Too Much of Race" 102)

Since Fascism involved political support from various segments of the population, Fascist's policies manifested as a radical expansion of government authority over the economy. Hughes contended that Fascists know that humanity yearned "to be rid of hatred and terror and oppression, to be rid of all the ugliness of poverty and imperialism that eat away the heart of life today" ("Too Much of Race" 104). It was Fascism's despotic backsliding that led Hughes to lament: "The Moors die in Spain, men, women, and children, victims of Fascism, fighting not for freedom—but against freedom—under a banner that holds only terror and segregation for all the darker peoples of the earth" ("Negroes in Spain" 109). Because of his experi-

ences with American racial prejudices, Hughes believed that blacks knew better than to fight "against freedom." It was his hope, however, that the Moors would soon acquire the same wisdom.

CONCLUSION: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE JEREMIAD, THE OBLITERATION OF AMERICAN ROMANTICISM, AND "THE END OF RACE"

One year before Hughes's death, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) wrote: "The Black Artist's role in America is to aid in the destruction of America as he knows it. His role is to report and reflect so precisely the nature of the society, and of himself in that society, that other men will be moved by the exactness of his rendering and, if they are black men, grow strong through this moving, having seen their own strength and weakness; and if they are white men, tremble, curse, and go mad, because they will be drenched with the filth of their evil" (251). It was precisely this attitude that the African American jeremiad mimicked throughout its evolution. Its discourse has been, from its initial conception, an instrument Blacks used to aid in forging social change in American romanticism. As it has become a fundamental part of American literary and cultural studies today, the jeremiad helped to forge the nation's political agenda. The manifestation of the African American jeremiad during the Harlem Renaissance positioned itself as a call to Blacks to celebrate pride in their blackness. It was intellectuals such as Hughes who felt that the white hegemonic structure needed his jeremiadic vision in order to move to change; thus, his prose, more than anything, became jeremiadic. He felt that in order to annihilate oppression abroad, white America had to get involved. To do this, white America had to change its attitudes toward racial discrimination, economic exploitation, segregation and peonage. By all accounts, Hughes's jeremiads played a fundamental task in the war on racism, and this battle, in turn, helped to establish his jeremiads on national and global levels. When he constructed his laments on the experiences of his people, Hughes indicated that social change was inevitable. The jeremiad, then, became a driving force for Hughes as he positioned his jeremiadic rhetoric to symbolize hope not just for black America, but for the oppressed everywhere. Worldwide racism became a parasitic contamination that Hughes felt should no longer be incubated by Fascism, Jim Crowism and other forms of authoritative and hegemonic designs. The jeremiad's continued prominence in his messages to white

America was the best display of his undying faith for the final liberation of African Americans. As he lamented to his audience at the 1937 Second International Writers' Congress in Paris: "We represent the end of race" ("Too Much of Race" 104).

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NOTES

[1]Howard-Pitney's *The Afro-American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America* was published in 1990 by Temple University Press. Recently, Howard-Pitney expanded his edition, *The African-American Jeremiad* (2005), to include a new chapter on Malcolm X, an updated consideration on the jeremiadic rhetoric of Jesse Jackson, and a new discussion on Alan Keyes. I quote, however, from the 1990 edition.

[2]Wilson Jeremiah Moses, for example, in *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), discusses what he coins the "Black Jeremiad" as a pre-Civil War phenomenon that was "characteristically concerned with explaining the dismal status of the African people during" American slavery (31). Picking up where Moses left off, Howard-Pitney, however, continues examining the "Afro-American jeremiad" beginning with persuasive rhetoric of activists such as Frederick Douglass.

[3]See John M. Jones and Robert C. Rowland's "A Covenant-affirming Jeremiad: The Post-presidential Ideological Appeals of Ronald Wilson Reagan," *Communication Studies* 56.2 (2005): 157-174; John M. Murphy's "A Time of Shame and Sorrow: Robert F. Kennedy and the American Jeremiad," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76.4 (1990): 401-414; Patrick Rael's *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 2002; and Andrew R. Murphy's "Longing, Nostalgia, and Golden Age Politics: The American Jeremiad and the Power of the Past." *Perspectives on Politics* 7.1 (2009): 125-141.

[4]At the end of Schyuler's essay, *The Nation* advertised Hughes's upcoming essay as "An opposing view on the subject of Negro art will be presented by Langston Hughes in next week's issue."

[5]In the early 1830s, thespian Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice, while he donned blackface, developed an instantaneously well-liked song-and-dance caricature depicting an old black slave he called "Jim Crow." Some accounts, however, suggested that Rice depicted a young, unkempt stable boy. At any rate, Rice's depiction became exceedingly stereotypical. Because of Jim Crow's laziness, disheveledness, and broken English, by 1838 the term "Jim Crow" was commonly being used as a racial epithet in relation to American blacks. At the end of the Civil War, most Southern states passed legislation—known as Jim Crow laws—that discriminated against African Americans in regards to attendance in public schools and the use of public facilities such as bistros and cafés, theaters, trains, hotels, cinemas and public baths.

[6]For a detailed discussion on Communism and African-American interests during the first half of the 20th century, see Mark I. Solomon's *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

[7]The term "sart" was used to identify the settled inhabitants of Central Asia. Over the centuries, however, the term has had variable connotation. For example, sarts, sometimes known as Ak-Sart ("White Sart") centuries ago, did not have any specific ethnic classification; it was usually applied to town-dwellers. Historians have suggested that the term's etymology is resultant of *Sart It* ("Yellow Dog" in Turkish), which is an offensive term for town dwellers by nomads. This is most likely the theoretical derivation which drove

the Soviets to eradicate the term as offensive. According to Hughes, "sarts" is a racial epithet that Europeans used to demean the people of Ashkabad, the capital of Turkmenia.

[8]For a detailed discussion on the social policies of Primo de Rivera's occupation of Spain see *J. H. Rial's Revolution From Above: The Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain, 1923-1930.* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983).

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MACABRE AND MODERN SOURCERY: "THE CAT THAT LIVED AT THE RITZ" AND "THE APOTHECARY" AS ANTECEDENTS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "A ROSE FOR EMILY"

DAVID FITZSIMMONS

Critics today, a handful excepted, widely ignore the work of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Louis Bromfield, yet William Faulkner, whose life was in so many ways parallel to Bromfield's, continues to receive much attention.[1] In this essay I will highlight some of the similarities between the lives of Bromfield and Faulkner. I will also show that there is little evidence that the Midwestern writer and his Southern compatriot actually had much interaction, perhaps in some part due to their different literary styles—Bromfield more Victorian, Faulkner more modernist. Finally, I will propose that, while they generally kept their distances, it seems that Bromfield and Faulkner read and respected—at least to some extent—each other's work, something that to my knowledge has not been explored by critics. I will conclude with the hypothesis that, through his reading of Bromfield, the Southern writer was indebted to his Midwestern contemporary. Specifically, I hope to demonstrate that in writing "A Rose for Emily" (1930)[2] Faulkner co-opted diction, tropes, and themes from Bromfield's lesser-known short stories, "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz" (1927)[3] and "The Apothecary" (1928).[4]

Remarkably, the two American authors led quite similar lives. Consider the following biographical data. Louis Bromfield and William Faulkner were both born at the end of the nineteenth century (one year apart) and died in the mid-twentieth century.[5] During the same thirty-year span, from the mid-1920s until the mid-1950s, both were highly productive fiction writers, even having short stories collected in the same annual volume, *The Best Short Stories of 1931.* Both changed the spelling of their names,[6] and each participated in World War I, neither for his own country.[7] And both, having moved

away early in their literary careers, later spent the majority of their writing days in renovated farmhouses in or near their native grounds.[8] Finally, both traveled to Hollywood to work on movies during the 1930s and parts of the next two decades, even sharing the friendship of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.[9]

With so much in common—similar ages, desires to serve in WWI, hometown pulsions, short story and novel writing, even Hollywood connections—an interested observer would think that the parallel lives of Bromfield and Faulkner would have overlapped often. Indeed, it appears to have been just the opposite.

One of the foremost Bromfield critics, Jayne Waterman, has extensively examined the archives in the Louis Bromfield Collection at The Ohio State University. In studying manuscripts, letters, telegrams, postcards, journal entries, newspaper and journal clippings, scrapbooks, photographs, financial records, an address book, and personal artifacts of Bromfield, Waterman has found nothing in these archive materials related to William Faulkner. Louis Bromfield's personal collection of books, populating shelves throughout the "Big House," his thirty-two-room country mansion at Malabar Farm in Lucas, Ohio, recently has been added to the electronic library catalog at The Ohio State University. According to Scott Savage, Staff Program Officer for the Malabar Farm Foundation, the Malabar Farm Big House books include almost four thousand titles, all of which are considered to be original books owned by the Ohio author. Within the Malabar Farm collection, the database shows four Faulkner texts: *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Intruder in the Dust,* and *Knight's Gambit.* This list corroborates my own visual inspection of the shelves, where I observed that *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* show strong signs of wear while *Intruder in the Dust* and *Knight's Gambit* look nearly untouched, still in well-preserved dust jackets.[10]

Only two clear connections between Bromfield and Faulkner are apparent. The first is the aforementioned mutual short story publication in 1931. The second is a letter written by Faulkner, referenced by Joseph Blotner in his Faulkner biography, in which the Southern writer agrees to help raise money to fight fascism. On October 24, 1938, Faulkner wrote to journalist Vincent Sheean, a member of the League of American Writers, offering to donate some drafts for auction, wishing "Sheean and Louis Bromfield success" in their antifascism endeavor (qtd. in Blotner 1030).[11] William Griffith, director at

Rowan Oak, Faulkner's former home in Oxford, Mississippi, finds no books by Bromfield in his database listing all the books in the house.

Conclusions might be 1) that Bromfield may have read some of Faulkner and 2) that Faulkner may *not* have read Bromfield. Concerning the latter, I propose, something quite the contrary: that Faulkner did read Bromfield and, moreover, that the Mississippi writer was influenced in a strong way by his Ohio contemporary. Indeed, because Faulkner's *floruit* was slightly later than that of the precociously successful Bromfield, we should consider the possibility of the Midwestern writer's influence on Faulkner. Specifically, we should interrogate word choices, rhetorical devices, and even themes found in Bromfield's "The Cat" and "The Apothecary" that are prevalent—and often utilized with more panache— in Faulkner's "Rose."[12]

Before getting into specifics, let me offer brief overviews of the stories. In "The Cat," a lonely but wealthy Miss Wannop offers to purchase the narrator's collection of porcelain figurines, less out of interest in the antiques and more out of a desire for company during the transaction. Wannop is a quite cold figure, so her servant, Amélie, desires to quit working for her. In fact, in the very hour Wannop dies, Amélie leaves the house. The story concludes with the lady's corpse lying alone—except for the responsible narrator acting as executor—her dead body loomed over by the hotel cat, a symbolic scene indicating social change.

In "The Apothecary," Fannie Sackville, a woman of the old guard, one of the "Flower of Europe" (300 ff.), resides in an "ancient" apartment building in Paris (289). As she designs to bring together a monied young woman, Anne Masterson, with a declining nobleman, the Duke of Sebastiola, Fannie holds a dinner party just above the apothecary's shop. The druggist has gone missing, but he is found during dinner as the odor of his dead body infiltrates Fannie's *soiree,* a carefully crafted party that appears to be the last opportunity to save the past generation through marriage. The odorous dissolution of the party emphasizes change.

Faulkner's "Rose" involves old buildings, an old woman, and death. Emily Grierson, too, represents the old guard, an antebellum aristocrat. Her family has declined in social and economic status, and she is the last of her family, now residing in the decaying family house on what was once the best street in town (119). She falls in love

with a carpetbagger, Homer Barron, whom she seems intent on marrying. Homer rebuffs her. Emily acquires rat poison from the town druggist, and the story concludes with Homer lying dead in Emily's bed. The story's protagonist has apparently poisoned him and then slept each night embracing his corpse. Change from the old South to the new is emphasized within this Gothic tale.

Given these story lines, it is not hard initially to see some basic similarities: Gothic structures, older female characters, death, and social change. We will now turn to specifics. On the most basic level, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" utilizes specific words found in Bromfield. Most notable, perhaps, is the transformation of one of the major figures in "The Cat," the servant Amélie (23 ff.) into Emily in "Rose." Other words used in common include "dry" ("Cat" 9, 31; "Rose" 121, 130),[13] "smell" ("Apothecary" 290, 291, ff.; "Rose" 120, 121, 122 ff.), "cuckold" and its French form *"cocu"* in "Cat" ("Cat" 5; "Rose" 130), "china" ("Cat" 17, 17; "Rose" 120, 128), "yellow glove" ("Rose" 126"; "Cat" 9), "toilette/toilet" ("Cat" 3; "Rose" 130), "skeleton" (in the former title of "The Apothecary; "Rose" 121), "seventies" ("Cat" 5; "Rose" 119), "when" beginning two of the three discourses ("Cat" 3; "Rose" 119), and numerous uses of "house" ("Apothecary" 289 lines 4, 9, 11, 12, 290 lines 19 and 25, ff.; "Rose" 119 lines 4, 7, and 12, 122, ff).[14]

Moreover, the repetition of specific words in Faulkner is tied to the repetition of certain tropes and themes used by Bromfield. For example, Bromfield emphasizes the old building in writing about the "house on the Rue Jacquinot" in "The Apothecary" (290), in which the "ancient" building comes to represent the Gothic side of the eerie Apothecary as well as the crumbling world of Fannie Sackville and her friends, "the flower of Europe." In short, the house is symbolic of a bygone era, of the change from the old guard to the new, similar to the change of politics Bromfield represents in "The Cat," where Miss Wannop and her Royalist (15, 25) and Bonapartist (15) beliefs are the "something more than Miss Savina Wannop" who "lay dead in the room next to the *porcelaine de Saxe*" (38).

In Faulkner the house becomes symbolic in a similar way, except in "A Rose for Emily" the "once" white house (119)—mentioned on the first page of the discourse as it is in Bromfield's "The Cat" and "The Apothecary"—symbolizes the bygone era of the American South: an agricultural economy, rooted in slavery, with its landed class adhering to genteel mores and practicing its uppity *"noblesse oblige"*

(124). In Faulkner the decaying structure stands on "what had once been our most select street," surrounded now by symbols of the new economy, "garages," "cotton gins," and "gasoline pumps" (119).

Further, the house not only represents the physical structure, the signifier comprised of wood and nails, but also denotes a line of people. That is, "house," as in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," can have a double meaning: both structure and family. In Bromfield, on the one hand, the loftiness of Miss Wannop and Fannie Sackville is somewhat dubious, as both have descended, at least in part, from not-quite-so-lofty American ancestry. In Faulkner, on the other hand, Emily does come from a more established line. Even so, the new generation of townspeople proclaim that the "Griersons held themselves a little too high"(123).

Speaking of Poe, this American forebear's influence on both Bromfield and Faulkner is apparent. Both reveal their Gothic descent, the former slowly working up to horror, the latter boldly declaring it. The ludicrous Siamese cat that lived at the Ritz in Bromfield's eponymous short story as well as the dead body at the end of the narrative are mild tips of the cap to the Baltimore writer, but the "beady-eyed" apothecary, lurking in the basement of an "ancient" building in Bromfield's O'Henry prize-winner—not to mention the crescendo of the hideous odor that pervades the Last Supper scene for the "Flower of Europe" and the dénouement, where Anne Masterson falls into a funeral wreath and beholds a candle-lit body attended to by a mysterious woman in black—seems like a detail from the best of Poe's horror stories. Not to be outdone, Faulkner combines the psychological dread of the spinsters Wannop and Sackville, the physical odor of a dead body, and the suspense of the closing scene of "The Apothecary" with the added perversity of murder and necrophilia. Perhaps the most recent of the three short stories even out-Herods Poe.

As colors figure prominently in many of Poe's short stories, so, too, do they in these works. Most notably, the color yellow ties together "The Apothecary" and "A Rose for Emily." The "Flower of Europe" hints at yellow, suggesting the common color for reproductive parts of flowers: yellow stigmas and pistils. As Fannie and her coterie lose their power, the implied color of yellow suggests her/their ability to continue their species. The Duke of Sebastiola, one of the Flowers, dresses "in dapper Latin Fashion with gaiters that were *too* yellow [my italics]" (317), a sign of his declining potency.

In the final dinner scene, the Marquis de Gotha tries "to smile and only succeeded in showing a row of unpleasant pointed yellow teeth" (344), aged fangs that no longer pack much of a Machiavellian bite.

In "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz," yellow is manifest in a way identical to its use in "A Rose for Emily." The greedy hanger-on, the Marquis de Vistiglione, a "shabby, threadbare little man" (5) connects Monsieur de S— with Miss Wannop solely for the commission on the sale of the *porcelaine de Saxe*. It is he who is "clad in a shabby cutaway and soiled *yellow gloves* [my italics]" (9). This impotent figure is then replicated and embellished in Homer Barron, who drives Miss Emily through town in a "yellow-wheeled buggy" (124) and wears a "*yellow glove* [again, my italics]" (126). Of course, this carpetbagger, symbolic of the rising generation that is overthrowing the ways of the past, is rumored to be gay. If the townspeople are correct, that Homer (near homonym for the slang for "homosexual") is gay, then he may have been killed by Emily because he symbolizes being barren (a homonym for Barron).[15] In short, what began in Bromfield is the full monty in Faulkner. In Bromfield, yellow represents various aspects of impotence; in Faulkner, the same color insinuates sexual impotence for a despised Northerner lurking in the turn-of-the-century deep South.

There is not enough space here to explicate the full spectrum of colors in Bromfield's "The Apothecary," which is quite reminiscent of Poe's "The Mask of the Red Death," but an examination of Bromfield's and Faulkner's parallel uses of black—the absence of all color and, symbolically, the absence of power—is worthwhile. First of all, it is important to see the transition from Bromfield's earlier short story, with its Siamese cat, a white animal with "soiled" white paws,[16] to the more sinister narrative, "The Apothecary," with its black feline, a sidekick to its evil owner. In the earlier of the short stories, Bromfield plays with a devilish cat who torments Miss Wannop. With a white coat that transitions to gray and black, the Siamese critter is somewhat of an ambivalent symbol, first appearing ironically innocent in its whiteness but later seemingly vicious in its deeper coloration as it stalks the old lady. In the final scene, the Siamese cat darkly prevails over the corpse of Miss Wannop, and the narrator explains that the cat "had found her out at the very end" (37).

In "The Apothecary," the cat is fully evil, taking on conventional blackness.[17] When we first meet the cat through its green eyes shining in the dark (291), we may assume the cat is black as it is aligned

with its black-bearded owner in "the shadows" of his "evil-smelling shop" (291). Immediately our suspicions are confirmed, as the beast is described as "black" (291, 327). Of course, the cat does not figure prominently in the story; instead, it functions as a transferred epithet, by which the author invites us to acknowledge fully the blackness of the apothecary, who is described as having "a dirty black beard" (291) and "tangled black hair" (296). Perhaps more importantly, Fannie's memory of him is "a black, bent, dirty, crooked image with an aura of evil," from which T. J. Eckleburg-like eyes emerge, always watching her:

> They [the eyes] were beady, red-rimmed, and filled with malice. They came to her sometimes in the midst of the gayest evenings when she sat telling risqué stories at the Ritz or the Ambassadeurs with a grand duke on her right and an automobile king on her left. She never saw him again in the light of day, but only his eyes peering out from the darkness of his cave. It seemed to her that the eyes knew all the long history which she had managed to forget. Sometimes when she was very tired she fancied that the eyes were accusing her of things which no one but herself could possibly have known. (298)

In Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," black never functions in such an impressive way, but the conventional marker does subtly insinuate itself into the fabric of Emily's life. Emily is described as a "fat woman in black" with (not quite so Eckleburg-like) eyes that are like "two small pieces of coal" (121) and "cold, haughty" and "black" (125). Faulkner sacrifices the overall oppressive *tone* of dark leering and pitch blackness for the supporting role of *foreshadowing*. That is, Faulkner uses black as one of a variety of clues leading to what biographer Joseph Blotner describes as "a technique [Faulkner] had practiced in the *Times-Picayune*: the surprise ending" (632). The effectively jarring occurrence of the "iron-gray hair"—set off against the darkness of Emily's life and her impotent, bygone world—undoubtedly explains the lasting success of this O'Henry-like short story.[18]

A last foray into colors leads from actual artifacts to metaphorical meanings. The "china blue eyes" of Miss Wannop (17) and the naturally blue eyes of the Siamese cat are facts of the stories, and they inextricably link the two creatures together. Both are complicit in lurking around the new generation, which has taken over the Ritz, just as the black eyes of the apothecary and his cat link the two creatures to an older generation hanging around the "once worldly quarter" in Paris (289). It is the "china" part of the description that offers further insight into tropes shared by Bromfield's and Faulkner's short stories. In "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz," the Midwestern writer creates a character who decorates her apartment (and her storage lockers) with *porcelaine de Saxe*, white china figurines colorfully painted. But these are antiques of which she apparently has little knowledge: "After lunch we looked at the *porcelaine.* She admired the pieces with a curious banal enthusiasm though it seemed to me that she knew nothing whatever about them—the dates, the lustre, the marks—nothing that a person with so large a collection and so enthusiastically expressed an interest should have known" (25). We discover that Miss Wannop, with her antiquated views of politics and society, is herself a piece of *porcelaine,* a collectible, and nothing more. That is, the figurines she looks at every day are connected to her "china-like" eyes, metonymically representing how she is an antique of little interest or use.

In "A Rose for Emily," china is also present, as the main character teaches "china-painting" (120). But, just as Miss Wannop is a relic of the past generation, so, too, is Emily a remnant of a bygone era. Eventually the children no longer take lessons from her: "Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines. The front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good" (128). Of course, it is hard to overlook the reference to "pupils," quite possibly a sly wink at Bromfield and his earlier story's remarkable "china-blue eyes." Nonetheless, Faulkner repeats the antique gesture first offered by his contemporary. Emily values china, and the "next generation, with its more modern ideas" (120) eschews it. Emily is just as much of an antique, fit for the sideboard or corner cabinet, as Bromfield's Miss Wannop. Both Miss Wannop in "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz" and Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily" (not to mention the apothecary and his psychological patient/victim, Fannie Sackville, in "The Apothecary") represent old, no longer powerful orders to which they cling.

Beyond these, there are a number of obvious other connections among "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz," "The Apothecary," and "A Rose for Emily"—all take place at the turn of the century, employ

characters who dispense drugs, show servants leaving immediately after a character's death, emphasize the pervasive odor of dead bodies, and even conclude with corpses as their final punctuation marks—but a treatment of the three narratives would be remiss without considering narrative method, namely, the points of view from which we see and hear the stories.[19] In short, we find that Faulkner offers an amalgamated perspective drawn from the two options Bromfield chose.

In "The Cat" Bromfield develops a fairly simple discourse featuring basic homodiegetic narration. That is, Monsieur de S— is a character-narrator who is part of the story world. Thus, the narrative begins with the typical first-person markers of homodiegetic narration: "When I knew her she was an old, old woman with a face that was lined, white and transparent" (3). Of course, in places Monsieur de S— draws upon accounts of others, namely from information passed along to him by Miss Wannop's servant, Amélie, about her former employer. Monsieur de S— offers, "All these things I learned after her death, from the woman [Amélie] who for eleven years was her maid and who is now the wife of my *maître d'hôtel*" (4). The perspective of the story continues somewhat uninterestingly, other than that we are asked to consider closely any biases of the character of Monsieur de S— as we are introduced to characters and their actions within the short story through his observations. In the end, few reasons are given to question the reliability of Monsieur de S— besides his mildly annoying wealthy smugness and a modicum of facile dissatisfaction he shows with most people around him.

In "The Apothecary," Bromfield turns to a heterodiegetic narrator. The story about the effects of the beady-eyed dispenser of drugs upon Fannie Sackville begins with the typical voice of an outside narrator: "He was a small, bent, ageless little man with a scraggly black beard, and he lived and had his shop in two rooms in the basement of an ancient tottering house on the edge of that once worldly quarter, the Faubourg St. Germain" (289). This opening appears to be a discourse deriving from an extradiegetic narrator, who conveys information we are likely to accept *prima facie*. The narrative carries on in this way, of course, with the exception of direct discourse between the characters, lacking any first-person pronouns or any other clues that this narrative is anything but related by an outside observer. To this end, the perspective of "The Apothecary" is even less remarkable than that of "The Cat." Indeed, we are never really asked by

Bromfield to pay any special attention to point of view, always considering the source of the discourse's information to be knowledgeable, reliable, and eminently uninvolved.

When we turn to "A Rose for Emily," however, the case is quite different. Indeed, much of the effect of the Southern writer's most famous short story hinges on his careful choice of perspective. Pinning down the point of view in both of Bromfield's stories is quite easy. The first sentence of the narrative gives it away and nothing changes. The opening of "A Rose for Emily" might at first appear to be the same: "When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years"(119). In this passage, there appears to be a homodiegetic narrator; that is, we seem to be getting the story from a townsperson who is part of the story world, and our inference derives, at least in large part, from the telltale first-person pronoun "our." The biggest change from "The Cat" appears to be the plural form of the pronoun, i.e., including others in the narrating.

It is in the complexly multiple narrative method of "A Rose for Emily" that Faulkner combines the effects of both of Bromfield's short stories. As James Wallace aptly points out, what the narrator in "A Rose for Emily" sees cannot be just his own perception. The events to which the narrator confidently refers occur in multiple locations and over a long period of time.

> The reader must wonder how the narrator knows all this, unless he is one of the aldermen, talking about himself in the third person to hide his complicity. But if he is an alderman, how does he know so precisely what took place in the druggist's shop or in Judge Stevens's office? The narrator may be any one of these people, but he cannot be all of them. He knows so much (if indeed he hasn't fabricated everything) because the details of Emily Grierson's life have been passed to him along a sloppy bucket-brigade of gossip, making him all the more unreliable and all the more suspect as he passes along to us the observations and suspicions of his fellow townspeople. Homer's visit occurred forty years before the narrator writes. Surely memory and imagination have helped to embellish the stories swept forward by curiosity and "affection." (106)

Wallace points out what many readers themselves figure out: the narrator of "A Rose for Emily" depends upon hearsay, upon the readily wagging tongues of the town. Gossip is the narrator's source, and the use of the first-person plural pronouns "we" and "our" throughout the discourse are unspecific. That is, the antecedents to the narrating pronouns (in true Faulknerian fashion, I might add) are not entirely clear, certainly not to the readers, and forty years after Emily's death, probably not to the narrator. It is the townspeople's "consensus" that Wallace describes (106) that gives Faulkner's discourse the appearance of fact, something akin to the reliability we experience in Bromfield's "The Apothecary."

But readers of "A Rose for Emily" must return to questioning the reliability of the narrator and his accomplices, his gossip-happy townsfolk, as they blither on under the protection of plural pronouns like "we" and "our." To this end, we are taken back to the interrogations required of us about Bromfield's first-person narrator in "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz." To what extent do we trust Monsieur de S—? Similarly, but even more importantly, to what extent do we trust the collective "we," the townspeople? In the end, what Faulkner does is to take the two perspectives implemented by Bromfield in the opening and closing short stories of *Awake and Rehearse* and combine them. That is, he takes the mildly interesting point of view of "The Cat" and the hum-drum perspective of "The Apothecary" and creates an amalgam: a homodiegetic narration that is so smug in its gossip-as-source that it masquerades with the swagger of a reliable extradiegetic account despite its homodiegetic vulnerability.

So, where does this leave us? I began this essay with the hypothesis that Faulkner, influenced by Bromfield's "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz" and "The Apothecary," drew diction, tropes, and themes from the Midwestern writer's two short stories to create his masterpiece, "A Rose for Emily." Of course, many of these narrative elements used by Bromfield and Faulkner in these three short stories were current during the early twentieth century, i.e., other authors described old houses, wrote of cats, and interrogated the changing social, political, and economic orders.[20] Nevertheless, the extreme frequency and particularity of the parallels between the two authors' works moves beyond historical trends. The evidence suggests that Faulkner had Bromfield's "The Cat that Lived at the Ritz" and "The Apothecary" in mind as he composed "A Rose for Emily," the more

recent showing robust parallels in diction, rhetorical flourishes, and ideas.

While Faulkner seems to have adopted word choices, literary devices, and themes from Bromfield, this borrowing does not imply that the Southern writer's short story is merely derivative. The enduring success of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is due just as much to the way he told his story as it is to the careful combination of story elements he selected. Bromfield's short stories are fine narratives in and of themselves, but their literary merit has not been established in the long term. On the other hand, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" continues to be esteemed and widely read to this day. This investigation into literary lineage reveals that Bromfield's two stories contain engaging narrative elements that appear to have been more artfully combined in Faulkner's famous story and that Bromfield's sensibilities, somewhat akin to those of a bygone era, are transmogrified by Faulkner, who re-focused them through the lens of a more contemporary—and still popular—modernist aesthetic.

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NOTES

[1]See criticism by David Anderson, Dorys Grover, and Jayne Waterman.

[2]Joseph Blotner indicates that "A Rose for Emily" was written in 1929, having been submitted to Scribner's for consideration in September of the same year (632). Forum published "Rose" in April of the next year.

[3]"The Cat that Lived at the Ritz" first appeared in the October 1927 issue of *Harper's Bazaar.*

[4] "The Apothecary" first appeared as "The Skeleton at the Feast" in the October 1928 issue of *Cosmopolitan.*

[5]Bromfield lived from 1896-1956; Faulkner lived from 1897-1962.

[6]"Lewis Brumfield" became "Louis Bromfield"; "Falkner" became "Faulkner."

[7]Bromfield aided France as an ambulance driver while Faulkner enlisted in the Canadian Royal Air Force.

[8]Bromfield returned to Lucas, Ohio, a stone's throw from his birthplace, Mansfield, establishing Malabar Farm. Faulkner returned to his childhood hometown of Oxford, Mississippi, (quite near his birth place, New Albany, Mississippi) to establish Rowan Oak.

[9]Bromfield hosted Bogart and Bacall's wedding at Malabar Farm. The couple starred in Faulkner's screenplay of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep.*

[10]The rare books at Malabar Farm's Big House, due to their special status, do not contain typical bar codes on the spines of the books. As a professional photographer, I have photographed and assisted in creating a visual cataloging system for the Malabar Farm Big House book holdings.

[11]A first edition of Sheean's *This House against This House* is prominently shelved in the "red room" at Malabar Farm.

[12]See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence.*

[13]In Bromfield "desiccated" also occurs ("The Apothecary" 310).

[14]This catalogue of words includes forms of words, e.g., "smell" and "smelling" ("Rose" p. 120 and p. 122, respectively).

[15]For more on the alleged homosexuality of Homer Barron, see Hal Blythe and James Wallace.

[16]Siamese cats are born entirely white, an artifact of a form of albinism. As they grow older, chemical changes in the cooler portions of their bodies create darker paws, snouts, ears, and tails.

[17]See Peter Rabinowitz's *Before Reading* for an insightful treatment of the literary convention of "snap moral judgments" (pp. 84 ff.)

[18]The "iron-gray" hair symbolizes change as the older generation ages.

[19]In *Narrative Discourse* (186), Gerard Genette famously divides traditional point of view into two separate queries: *who sees*? and *who speaks*?

[20]See Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905) and Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925) on "houses," Ernest Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" (1925) and T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939) on "cats," and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and John Dos Passos's USA Trilogy (*The 42nd Parallel*, 1930; 1919, 1932, and *The Big Money*, 1936) on changing orders.

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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	Inteview(s)	rev	Review essay
jrnl	Journalism	S	Short fiction

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Jack Conroy	1980
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