

MidAmerica XXXV

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

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The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
congratulates

David D. Anderson

founding member of SSML and
founding editor of *MidAmerica*

who received the 2009

**Ohioana Career Award for
Outstanding Contributions
to the Arts**

at the statehouse in Columbus on Ohioana Day
Saturday, October 17, 2009

In Honor of
James Seaton

PREFACE

On May 8, 2008, members of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for the thirty-eighth annual meeting of the Society. Highlights included several special panels on creative nonfiction, the third annual SSML Festival of Films, and an open mike session where participants shared their creative writing. At the awards banquet on Friday night, Christian Knoeller received the Jill Barnum Midwestern Heritage Prize for his essay, "Native on Native." The David Diamond Student Writing Prize went to Nicholas Kowalczyk for "Murder in Rustbelt City." Todd E. Davis received the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize for "Tree of Heaven." James Seaton received the MidAmerica Award and the Mark Twain Award went to Jonis Agee.

SSML is currently operating at a loss due to increased expenses in publishing its journals and convening the annual Symposium on Midwestern Literature and Midwest Poetry Festival. A major gift from our longtime active member, 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, Janet Ruth Heller, Ted Kennedy, Jean Laming, Loren Logsdon, Bud Narveson, Marcia Noe, Mary Obuchowski, Tom Page, E. Elizabeth Raymond, Herbert K. Russell, James Seaton, Guy Szuberla, Doug Wixson, Melody Zajdel, and the family and friends of Paul Somers.

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YES

EDWARD MORIN

When Joe Sartori shook my left hand
his grip locked in like a rock crusher.
"Not so hard!" his wife cried, "you'll hurt him."
I squeezed back with almost equal force
for a piss-and-vinegar moment
as, with a smile, he growled "Yes, Yes!"

Home from college for the holidays,
I visited these middle-aged neighbors
at my mother's bidding, and for fun.
Biscotti and red vermouth appeared.
Joe smacked his lips, his polished face glowed,
and his baritone resounded, "Yesss!"

Martha talked enough for both of them.
Except for his left upper body,
Joe was paralyzed. From a wheelchair
he interposed his one syllable
with droll inflections, or shook his head.
His wife assured me, "He understands you."

She asked parentally about school.
As I described my courses, she said,
"How can your head hold all that knowledge!"
I hadn't told how much I forgot.
She thought our brains worked like pots. Joe's leaked.
I sensed he must have envied me mine.

I used to hear them argue next door.
She ranting at the end of her rope,
he yammering unintelligibly.

Yes

Pentecostalists passing by their house
might have thought they heard Joe speak in tongues.
He was Catholic, as far as we knew.

When I was broke or girlfriends dumped me
and I feared the horrors of life's end,
Joe's predicament stormed into mind.
Fate gave him one word to last his life.
Not a bad choice, I still say out loud
to the night sky in witless affirmation.
Yes. Yes. Yes.

Ann Arbor, Michigan

DIMINISHING RETURNS

ROY SEEGER

From a safe distance I watched the rain,
my breath fogging the kitchen window. And my age?
It was before I learned the secret to father's shell
game (three shells, the pea never leaves
his hand), before autumn meant the cross-
ing out of one more summer vacation. Not even the bridge

down the road existed yet. Nothing did—just the bridge
of my nose, just the space between the rain-
fogged glass & my forehead. I uncross
my legs & they sting. What I know: no one's the age
they should be yet & whoever leaves
home is bound to return—*Come out of your shell*

sweet child, daddy's home with presents: a painted shell,
blank postcards of some old bridge
in Virginia. Rejoice. Come morning, he'll leave
the front door open to let what's outside in—the rain,
what seeks shelter from the rain. He told me I age
according to plan, that someday (cross

his heart) he'll stay & stay. *But mommy's cross*
at me now. It gets so we need shel-
ter from what gives us hope—this golden age
is nothing but mother's wishful past bridging
the gaps in her dream: fields of heal all, & she—the rain
that tests their stems. And what leaves

us to our own devices also sustains us; the leaves
of deciduous trees form a thin layer across
stagnant water like aged skin— & then the miracle of rain

Diminishing Returns

11

collected in the curved fragments of mussel shells...
Downriver, despite last year's renovations, the footbridge
planks washed out. *Father, the truth is, age*

does not gauge wisdom at all—the age
of a tree is revealed by its rings, which leaves
the roots disembodied from the trunk which now bridges
both shores, and calls back to the roots, crosses
the distance through sheer conviction. A turtle's shell
is an extension of the self, but also shelter from rain

& predators. Mother listen—father's car crosses the bridge
& leaves the road, air born. Upon his return, he's a shell
of himself, & cupped in aged hands—a creature afraid of rain.

University of South Carolina Aiken

RAISED IN A CORN PALACE¹

DAWN COMER

like a time capsule with the lid off
— Corn Palace video description of South Dakota

As I pack up my life, I wish I hadn't lost my wishbone collection. I've had my collection since I was just a girl, no older than six, and have added to it every wishbone I've ever since had the pleasure to break. When I was a child and my mother would prepare the chicken for Sunday dinner, my brother Mike and I would always pull the wishbone. "You pick," Mike would say, holding between his thumb and forefinger the center nob of bone, and so I would choose which end would be mine, which end I would stake my wish on. Then I would grab hold, the bone warm and slippery as the bird from whose body it had come, close my eyes, make a fervent wish, and pull. A splintery crack. The looseness of bone broken free. A prayer that I might have the better end, that my wish might be the one destined to come true.

"What'd you wish for?" Mike would always ask whether I had won or lost. "C'mon, tell me what you wished for." Though I never asked, Mike would always tell me what he had wished for, from a new baseball glove when he was eight to Dad not seeing the dent in the Bel Air's back fender when he was sixteen—but I never shared my wish. Not even once.

Instead, after dinner, I would walk upstairs to my room, lock my bedroom door behind me, and pull a black scrapbook bigger than the family Bible from beneath my bed—my wishbone collection. With a dab of rubber cement, I would glue my half of the wishbone to the heavy yellow paper, and with a pencil I would write the date and wish underneath. Then, if I had the losing end, I would take a red pencil and draw a straight line through the abandoned wish. But if I had the winning end, I would take a gold crayon and draw stars all around. Sometimes, wish recorded, I would just close my scrapbook and slide it back under my bed. Sometimes I would read over past wishes,

marking down whether they had come true or were at least closer to coming true than when first wished. Silly, I know, but even now, sixty years since I began collecting, I keep my wishbones, record wishes and dates. Sometimes I even bake a chicken not because I'm hungry, but because I need to make a wish.

So when I started packing to move from my Mitchell, South Dakota, home to Chicago ("so great that nobody even needs to say it's in Illinois," my daughter Emma brags), when I found strewn across the attic wishbone fragments and heaps of scrapbook shreds used for rat bedding, I broke down and cried. But even after a good cry, I couldn't just walk away from my life of wishes spread across the attic—some with dates, some without; some answered long ago, some never to be. Inside an award-winning model of the Corn Palace that Emma had made in eighth grade, I found a black hat box full of postcards from other people in other places, and before Emma could catch me at it, I dumped the postcards in the black trash bag she had brought up for clearing away my wishbone collection and instead began to box up all the remains that remained. And I wished I had a wishbone to wish upon again, to wish that all the mess were cleared up, that I could put all those years back together again, that I didn't have to leave any of it behind.

Emma, she doesn't understand. She gets impatient with me. "It's just stuff, Mom," she tells me. "Just stuff you don't need, stuff you can't hold onto." This she tells me as she and my grandson Evan help me clear out my place, reduce my belongings by eighty percent since I can't take everything I own to Chicago. I know I can't take everything, but how can I keep from wanting to? Emma means to be kind, I know, and helpful, but sometimes the words that leave her mouth sound cruel, callous.

"Why save wishbones in the first place?" she asked as I handed her the trash bag full of postcards believed to be my wishbone collection. "That's just weird. And you had to have known rats would find them someday—they're just bones, after all."

But I hadn't known rats would find them someday, hadn't even thought of them as bones at all. So I tried to explain that they weren't "just bones," that they were instead a lifetime's worth of wishes, my hopes and dreams made visible, the ebb and flow of my desires, my worries, my life. "Mom," Emma said, stopping my speech with blunt eyes and a slow bruising tone, "they are chicken bones. That's all they are."

But if chicken bones are all my wishbone collection is, then what is the Corn Palace? "Just corn," Emma says when describing the Corn Palace to her Chicago friends. "Sure, it makes for a pretty photograph, but really, when it comes down to it, the Corn Palace is just corn and grain and straw."

Time was when that was different. Time was when Emma marveled at the Corn Palace, when she couldn't wait for the Corn Palace Festival to come around every August, when she designed her own Corn Palace murals with the rest of her fourth-grade class, when she created her award-winning model of the Corn Palace and wrote a paper on its history in eighth grade, ending with the line, "Of all the wonders America has to offer, the Corn Palace of Mitchell, South Dakota, is the most wonderful wonder of them all." Time was when she sat high atop a miniature Corn Palace on a festival float, queen for a day. I wish that time could be again, at least for a little while.

For Emma, leaving the Corn Palace at eighteen years of age may have come easy, but for me, leaving will be anything but. I know that. No, I didn't grow up inside the Corn Palace, not literally. Not in the sense of being born in that building and never leaving its four walls. But if you also had been born and raised in Mitchell, South Dakota, you would know what I mean when I say the Corn Palace is my home because it would have been yours, too.

Every small town has one. A place to gather. A place to cheer on high school basketball teams, to eat popcorn and hotdogs and drink Pepsis. A place to watch local theater productions of *Oklahoma* and *South Pacific*, to see the occasional entertainer who comes in from outside. For Mitchell, that place is the Corn Palace. Aside from the murals made of corn, grains, and grasses, aside from the sun-glassed, fanny-packed tourists who take pictures outside and wander aimlessly inside, aside from the keychains and mugs for sale, the Corn Palace is just a place to gather and to grow up and to be with other Mitchellites. It's a place to belong. As the video that only tourists really watch proclaims, the Corn Palace is "a celebration of who we are and what we do." What exactly this means, though, is harder to pin down. Who are we? What do we do? Even in the beginning, way back in 1892, there was disagreement. The Indians called this area, called South Dakota, "the land of visions." The settlers termed it "the Wild West." For me, the Corn Palace and Mitchell, South Dakota, has always been and always will be "the place of belonging."

Who I am: Ruth Michelle Mitchell. But that is only a name.

What I do: I live. As best as I am able, I live alongside people I love, hate, am indifferent towards, but in every case, people I know because they are part of Mitchell and the Corn Palace is part of them. It's only now that I am about to be pried out of my place like some too-old split cob of corn that I can feel the sticky tar paper holding me in place, wanting me to remain in the great mural I have been a part of since the day I was born.

I was born Ruth Michelle Helgelien, belonging in every way to this place, and I loved the feeling. I belonged to my family, to the Corn Palace, to Mitchell, to South Dakota. Extended outwards, you could say I also belonged to America, to Earth, to the universe. But, really, I've never thought much beyond Mitchell. My parents, they were good people. Hard workers. Lovers of family and of place. They weren't so much thinkers as doers, and what they did, they did well. My Dad, Tru Helgelien, established and ran Tru's Value, the local hardware store. My Mom, Eleanor, transformed the basement of our house into Eye of the Beholder, a beauty parlor where I'd find her faithfully cutting hair every afternoon I returned from school. And if ever I needed to talk to Mom or Dad, I was welcome wherever they were, whatever they were doing, even if they were working. Dad would ask a customer to step aside so he could wait first on me; Mom would set aside her shears to give me a welcome home hug.

Out of two children, I was the younger. My brother Mike, three years older, was always protective, showing his love by worrying about how the guys I went out with would treat me. And because the guys I went out with knew my brother, they never disrespected me. I was safe. I was happy. I was loved. But most of all, I belonged, fitting into my family, into the Corn Palace, into Mitchell like a perfectly sawed ear of corn. And when I married Bo Mitchell at seventeen, I fit even better, belonging even in name to the great Mitchell mural.

My life has been marked by the changing designs on the Corn Palace. Each year a new mural replaces the old one, having lived out its life and purpose as art for humanity and as The World's Largest Birdfeeder. Strange how making a home in a place can slowly, beautifully, naturally wear it out, lead to its end. Birds and mice, even rats I suppose, need food and shelter, and year after year after year the Corn Palace provides just that. I suspect the animals don't notice the murals, the sweeping portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Elvis, Crazy Horse, a man walking on the moon, rodeo riders. I suspect birds don't ever suspend their flight within sight of the Palace to admire, just

admire, the artistry, the pictures, the words, the shaping of thousands of bushels of corn and wheat and wild oats and so many other beautiful gifts of the earth into pictures that mean more than what they are made of. But for the birds it must all mean something, mustn't it? For the birds, the Corn Palace means they don't have to scrounge for food or seek out small backyard feeders. For the birds, the Corn Palace is a smorgasbord of the grandest scale where they can feed for hours and never go hungry.

Strange how the Corn Palace can be a place of both permanence and constant change. The big changes everybody notices—the stripping of the old mural, the tarpapering in preparation for the new, the placing of cob after cob of thirteen different colors of corn to create images never before seen in grains and grasses. We who live in Mitchell, we watch these big changes as they take place from early spring through late summer, but can we see the slow disappearance of grain on a daily basis, even as the mural is being created? From one day to the next, can we tell how many birds' bellies have been filled? We would prefer to stand at a distance and admire the largeness of it. We glory in the fact that we can't say precisely how many kernels of corn remain and how many have fallen. But then one day, all at once, it seems, we look at the Palace and see that it has become old, worn, full of gaps where grain once was, showing off the tarpaper beneath. We see that life has taken its toll, and we both mourn its passing and yearn to start all over again.

I can look at the Corn Palace any time of day or night and it looks different each time because of where the sun is in the sky, or the moon, or seemingly neither when armies of clouds roll through. If I want, I can drive out in the country and see fields of corn and wheat and rye that stretch out for miles and miles and miles, and just seeing forever like that, seeing visions sometimes like the Indians did and feeling the wildness of the land like the settlers did, this part of South Dakota's just a special place. In Chicago, I worry that I won't be able to see the land or the sky or the sun or the moon, though I'm pretty sure I'll feel the wind. I don't know what it will be like to trade in my Corn Palace that changes every day, that feeds and houses the smallest of God's creatures, for buildings that do no such thing, that just stand there tall and gray and steely, like hundreds of silos that hold no grain but only people and papers and money and things. Some days I think it will kill me, this change, this place called Chicago. Some days I think I shall be unable to breathe Chicago air,

that every breath will slowly poison me until one day I can breathe no more. But then I consider Emma and Evan, my heart shifts, and I know that I will go because I must. Because I love.

Emma and Evan, they need me, and for love of them, I would move anywhere, even to Chicago, a city that is always expanding, forever moving, a city worlds away from The World's Only Corn Palace. I have tried to persuade Emma to come home to Mitchell, to return to the place of her childhood. But she tells me Mitchell is "too small," "too stagnant," "too stifling." "No offense, Mom," Emma tells me, "but I outgrew Mitchell the day I left for college." I do not understand how she could have "outgrown" Mitchell when all I have done every day of my life is grow into this town, deepened my roots and found them to keep going deeper still. But I'm trying to respect her, to let her be who she needs to be, even if I don't understand exactly.

What I do understand is that Emma is alone in a big and busy place with an eight-year-old son, that she needs to belong somehow to someone, even if that someone is just her mother from Mitchell, a town her Chicago friends don't recognize until she says, "You know, the Corn Palace," and then some of them recognize. But some of them still don't. I imagine Emma shrugging off Mitchell, saying that it's "just a small place," a "good place to raise kids maybe if you want to keep them ignorant of other cultures, but not a place to live if you want to get anywhere in life."

Is it important to say why she wants me with her? Why she needs me? My daughter knows something about the loss of a husband just as I do. No, not just as I do. Different. I know about the loss of a husband after forty-five years of marriage and the raising of a child to adulthood. I know about the loss of a husband as someone who has lived through good and bad times with a husband, times of exuberance and joy, and times of indifference and hostility. Emma, she knows about the loss of a husband she hardly had time to know, a man who was a lover and a father for just under nine years, hardly long enough for the marathon of married life to settle in and stick, which likely explains why he left. Not that it's ever easy to lose a husband—I have missed Bo every day for the six years since a heart attack stopped him walking home from the post office—but losing someone you've just begun to really grow into, who seems suddenly to have grown tired of loving you, seems harder somehow. And to have a young child to care for and raise all alone? There is no question Emma needs me.

Emma tells me she's glad I will be coming to live with them, that she's excited to have me in Chicago. "We'll go to Chinatown on Sundays," Emma tells me. "I'll treat you to real Chinese food, not the dumbed down sweet and sour and General Tso's you get in Mitchell. And Evan, he'll introduce you to bubble tea, this great milk tea with tapioca balls you suck up through a big fat straw."

I will not be returning to live again in Mitchell. Emma and I, we don't speak about this, but we both know it is true. We are getting rid of too many things for me to come home later. Once in Chicago, settled and living day to day, my house will be put up for sale. Somebody will buy it and I will not even return to see it sold, to say goodbye. My daughter jokingly refers to my "senior moments" when memory fails me, when names I've always known are lost, keys are misplaced, groceries-to-be-bought are forgotten. I laugh about these moments, too, but I know that we both know more will come of them, not less. We both fear that one day I will slip headlong through the fog that teases at my head even now, will slip headlong and drown in forgetfulness. Only it won't be the past that I forget. It won't be Mitchell or the Corn Palace or any of the wishes I have made that fade from memory, but Chicago and Emma and Evan who will slip away. By then, I'll be no help to Emma, no help to Evan. Instead, I'll become a burden, an inconvenience, a useless, placeless, empty cob of corn. Maybe I'll even forget to wish on wishbones when they come my way. But this is a matter I try to think about as little as talk about.

What do I wish for now? For things to be the same? No. Not really. Life changes. People grow and move and die. I can't wish for Bo, dear husband that he was, to be back because he had to go when he had to go. I know that. I could wish for Emma to return to Mitchell, but I know she won't, that she can't, that once you leave a small town it always seems smaller than when you were in it. Guess that's why I'm glad I never left. Guess that's also what worries me about Chicago. I think I'm past the age where leaving my home will be exciting, amazing, an adventure. Mitchell, South Dakota, is my world, the Corn Palace my compass. "You can go online," Emma tells me. "Every day, twenty times a day, you can go online and see the Corn Palace web cam." But even she knows that is not the same. Not the same as feeling the mid-July sunshine beat down on me from all angles. Not the same as feeling the bitter January wind whip my hands and face. Not the same as seeing the Corn Palace always there in sunshine and snow through all my own struggles, whatever they

may be. A constant companion to change with, to face every glorious or miserable day of life with. That's the Corn Palace for me.

"I am sixty-six years old and I am moving." How many times a day I say that to myself! Before my morning shower, I stand naked in front of my bathroom mirror and watch my lips move to say those words. "Good luck," I sometimes say next, or "you're crazy," or "Emma and Evan, they need you." Sometimes I say nothing. Still, I look at myself in the mirror, my saggy sixty-six year old body from which all the fight for firmness has gone out, and I wonder what Chicago will do to a body like mine, a body meant to relax on the front porch with a good book and little else to do but eat chicken and noodles with mashed potatoes and a few frozen peas for color. A body like mine is made to play cards and bingo with Alwilda and Mildred and Phoebe, all friends with names and bodies equally saggy and resigned to circumstance. A body like mine is not meant to go to Chicago, not meant to take the subway, not meant to try new things like sushi and Chinese food like "real Chinese people" eat, not meant for any type of tea but plain iced Lipton.

Last night over dinner, my arm stretched halfway across the table to grasp the end of the wishbone that Evan had not chosen, I wished just once that Emma and Evan could need me here in Mitchell. Here where cars don't bunch up on expressways like rats inside some slow digesting snake. Here where skyscrapers twice the height but not nearly so majestic as the Corn Palace do not restrict and channel the howling wind. Here in the land where the sky—no matter its mood—is a constant companion, where visions can still be seen, where there is still some wildness to be had, where belonging is every bit as important as being. I closed my eyes and let Evan pull, knowing in my own bones that I held the shorter end before I even heard the snap.

"Guess what I wished for, Grandma," Evan gasped, waving his winning end. "I wished..."

"Hush!" I commanded, more strongly than I'd meant, my eyes rising to meet his. "You hold onto your wish and keep it close. Don't ever share it."

"But I want," Evan stammered, "I want you to know. Please!" he pleaded. "It's about you, Grandma, and it's important."

"All the more reason not to share," I said, half wondering, half wanting to know. "You just keep that wish safe inside, keep it to yourself."

Evan's eyes dropped then to look at his wishbone, still pinched between his thumb and forefinger. I could tell he had to have some-

thing to rest his eyes on so as to keep from looking sad and disappointed and said, more gently now, "You just hold onto that wishbone and your wish, and after we've had a slice of cherry pie, I'll show you what you can do with it, what I have done with all my wishbones."

Emma sighed but didn't interrupt.

"But Grandma," Evan said, raising his eyes to mine, "what if I never get to pull another wishbone?" He lowered his eyes again and began to turn between his fingers this wish of his. I watched its turning, watched the smooth grey surface of bone give way to the browned marrow where the bone had splintered, then go grey again. Evan's fingers stopped and I watched as his closed fist turned into an open palm to catch the wishbone, then closed again. Evan didn't look up but mumbled, as if embarrassed, "I don't think they have wishbones in Chicago—I've only had them here."

"But you eat chicken, don't you?" I asked, holding back both laughter and astonishment.

"Sort of," Evan said, "only I don't think Chicago chickens have skin or bones like Mitchell chickens. Chicago chickens are thin and flat and covered in ice. Mom buys them by the bag."

I glanced over at Emma who shrugged her shoulders and said, "I just buy the frozen breasts—less mess, all meat."

Now, I'm not so backward that I hadn't heard of such a thing, hadn't seen the bags of breasts in the freezer section of Coburn's, but I've never wanted anything less than the whole chicken, never wanted anything less than breasts and thighs and drumsticks and wings and wishbone.

"Don't you get tired of just eating white meat?" I asked Emma, imagining bland baked breasts staring up at me from a plate in Emma's Chicago apartment. "The same old thing over and over?"

"It's not always the same, Mom," Emma said, picking up her knife to cut chicken free of a leg bone. "I cook them in so many ways—stir fried with vegetables, tossed with fettucine, glazed with honey and lemon. Believe it or not, Mom, I'm a good cook. And versatile."

Emma didn't add "unlike you," but I wondered if she thought it, sitting there at my kitchen table, my usual summer Sunday dinner of roast chicken, mashed potatoes and pepper gravy, buttermilk bread, sweet corn, and sliced tomatoes spread out on the table before us. I wondered if she thought I wasn't versatile, if she thought I was just typical and maybe a little boring.

"Mom is a good cook, Grandma," Evan said then, looking up at his mother who seemed relieved to have her son's support, "but she

never makes anything like this. When you come to Chicago, can you find real chickens like this one? Real chickens with wishbones, too?"

"Oh, I think I can find chickens with wishbones in Chicago just as well as in Mitchell. Well, maybe not just as well," I said, wondering where on earth Emma bought groceries in such a big city, "but if they've got them there, we'll find them."

"And if they don't?" Evan asked.

"If they don't have chickens like this in all of Chicago, well, then," I said, thinking what next to say even as I was speaking, "well, then, I guess you and me will just have to drive all the way back to Mitchell to buy some, won't we?"

"Oh, wow! Can I, Mom?" Evan asked, jumping out of his seat. "And can we stop in at the Corn Palace when we come for the chickens?"

Before Emma could give her permission, I had already said "Sure. Why not? You know why the chickens in Mitchell are so tasty, don't you Evan?" I asked.

"Because of the wishbones?" Evan asked.

"Well, maybe in part," I answered, "but even those flat iced chicken parts your mom cooks once had wishbones," I said. "Let me give you a little hint," I said.

"You know all that corn on the Corn Palace?"

"Yeah..." Evan said.

"Well, the chickens around here, they eat the same corn as what gets put up on the Corn Palace to make all those pictures you see."

Evan's eyes widened.

"From the time I was born, every chicken I've ever eaten in Mitchell has been a Corn Palace chicken. Every chicken has been..."

"Royalty," Evan whispered, gazing at the winning wishbone he held out before him.

"Absolutely right," I said, recognizing only then that every wish I'd ever wished in all those years, every wishbone I'd ever pulled and saved, every wishbone destroyed by some attic rat had been in its own way a royal petition. "Chances are," I added, thinking then of the whole chickens that must surely exist somewhere in Chicago, "chances are even some of those chickens in Chicago have a little of the Corn Palace inside them, and we'll find them, wherever they are."

"Promise?" Evan said, raising his right eyebrow in its own question.

"Promise," I said.

And then, as if Evan's wishbone had found its way to some long forgotten treasure chest, I felt a small click deep inside and remembered how, as a girl, I had believed that Mitchell was a kingdom ruled by the kindly King Maize and Queen Rye. And as the bone turned in the lock, the impulse to bow low flooded through me and I remembered how, whatever event had brought me to the Corn Palace—whether one of my brother Mike's Kernels games or a Jimmy Durante show—I would slip away to go and stand in the entrance-way, to silently and without words bring my wish before King Maize and Queen Rye. Never was I scared that my wish might be refused or, worse, that I might be sent to the executioner. Instead, I was just hopeful that I would be heard, even if my wish weren't granted.

In that moment, I was glad the wish I had made would not come true, and I knew then what my wish would be a week from then when I had moved away from Mitchell and sat eating chicken at my daughter's kitchen table in her Chicago apartment. For some time, I have felt like God was holding the top knob of a celestial wishbone, urging me to wish for either Mitchell or Chicago and pull. But since I cannot wish for either, I will wish for both. I will wish for love and understanding towards Evan and Emma. I will wish that resentment not creep in upon me when I am far away in Chicago and think about Mitchell. I will wish for appreciation of new things like bubble tea, for a more sensitive palate to love that which I don't know. I will wish for peace to reside within me, for the Corn Palace to be always present deep within so that I need not long for home but only stay connected to the home inside of me. I will wish even for Evan to continue his own wishbone collection away from my eyes after I have shown him how to start.

, Defiance College

NOTE

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DOCTOR AND PATIENT

STEPHANIE CARPENTER

The doctor is a man trained in the old system, the system of moral treatment. He is a medical doctor as well as a doctor of psychiatry; his knowledge of the brain is enhanced by dissection. He has handled the riddled tissue of a diseased mind, and he knows that there are patients under his care who will not be cured according to the means available. To the rest—the women maddened by puerperal fevers, the drunks bounced from workhouse to workhouse, the dissipated livers and the melancholics—his hospital offers a gentle remedy. It is a large institution, following the Philadelphia building plan. At its center are the administrative offices and apartments, the pharmacy, the kitchen. To one side are the men's wards—the convalescent wards, the receiving wards, and at the farthest remove, the most disturbed wards. On the other side, the women's wards follow the same pattern. The hospital is three stories high, with basements and attics where the service staff have their rooms. It is by far the largest building in this part of the state and the most modern. It has forced-air ventilation, underground service tunnels, a telephone system, electric lights. It has ducts to throw the bedclothes down, and ducts down which to throw the dust. It has indoor toilets and vermin-proof baseboards. Its grounds are expansive, the native trees interspersed with specimens the doctor has brought back from his travels. Tulip trees and a copper beech, ginkgoes and silver willows.

There are more than five hundred patients at the hospital, and the doctor knows every one by name. He knows each of their histories and communicates with their loved ones. He is the superintendent of the hospital's affairs, and he is its final authority in every course of treatment. Even his wife is invested in his work. She pays visits to the women's wards, sits with the patients in the receiving room. Most of the women are in their middle age—her age. Many of them are here because they've been ill-treated. "Domestic infelicity" is the third most common cause of institutionalization, along with "grief, care

and anxiety." There are many women with whom the doctor's wife cannot communicate. They are Swedish or Finnish or German. They are farmer's wives and farmer's widows. They shake with epileptic fits; they cannot sit up for the pain of breathing. They were found delirious in a boarding house downtown; they were found walking alone along the lakeshore. The nightly sing-alongs put Babel to shame when the music reminds these women of songs in their own tongues.

The patients come from all walks of life, but the humblest walks are better represented. Most are farmers or laborers. Many of the women were domestics. For most, the wards are more opulent than the homes that they have left. There are oriental carpets on the floors, potted plants hanging from the ceiling beams. On every ward, a piano or an organ, and always fresh flowers from the greenhouses. There is a large chapel and a library, daytrips whenever the town has a fair or festival. Some Saturdays, a magic lantern show. The patients are treated with kindness and respect. Restraints are rarely used. They are fed nourishing foods and kept clean and warm. It is believed that this manner of living—separate from society but not degraded, in the borderland between the town and the country—will bring them back to their right minds.

The doctor has decreed that patients brought to his hospital should be brought in full cognizance of where they are headed. He receives all but the most dangerous patients in his office. They come with their spouses or their siblings, their offspring or their neighbors. They come with their elbows in the grip of their father and their stepmother.

The father is a businessman, a civic leader from a town farther up the lakeshore. He manages the northern interest of the local lumber baron. The father's wife is too young to have mothered the girl they hold between them.

The girl is seventeen. Her behavior is erratic. She is hostile toward her family but ingratiates herself with strangers. She is careless of her appearance. The treatments administered by the family doctor—cups to the back of the neck, mustard casts, draughts of quinine with iron—seem only to have aggravated her tendencies. Her father presents the requisite certificates of insanity, which name "pubescence" as the probable aggravating cause.

We tried the water cure, says the father. She was discovered using whiskey.

And her schooling?

We sent her to my wife's alma mater. She was sent back to us for stealing.

It isn't a case of the wicked stepmother, says the stepmother. I have known this child since her infancy.

The doctor takes the girl's wrist in his hand. Her pulse is normal, her fingers warm and limp. She has limpid eyes but a poor complexion.

In our climate, the nervous organization of a young girl is very sensitive. The doctor smiles at the girl. Do you know where you are, my dear?

She looks at the carpet. These are ugly.

But durable. He scuffs his feet against the nap.

She knows why she's here, the father says. We can't keep her at home. He looks at his daughter, but she looks only at the floor.

I cannot manage her anymore, says the stepmother. She gives me no peace.

My wife is nervous herself, says the father. She's been advised to avoid strain.

I would have advised the same, the doctor says. I hope the trip wasn't too much for you?

She does not look at him. It was perfectly comfortable. I look forward to our return.

Of course. The doctor turns again to his patient. Would you care to see Amy's room before you go?

From his office, the doctor leads them down a wide, comfortable hall. He passes them through two locked doors onto a long hallway, lined with rocking chairs. This is one of the convalescent wards, where those patients who are closest to recovery have their rooms. There are two others, directly above and below.

Where are the patients? asks the father. The bedrooms, open-doored, are all empty.

They may be outdoors, says the doctor. They have two walks daily and calisthenics several times a week. Or they may be in the dayroom—this way.

He leads the family to a turn in the hallway, a point where it widens into a room, with a fireplace and a picture window. Here, eight women sit, their hands folded in their laps. They nod when the doctor greets them by name. There is a woman whose skin is bronzed by Addison's disease. There is a woman with a cancer on her cheek, and a woman whose palsy shakes her rocker. There is a woman in a

wheeled chair whose feet do not show beneath the hem of her dress. All of the women are clean and quiet.

They are so still, the stepmother whispers.

They are unwell, says the doctor. The stronger ones work during the day, in the sewing room or the laundry. This way, please. To the left is a receiving ward. Straight through this door are the intermediate wards, where Amy will be.

Oh, says the stepmother. Are you quite sure this is where she belongs? She is troubled by the size of the place, the station of the women they've seen so far. After all, Amy isn't a farmer's daughter.

It is true, the doctor says, that many of our patients are poor. However, it is an administrative principle of this hospital that distinctions of social class should be observed to the same extent as they are in the outside world.

But—there are private hospitals?

He nods. At greater cost and farther away. The decision is yours—yours and your husband's.

This is where she belongs, says the father. His daughter is staring out the window, worrying at a scab on her chin. She looks like a victim of smallpox for the scars she has brought upon herself. Stop it, he says, and takes her by the wrist. No more of that now.

She shreds her hair, too, says the stepmother. And bites her fingernails down past the quick. What does that mean, doctor?

It is too soon to say. He opens a door. Here is her room.

For all the extravagance of the hallway, this room does not resemble even the plainest of boarding school rooms. There is a narrow iron bed with a black wool blanket folded across the foot. A small table beside the bed. A straight-backed chair on the other side of the table. No closet or bureau. There is only a small rectangular rug beside the bed, and the bedframe is bolted to the floor. The tall window has a heavy screen on the inside.

The father inspects this screen. How is she to get fresh air?

The attendants have keys to open the screen and raise the windows.

It is like a prison, says the stepmother. She is trembling so that the girl, whose arm she grips, seems to tremble too.

The patients are allowed personal items, says the doctor. We ask that you consider the potential risks associated with the things you send, but there is no reason she shouldn't have comforts.

The father lays hold of the footboard and shakes the bed; it doesn't budge. She won't have a roommate, then?

At present, we have no patients whose age and station both accord with a young lady's.

Young lady, says the father. The girl's hair has come loose and she is splitting it from the ends up. Torn in two, the strands that frame her face frizz wildly.

Begging your wife's pardon, says the doctor, the girl will learn by example how to better herself. Would you care to see the receiving rooms?

We'll see them soon enough, I'm sure, the stepmother says. We have our train to catch.

Of course, says the doctor. Just a few papers. You can sign them right here, if you'd like.

The father takes his pen from its case—a heavy pen embossed with the gold seal of the lumber company. He signs carefully in triplicate and the doctor walks the party down the ward.

Here? The stepmother turns at a door with a window.

No, says the doctor, but he opens the door anyway, admitting them to a porch. The girl rushes to the wooden railing, pushing her face against the heavy screen that makes it impossible for her to jump. It is cool and gritty; the stepmother's gloves blacken when she touches it.

Ugh, she says, and takes hold of her stepdaughter's waist. Filthy, Amy. Stop. She wipes Amy's forehead with a handkerchief moistened by lavender water. The girl's skin smells of sulfur when dampened but it is none the finer for it. None of the stepmother's toiletries can make the girl's face presentable. Write to me, she says. I will write to you every other day, excepting Sunday.

Her handwriting is unreadable, says her father. Can you fix that, doctor?

Ours is a restorative cure, the doctor says. Our goal is to bring the patient back to a normal frame of mind. If you are concerned about her education, you might consider engaging a tutor.

Pay, you mean? In addition to her room and board?

Sir, your daughter is among the youngest of our patients. Most of the others here ended their formal education at the third grade. We have a small library and instruction in the trades, but you must remember, this is a hospital, not a college.

We will engage a tutor directly, says the stepmother. What kind of life will she have if she can't spell her name to sign a check?

As you wish, madam, says the doctor, and ushering the family off of the porch, he locks another door and leads them out of his hospital.

During the first hours the new girl is left to herself and no one will speak to her. The other women sit silently in their rockers; they are all old. This is a hospital, not a school—these women the sorts who call out from the poorhouse yard, fenced in and in rags. They are harmless there. Here, they rock and seem not to see her. They are unwell, she knows.

The women in white are attendants. They order the others into line, they unlock the doors, and they walk at the front and back of the line down the stairs and out the building and onto the grounds. Behind the building are hills and trees; in front of the building is a lawn scabbed with stumps. In another direction are fields and there are men working far off and there are cows grazing nearer. The only fence is that holding the animals. Amy follows the attendants down a broad lane, matching her pace to the woman's beside her.

Where are we going? she asks.

Nowhere.

How long will we walk?

Till the attendants are tired.

They pass the hospital three times and the fourth time the attendants say stop. The attendants count the women again and again until the larger one says—this new girl. Why didn't you say something? she asks. She is taller than most men and speaks with a strange accent. I didn't know, Amy answers, but the attendant has turned away. She wears all the keys like a corsage at her waist; when she unlocks the door, the women file up the stairs and back to their ward. There are women who fall at once onto the thick chairs that line the walls, and there are women who fall to chores.

What do I do? asks Amy. The women, rocking, do not respond.

A woman passing with a bucket and brush says, Come with me. This woman's face is white in places where the skin is dead. Everywhere else it is very red. She stands in front of Amy until Amy stands too and then leads her to the end of the ward, to a door marked water closet. An outhouse smell comes to them through the door.

You must go in there and scrub the floors and the bowls.

A poor woman does that.

No, you do.

The mottled woman waits and Amy pulls the door open. Feet show beneath the two half-doors inside. The bucket is empty and it is too big to fill from the washbasin. She slips back into the hall and sees, opposite, a door marked bath. Inside this room are two bathtubs and, behind them, two straight-backed chairs. Her bucket fits easily under the nearer tub's faucet but there is a cage built over its handles—her fingers will not fit between the wires. The floors are slick in this room and the windows run with condensation. She sits down on one of the damp chairs. She wonders how long she will be made to stay here. She was kept for one month at the school.

Amy listens to the creak and thump of the rocking chairs in the hall. Listens to birds on the other side of a clouded closed window. Their strange silhouettes jump on the windowsill. She crosses the room and raps on the glass but they don't fly away. There are no birds near the other window. Wiping a pane clear she looks out from the back of the hospital at tangled gray trees. A trail of smoke over the treetops makes her think of a train cutting through the woods. A different train than the one that brought her here.

Humid air drags at her heavy dress. Sitting again, she sees an opening in the back of the metal cage. She slides her wrist between the wires and twists the hot water handle. Water runs into the bucket. It is loud and the door opens outward and the smaller attendant comes through. The attendant is quick; one arm holds Amy to the chair, the other turns off the water.

How did you get in here?

The door was open.

The door is never open. How did you get in here?

I don't know.

The attendant grasps the back of Amy's dress and heaves. The dress is made of thick strong material that does not give but catches Amy under the chin, hoisting her from the chair and onto her toes. Her head is slung in heavy fabric and she cannot see the attendant, who forces her legs to move forward and catches hold of her wrists when her hands rise up toward her neck. Amy's throat is constricted and her mouth dry and open as the small attendant propels her across the room and out the door. Their feet on the floor are suddenly silent and then there are patches of black in her eyes, and these patches rush toward each other and block out everything.

Get up, the attendant is saying. Go and sit with the others.

Amy cannot speak. She is lying in the hallway on the runner.

Go and sit, the attendant repeats. There's water in the dayroom. I was told to clean.

Go and sit! The attendant is almost as small as Amy but leaning over her, she seems larger. Amy scuttles backward but not quickly enough; she is caught by her forearms, lifted to her feet, and pushed toward the dayroom.

Among the others she finds an empty chair. Her feet are sore and her head and stomach ache for want of food. The women rock but all have their eyes closed. She closes hers and opens them at the sound of a gong and of the women again lining up.

All the way down the hall the smell of food grows stronger until they reach the dining room. There, silver and plates mark the places and each woman stands behind a chair. When the matron says Amen, the women pull their chairs back and sit. Amy is beside a woman who will not speak and across from a woman who will not eat. The attendants stand with their plates in the corners of the room. The woman who will not eat watches Amy.

Gluttony is a sin, the woman says. Covetousness is a grievous sin. I am talking to you, child. Take heed.

Everyone else is eating quickly.

I am hungry, Amy says, taking a bite of bread and butter. The woman smiles.

I was hungry once, too. Now I am full with the Lord.

Amy eats faster.

The Lord called upon me once to fast for thirty days. You must have seen the newspapers? They called me the Walking Skeleton of Charlevoix.

Amy shakes her head.

Heretics called it trick photography.

Aren't you going to eat your bread?

It wasn't a trick.

May I have your meat?

I was half my present weight.

Amy switches her empty plate with the full plate across from her. She eats two portions of meat, two portions of vegetables. She drinks both their glasses of milk. The thin woman does not interfere, but folds her hands and watches.

Gluttony is a sin, the woman says for a second time. It is also against the rules.

No one saw.

Save Him who sees all. Here we eat only from our own plates.

The attendants bang the small gong at the head table, and the patients rise and begin to clear the dishes. They stack their dirty plates and glasses on trays and send them down the dumbwaiter to the scullery. One woman begins to scrub the tables and another to sweep the floor. One attendant takes the others back to the day room, and the other attendant stays behind.

There is a half hour until the evening program, and the fasting woman plays the organ to pass the time. The rest of the women sit quietly. Amy's eyes are closed when the attendants tell them all to stand. The women begin to line up for the program, but the attendants say no.

Someone took a knife tonight. Either that person will step forward, or none of you will have your lantern show.

No one moves. The attendants take hold of the woman nearest to them and run their hands roughly over her body. She is the woman who wouldn't speak at the dinner table. She is quiet as they peel down her stockings, shake her skirts, unlace her corset.

The rest of you will save us some time by undressing yourselves.

I will not have you handle me in such a manner, says the fasting woman. That child there is a born thief. That child's conduct is not in keeping with the Christian conduct of our ward.

What's that? says the large attendant. She takes Amy by the arm and the knife falls out of Amy's apron pocket.

This will not do, the fasting woman says. We are a God-fearing ward. I didn't take it, says Amy.

Not much you didn't, says the smaller attendant. You mind yourself or you won't be up here long.

Are we all to miss the program? asks the fasting woman.

Line up now! says the large attendant.

Not you, the smaller one says, and Amy gasps as again the attendant takes hold of her collar, her forearm against the girl's backbone, and pushes her down the hall, across the threshold of one of the bedrooms. The attendant presses her knees into the backs of Amy's to make her kneel on the bed. She keeps one hand hard on the girl's shoulder, undressing her.

I'll be back with your nightclothes, she says. Then the door locks from the outside, shaking slightly when it is tested. Amy is left alone and naked in the high narrow room. The black, rank blanket to wrap herself in. There is no light in the room but what comes in around the

door. The window is a blank in the darkness. Through it, she cannot make out cows or fields. There is nothing homely here, no one here whose name she knows. For all she strains her ears, there is no sound from the ward; the other women have left. At home, at night, the wind makes noise in the trees, and her parents' voices rise up through the vents:

She tears her clothes, says the stepmother, she will not learn the value of nice things. Look at the state of this dress.

How'd she manage that? asks her father.

She claims she fell over the bluff this afternoon.

Really, says her father. And came back up in one piece?

There had been a game once, of girls falling backward into each other's arms. It was hot and flat where they'd lived then, and everybody had a farm except her father, who had a lumberyard. They would play the game at the mid-day recess, falling over and over again into each other's arms and later linking their arms together to walk home from school. There would be the sound of big horses behind him, and of her father come with his lumber cart. Everybody liked her best because he rode all the girls home. Now there weren't any girls and it was only hot in the north country at the dead end of the summer. The rest of the year the wind off the lake made their big house shake and the trees that swept from the bottom of their yard to the edge of the lake sighed and fell against each other when the winds really rose. They fell against each other and she fell through them, all down the hill. She ran as hard as she could with the low branches catching at her and every time she tripped she let herself fall, all the branches tearing her clothes and catching her before she hit the ground. It was harder to fall face-first than it had been to fall backwards. She ran and fell and was caught until the trees ended and the lake began. From their house they could see over the trees to the lake and the boats making the long trip to Chicago. They could watch the sunset through all the west-facing windows. She wasn't often this near the lake - it came and went with pebbles in its waves that hit the shore and were drawn back out. The lake was an ill-tuned harp, and nobody went in its water unless it was very hot. She didn't go in the water because it was very cold, and she didn't notice the sand was wet until her stockings were soaked through. It was hard to pull her wet feet up the slippery hill home.

Have you seen her boots? How am I supposed to keep her in clothes? With the way she's growing and the way she takes care of

her things - it's more than I can manage. And did you look at her? Her arms and her ankles are as bad as her face.

She looks like she lost a fight with a chicken.

She was in the woods, obviously.

Well, she can't be playing around in those woods any more. There's a crew in there, surveying the trees.

What use are they? Skinny little things.

There's some good wood in there. Enough to bother clearing it out.

Not the woods in front of the house?

It's company land.

But think how the house will look, up here by itself.

That's my business, dear.

Their voices had stopped, then, and now as that night she slides her fingers over the surface of her scabbed face, works fingernails across her cheeks. She has no idea of a way out, or of a way back to her parents' house. No idea of what to do, and so she repeats to herself what the small attendant said: you won't be here long. In the bare room she finds a comfort.

University of Missouri

JOHN NEIHARDT WRITES: TEXTUAL APPROPRIATIONS OF INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING

MATTHEW LOW

Even though [Neihardt] could not understand the language that Black Elk spoke, we cannot doubt, I think, that he discerned readily the rhythms, the inflections and alliterations of the holy man's speech . . . The transformation of speech into writing—this speech into this writing—is a matter of great importance, I believe. And Neihardt believed it, too. He brought extraordinary sympathy and dedication to his task.

—N. Scott Momaday, "To Save a Great Vision," *The Man Made of Words* (28)

The translation of native oral stories is an absence, never the natural haunt of presence. The transmutation of sound, the voice, and the trace of memories into written sentences is, at best, an artful pose; an aesthetic absence at the instance of creation of native stories. Surely there are traces of native presence in translations, but the cause of authored renditions is both a cultural discovery and a literary enterprise, and poses as a union of memories; the creases on the verso are cultural restriction and domination.

—Gerald Vizenor, "Wistful Envy," *Fugitive Poses* (64)

It is good. It is enough.

—Vine Deloria, Jr., "Foreword," *Black Elk Speaks* (Bison Books ed., xvii)

The place of the text *Black Elk Speaks* in the canons of American and Native American literatures has always been one of fluidity, uncertainty, and contention. That this is fact—along with the fact that this will likely never change—will be taken as a given to open this paper. One thing I will not be doing here is trying to resolve the tricky placement of this problematic text in various genres and canons. As my title suggests, I do regard Euro-American John Neihardt's act of

putting to type and paper the oral narrative of Oglala Sioux Nicholas Black Elk as a sort of appropriation, fully aware of the often negative connotations—particularly in postcolonial usage—that word now carries. However, I also have no interest in devaluing *Black Elk Speaks* as an important text worthy of study in a variety of venues and from multiple points of view. The story it tells can be helpful in enlightening contemporary readers—especially younger readers—about key issues in the history of native-white relations. Moreover, the story is told from Black Elk's point of view, but not in any language he himself spoke or understood, a fact that serves as the main point of contention for most of the work's critics. Examining the equally problematic figure of John Neihardt—a poet with a lifelong interest in writing about and from the perspective of Native Americans—taking on the role of ethnographer and scribe adds a further layer of significance to the work. Lastly, from cover to cover *Black Elk Speaks* is a fascinating textual artifact. Not just the story itself but everything from the names on the title page to the photographs and artwork included and the appendix of Lakota words provided at the end leaves much for any reader to wrestle with. Thus, at the very least, it is worth a read.

But how it is read and by whom is my main concern here. Specifically, I want to take a closer look at how this text has been received by theorists, scholars, and writers in the growing field of indigenous literary criticism. While not yet employed as a formal critical field like new historicism or poststructuralism, indigenous scholarship, as practiced by a number of figures from Paula Gunn Allen to Robert Allen Warrior, comprises work similar in focus and scope, allowing non-native scholars like myself to apply such criticism to readings of texts from a wide range of genres, time periods, and authorships. Yet it is important to note that these writers do not all work from a unified voice or critical stance, as the epigraphs that open this paper reveal. Indeed, this is the very point I wish to expand on here: what a problematic text like *Black Elk Speaks*—which isn't truly a "native" text, yet simultaneously cannot be fully excluded from this genre—can reveal about the work of reading through the lens of indigenous criticism. There are tensions, complexities, and disagreements within the field that have not yet been fully considered. Part of the work of this paper, then, will be an attempt at employing a sort of reader-response theory with indigenous literary criticism in a reading of *Black Elk Speaks*.

Before getting more fully into the indigenous literary critical readings of *Black Elk Speaks*, it is worth saying a few words about the treatment of this text in more traditional forms of Western academic discourse. Though not immediately taken up by theorists and literary critics upon its 1932 publication, the book began to gain some cachet in the early 1960s, amid growing interest in other types of native literatures, most especially those related to the ethnographic work of Euro-American academics: "as-told-to" narratives, spiritual autobiographies, and first-hand accounts of major events like the Battle of Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee. As *Black Elk Speaks* fits into all of these categories, it quickly became the most recognizable of this sort of text, and so a great deal has been written about it. Most of these Western critical interpretations look at the book from three main perspectives: the reliability of its historical information, the authenticity of Black Elk's vision, and the relationship between Neihardt and Black Elk. One of the most well-known literary critical examinations of the text is Robert F. Sayre's "Vision and Experience in *Black Elk Speaks*." While Sayre's reading of Black Elk's narrative is interesting and offers some relevant insights into the nature of the "mystical vision" in general, it primarily sticks to these major themes. For example, at one point Sayre makes the claim that "we can trust Black Elk only as we can trust his biographer" (511), seeming to prepare a critique of the ethnographic relationship, but soon thereafter resolves that "the relations between Black Elk and his editor-writer appear outstanding" (512-513). And most criticism of this text works in much the same way—taking one side or another on whether Neihardt's production of the text is authentic, or if his efforts are simply exploitative. This is not to reduce the importance of such scholarship, but to say instead that more nuanced and thus more rewarding readings may be found in the disparate interpretations of *Black Elk Speaks* by prominent native scholars themselves.

As highlighted in the three epigraphs that open this paper, N. Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, and Vine Deloria, Jr. give very different interpretations of how exactly a text like *Black Elk Speaks* should be read. Beginning with the most positive, Momaday's reading of the text takes the message of the narrative to heart. Specifically, in the essay "To Save a Great Vision" from *The Man Made of Words*, Momaday states that he sees Neihardt as an "instrument of preservation"—indeed, the idea of "preservation" is key to Momaday's reading—and that "*Black Elk Speaks* is an extraordinary

human document" (22). Before getting into these more positive qualities, however, Momaday does take note of some of the text's potential problems, including the fact that no one knows "where to place the book in our traditional categories of learning" (22). And he is content to cast aside most critiques of the text, noting that "we need not concern ourselves with labels here, any more than we need concern ourselves with the question of authorship or the quality of translation or transcription" (22). Instead, Momaday wants to celebrate *Black Elk Speaks* for the universal qualities that it conveys about the power of language—especially in the form of oral storytelling—and the ability of a story to connect a group of people, in this case Black Elk's Oglala Sioux, to a destiny larger than themselves. His enthusiastic reception of the text is thus rooted in the power he bestows on Black Elk, first and foremost, as an oral storyteller and second on Neihardt's successful transcription of that story into prose English.

Such a reading is risky for Momaday, a prominent figure in indigenous literary scholarship, because there are certain problems with his reading of *Black Elk Speaks* that must be considered. Foremost among them is his early dismissal of the significance of Neihardt's presence as ethnographer and transcriber, receiving this story secondhand through a translator. Raising fundamental doubts about the reliability of any translation is all but a given anymore—let alone the convoluted set-up that was required for the transmission of Black Elk's original story to the textual document that became *Black Elk Speaks*—yet Momaday seems content to let this pass. For example, at one point in the essay Momaday notes the "consistent symmetry in Black Elk's account," going on to write:

He is at every moment aware of the aesthetic foundation of the storyteller's function. He orders his words. He fashions his language according to ancient conceptions of proportion, design, perspective. The aesthetic realization of his story is not immediately of his own invention; rather, he fits his narrative into the universal scheme. The motion of his voice is the motion of the earth itself. (27)

As beautiful and compelling as this statement is, it describes a telling of Black Elk's story that is impossible for the reader—native or non-native—to know. In fact, as articulated here, the only people who could attest to such a statement are those who witnessed Black Elk's telling of the story firsthand, and Momaday was not one of those people. What Momaday is talking about here—the textual translation, transcription,

and reproduction of that story, the text *Black Elk Speaks*—is a much different thing indeed. So, in referencing the textual document, when Momaday states that Black Elk “orders his words” and “fashions his language,” he is incorrect for the very simple reason that Neihardt, in transcribing the text that the reader holds in his or her hands, physically does those things. Momaday wants to create a clear path of reception from Black Elk to the reader by cutting out the middleman, when in fact a middleman very much exists: John Neihardt. Perhaps his desire is to sustain some semblance of the oral tradition in *Black Elk Speaks*, as he often does in his own work, especially *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Man Made of Words*. But this is the risk Momaday takes in attempting to preserve Black Elk’s vision. This is not to say that his reading lacks sophistication—instead, it is to show that in upholding the visionary elements of the narrative and eschewing the mechanics of the textual document, Momaday comes to a reading far different from that of many of his contemporaries.

On the other end of the spectrum is Gerald Vizenor, who is interested in many of the same concerns as Momaday—especially oral storytelling—but devotes much more attention to those very things left out of Momaday’s reading in “To Save a Great Vision”: the problems of ethnography, exploitative relationships, and the narrative mechanics of the whole textual document. Moreover, where Momaday’s writing is consciously free flowing, playful, and easy to read, Vizenor’s is equally convoluted, dense, and full of his own efforts at establishing a new set of terms for discussing what he calls “Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence.” Momaday could be fairly critiqued for being too uncritical at times; Vizenor could just as easily be critiqued for donning his trickster guise too often and at the expense of the reader. As such, when paired together they can be complementary, one often picking up where the other leaves off or falls short. And this is certainly true in their treatment of textual appropriations of oral storytelling, such as that which occurs in a text like *Black Elk Speaks*.

Within *Fugitive Poses* itself, Vizenor actually spends very little time directly addressing Neihardt’s text—as opposed to Momaday, who gives it a full chapter in *The Man Made of Words*. Indeed, the only place Vizenor mentions the text is in the chapter “Wistful Envy,” where he includes it under the category of “native by creation” in his definitions of “eight native theaters.” Through his use of the term “native by creation,” Vizenor asserts that these texts, of which

Neihardt’s *Black Elk Speaks* is one, are “native by artistic creation and imaginative thought” (89). In the complicated rhetoric of *Fugitive Poses*, this statement could almost be read as a compliment for Neihardt’s text. But when one looks more closely at Vizenor’s critique of the type of writing and writerly techniques of which *Black Elk Speaks* is comprised, one might conclude that Vizenor finds such literature quite problematic. The first indication is Vizenor’s reference to the work in this section as “*Black Elk Speaks* by John Neihardt,” as opposed to “*Black Elk Speaks* by Nicholas Black Elk,” suggesting that he is skeptical—at best—of Black Elk’s actual role in the composition of that text. Thus, from the start his view of the artistic inception and creation of this text is quite different from Momaday’s.

The epigraph from Vizenor that opens this paper is perhaps most effective in articulating his attitude toward the type of literary production that *Black Elk Speaks* claims to be. For Vizenor, the ideas of “presence” and “absence” are central for evaluating the valid treatment of native concerns, and in this quote he clearly marks the translation of oral narratives as an absence—or devoid of any relevant claim to indigenous authenticity. The stories themselves, as told by native storytellers—including Black Elk himself, and possibly even his son, Ben Black Elk, who served as translator for Neihardt—are always a presence. Problems arise, however, when an invasive culture attempts to incorporate such stories into its own literary heritage. Further damning is Vizenor’s phrase “cultural restriction and dominance,” a phrase that recalls the notion of appropriation (or misappropriation) that is sometimes attached to ethnographic autobiographies like *Black Elk Speaks*. Obviously anything accused of being a “cultural restriction” would denote an absence of native authenticity. But the part of Vizenor’s critique that is most striking is his use of the term “literary enterprise.” By this I take Vizenor to mean that the translation of the native oral story is taken up for the purposes of business—to capitalize on the supposed authenticity of hearing the story from “their” point of view in an effort to gain notoriety and profit from the endeavor financially. That Neihardt, the professional writer, profited more than Black Elk, the “native storier,” cannot be denied. Efforts like Momaday’s to deflect the reality of the textual production of *Black Elk Speaks* also fail to recognize that on one level the text has become another mass-produced object for consumption in the mainstream literary marketplace. Vizenor’s point may be too cynical for some, but he is trying to protect the integrity and authen-

ticity of truly native stories and storytellers over the aims and aspirations of Euro-American writers, academics, and ethnographers who would profit from the appropriation and/or exploitation of these narratives.

Finally, Vizenor's critique in *Fugitive Poses* allows for a more comprehensive treatment of *Black Elk Speaks* as a textual document—part and parcel of its “literary enterprise.” For example, the title *Fugitive Poses* refers to Vizenor's concern with the way natives have been photographed throughout history. Taking the most recent edition of *Black Elk Speaks* released by Bison Books (coincidentally, the same press that publishes Vizenor's work), one can see that photographs are a central part of the whole document. The most famous picture of Black Elk, taken as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, graces the cover. And inside are roughly ten pictures, of Black Elk with Neihardt in the stages of transcription, of Black Elk and Standing Bear in various levels of traditional garb, and of Neihardt with his arm around Black Elk—both wearing suits, no less. Any critical reader of *Black Elk Speaks* should be able to see that these pictures are problematic for a number of reasons. Still, Vizenor's articulation of the problem is perhaps most helpful:

The notion that a photograph is worth a thousand words is untrue in any language. Native stories create a sense of presence, a tease of memories, and a resistance to pictures of victimry. Yet the simulations of the *indian* serve the manifest manners of unbidden dominance. Photographs are specious representations of the other, the treacheries of racialism. Pictures are possessory, neither cultural evidence nor the shadows of lost traditions. (154)

Such a critique of the photography of native peoples plays well into a reading of *Black Elk Speaks* that is skeptical of Western ethnography and challenges Neihardt's motives, the “literary enterprise” he hoped to sustain by undertaking the work in the first place. Indeed, more than anything, Vizenor wants to see the text for what it is—a document produced by a Euro-American writer for an English-speaking audience—in spite of the powerful message it may contain. Again, this approach is not necessarily to reduce Momaday's reading, but to suggest that a text like *Black Elk Speaks* demands to be read through multiple and often contrary critical lenses. It is a complicated text, and a fuller understanding of it requires challenging some of its accepted interpretations, especially for non-native read-

ers—as these two critics do. Momaday preserves the vision, but Vizenor deconstructs the textual artifice.

I would like to turn finally to the quotation used in the epigraph from Vine Deloria, Jr.'s “Foreword” to the Bison Books edition of *Black Elk Speaks*. His conclusion that the text is “good” and “enough” is interesting for a number of reasons, not least of which is its seeming similarity to Momaday's reading. However, Deloria's statement here is also worth exploring because of what he has written previously regarding the many issues surrounding Neihardt's text. Looking first to the foreword, just before these concluding words used in the epigraph, Deloria devotes a short paragraph to the “present debates” on “Neihardt's literary intrusions into Black Elk's system of beliefs” and notes that “it is, admittedly, difficult to discover if we are talking with Black Elk or John Neihardt” (xvi). However, Deloria then goes on to conclude by stating: “Can it matter? The very nature of great religious teachings is that they encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth that is expressed. So let it be with *Black Elk Speaks*” (xvi). This sounds much more like resignation than enthusiastic endorsement, so in this way Deloria's reading does differ significantly from Momaday's. If one were to refer to Momaday's reading as “preservation” and Vizenor's as “deconstruction,” Deloria's might then be called “recovery,” an attempt to bring its most useful parts back into mainstream religious—or literary—discourse.

That Deloria makes this effort to recover *Black Elk Speaks* is significant in itself, given his earlier writing on similar topics. For example, in *Custer Died for Your Sins* he includes a long, searing chapter entitled “Anthropologists and Other Friends,” in which he is aggressively critical of the very type of ethnographic work performed by Neihardt in gathering information for *Black Elk Speaks* and his other works on Native Americans, such as *The Cycle of the West*. Though Neihardt is not named in this section, one cannot help but draw parallels between the critiques of his practice and the “anthros” that Deloria decries. *Black Elk Speaks* is specifically addressed in Deloria's work *God Is Red*, this time treated for its religious, rather than literary, qualities. And though Deloria is not overtly critical of the work itself, he does show concern for the “universal manner” in which native religions were framed as a result of its popularity. Indeed, it is with a discernable note of caution that Deloria writes that

"many Indian young people who had grown up in the cities and who now formed the backbone of the activist wing of Indian affairs, believed [*Black Elk Speaks* and Joseph Epes Brown's *The Sacred Pipe*] to be an accurate statement about Indian religions" (34). Clearly Deloria had a change of feeling, as only six years after penning this note of warning he composed the noticeably more positive foreword to *Black Elk Speaks*, in which a recovery of the text is called for. Nevertheless, the route taken by Deloria to come to this reading places him in an interesting position relative to Momaday and Vizenor: specifically, while he is clearly sympathetic to Vizenor's critique of ethnography and Neihardt's "literary enterprise" in general, he also finds value in upholding the spiritual elements of *Black Elk Speaks*, much as Momaday does in his reading.

All of this work is not to assert that Deloria or any other indigenous literary critic is contradictory or hypocritical. Instead, it is meant to show the complexity of the issues with which these writers are dealing, likely much more so than the average literary critic. For what is at stake in endorsing or decrying a certain text, or type of text, often has significant bearing on native life and culture. The formation of a canon for Native American literature has been a difficult and often contentious process. Certain texts, like Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* or Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, clearly have a well-defined place in that canon. But wrestling with a text like *Black Elk Speaks* is a different matter. On the one hand, as Momaday and eventually Deloria conclude, the text has a number of qualities worth championing—most especially the themes of unity, vision, and cultural preservation associated with Black Elk's story. On the other hand, as Vizenor and Deloria's earlier writings suggest, there is a danger in including into the canon a text that may be an oppressive voice innocently disguised as authentically native. No one is rushing out to defend *HantaYo*, and perhaps similar caution ought to be levied toward this text as well. In the end, however, what matters most of all is the work of making use of such criticism, and recognizing the far richer readings that are produced by taking account of what these many different native voices and points of view offer both the literary critic and the novice scholar.

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STEVE TESICH'S *FOUR FRIENDS* AND *SUMMER CROSSING*

GUY SZUBERLA

Yovan: ONLY IN AMERICA! Black and White and Polish and Jewish and they kiss and hug like gangbusters. Where else do you find such stuff but in America? I was born in the old country, but my dreams were born in

America. The dream . . . it lives!

— Steve Tesich, *Division Street* (1980)

Once Yovan's histrionics and clowning are set aside, it becomes clear that this half-crazed Serb immigrant—owner of the New World Bar and Grill on Chicago's Division Street—speaks for Steve Tesich (1943-1996), the author of *Division Street* (1980). In the lines from the play quoted here, Yovan may seem improbably serious and sincere, and all the more comic because of that and his simple-minded devotion to melting-pot sentiments. The company listening to Yovan's celebration of America is: "Black! White! Polish! Jewish! Protestant! Catholic!" "Agnostic!" and "Serbian Orthodox," and "trans-sexual," and "neo-sexual." His speeches, and the response of his multiethnic, multiracial audience, cue Chris, a reformed and reborn sixties radical, to take up a bullhorn. Through it, he shouts out his own stirring speech, invoking the "great American symphony" and the "frontiers of dreamers" (*Division Street* 52-54). In what may be an homage to Israel Zangwill's play *The Melting Pot* (1909), *Division Street* moves to a rousing finale, as an off-stage choir and the entire company sing "America the Beautiful" (54).¹

The songs and speeches are, like much else in the play, satirical jabs at the idea of the melting pot, however serious and loving the jokes and jabs. Tesich was soon to modulate such high-flown rhetoric and subdue extended comic flourishes in the screenplay for *Four Friends* (1981) and his novel *Summer Crossing* (1982). And yet, in the early 1980s, he continued to celebrate America as nation of nations, a New World made for dreamers.

Like Yovan in *Division Street*, Tesich had "dreams...born in America" years before he left the Old World. It's likely that, not long after coming to East Chicago, Indiana, in 1957, the Serbian-born Stoyan Tesich renamed himself Steve. With his mother Goya and older sister Nadja, he had immigrated to East Chicago from Uzice, Yugoslavia. He was fourteen, knew no English, and little about America. Until then, he had lived all his life in Serbia, in a small city in the Carpathian foothills. What he knew about America, he later said, he had learned watching Tarzan movies and old John Wayne westerns (Rothmayer 2). These, after repeated viewings, he must have committed closely to heart. While in Uzice, he had begun to tell such fantastic stories about America—and told them with such compelling power—that he earned himself the nickname of "Truman."

Tesich, his mother, and sister had immigrated to America to reunite with Rade Tesich, a father whom he had never known. Rade had disappeared while fighting the Germans during World War II. The reunion of father and son in East Chicago—as the opening scenes in Tesich's screenplay for *Four Friends* suggest—was painful for both of them. Rade had been a lieutenant in the Yugoslav army and, in 1955, when he renewed contact with his family, was part of a Yugoslavian government in exile. But in East Chicago he had to work as a machinist in one of the region's many steel mills. He was a sullen and bitter man with little love and few words for the young Steve. He died in 1960, three years after their reunion.

Tesich himself quickly succeeded in the New World. Within a year he had mastered English. He wrestled for East Chicago's Roosevelt High School, won an athletic scholarship to Indiana University, graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and went on to graduate study at Columbia University. Between 1969 and his death in 1996, he wrote eleven plays, all of which were produced; two musicals; and six screenplays, including the Academy Award-winning screenplay for *Breaking Away* (1979). He wrote two novels: *Summer Crossing* and the posthumously published *Karoo* (1998).

In the 1980s, especially after the success of *Breaking Away*, critics inevitably compared him to Frank Capra, another immigrant who had put his love of America into optimistic screenplays (Horton 81). Yet the master plot for Tesich's screenplays and fiction, however optimistic in its outlines, also revealed the pain and generational conflicts associated with a cultural passage from the Old to the New

World. *Division Street*, *Breaking Away*, *Four Friends*, and *Summer Crossing*, lightly or not, traced over the narrative lines and the character types that had already appeared in immigrant and American ethnic writers like Abraham Cahan, O.E. Rolvaag, Nelson Algren, and James T. Farrell. Tesich, this far, was writing what had already been written. Melting-pot ideas and a particular rhetoric of ethnicity pop up in odd, sometimes unexpected, and usually comic ways in his plays and fiction. He kept his eyes open to the comic and the absurd, parodying the old stories of immigrant aspirations and ethnic experience, setting them to a music that was his own.

STARTING OUT IN EAST CHICAGO

Music, mostly of Tesich's choosing, plays a programmatic part in the film *Four Friends*. As the opening credits roll, an old Serbian song plays softly. According to Tesich, it was a song that came out of World War I, sung by Serbian soldiers when they "were retreating and thought they would never see home again" (Horton 86). The film ends, as his play *Division Street* had, with the rising strains of "America the Beautiful." In between, the familiar music of Dvorak's "From the New World" symphony regularly punctuates the film's action or, played *sotto voce*, colors the emotional atmosphere. The soundtrack, with these and other less insistently played melodies, frames the story of young Daniel or Danilo Prozor. The film follows him from the moment he arrives in East Chicago to the day, a dozen years later, when he announces he will become an American citizen.

In one of the film's first scenes, as his father drives his mother and him to their new home in East Chicago, the young Danilo begins to play Dvorak on his flute. The music expresses his wide-eyed wonder over this New World. He is but twelve years old, a boy in short pants, a Serbian immigrant away from home for the first time. The New World that he now sees—and marvels over—passes outside the car in a jumbled panorama: Gary's rusting steel mills, East Chicago's industrial scrublands, and, somewhere ahead, Whiting's sprawling refineries. When he spots a sign welcoming them to East Chicago, he says in excited and broken English: "ist chick-a-go—A-mer-ee-ka!" His father squints his eyes, looks at the mills, and replies wearily, "America." He will play Prospero to his innocent son who, prone to dreams and poetic flights, discovers a green and virgin land, a wonder-filled New World, in the heart of industrialized East Chicago.²

Though Tesich said that *Four Friends* was "purely autobiographical," such comic exaggeration and the rich, thick overlays of the fabular suggest that the narrative runs less than pure. The critic Pauline Kael, for one, was annoyed by "the picture's love affair with America the melting pot" (286). Vincent Canby, presumably responding to the same mythic beliefs, declared *Four Friends* had "the qualities of a legend, a fable remembered." In 1981, the year of its release, Canby judged it "the best film yet made about the sixties," and the *New York Times* ranked it as one of the year's ten best films.

What Tesich draws upon, among other things, are the myths and fables inspired by America's melting-pot ideology. More precisely, we see him remembering and reinterpreting youthful experiences in the light of melting-pot myths. Because there are so many definitions of the melting pot—and so many more disagreements about its significance—a short summary of the leading ideas surrounding this most pliable symbol may be useful. Werner Sollors, in his book *Beyond Ethnicity*, emphasizes three: (1) an "ideal of universal regeneration" in which Americans and ethnics are alike regenerated, changing each other through the melding and mixing of their different cultures; (2) "ethnicizing" and (3) "Americanizing interpretations," which, in different ways, stand opposed to the first ideal (Sollors 99). Ethnics, under the second interpretation, remain distinct, their core culture unchanged by America; and yet, somehow, they can harmonize with its dominant political and cultural values. "Americanizing interpretations," the third definition, tend to impose a homogenized, pre-existent cultural and political "Anglo-conformity" upon all (Sollors 91). In *Four Friends*, Tesich seems to invoke the first, the ideal of universal regeneration, without quite letting go of certain notions about ethnic persistence.

His idea of "America the melting pot" in *Four Friends* seems far more imaginative, ambiguous, and playful than Pauline Kael's dyspeptic comment might suggest. From the nineteenth century on, certainly after Zangwill's 1909 play, *The Melting Pot*, American ideas of cultural and social assimilation have been rich in rebirth images. St. Paul's Epistles, particularly certain passages from Ephesians, once supplied the critical proof texts. Paul, in one oft-quoted verse, had described a nation of nations, where "aliens," reborn in Christ, are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens" (Ephesians 2:14-15, 19). For many years, such Pauline texts, quoted in sermons and recast in novels, poems, and political discourse, were

joined to the language of alchemy. Thus, in Zangwill's play and in subsequent expressions of the melting pot, we find Paul's words about conversion drawn through an imagery of burning, melting, and fusing in an imagined crucible (Sollors 94-97). If Tesich deploys some of this traditional language and imagery of rebirth in *Four Friends*, he does so allusively and, in the series of scenes closing the film, with an eye to comic dramatization.

The barroom fight, dramatizing Prozor's declaration that he's going to become an American citizen, owes more to John Wayne westerns than St. Paul's Epistles. Prozor says, with mock-heroic bravado, that the fight's going to be "in honor of my upcoming citizenship." The fight quickly turns comic, parodying the brawls of B westerns: Gergley, a high school bully now a swaggering security cop, taunts Prozor and his small band of multi-ethnic brothers. Prozor and Gergley punch, kick, spit, and stagger in time to Dvorak's "New World Symphony." In the context of the film's closing sequence, there's no mistaking the significance of their fight or the meaning of the music. However clumsily he fights, he is re-enacting the part of the Westerner. If he does not have the grace of Gary Cooper, he still can borrow some of the bravado of an archetypal American hero. Though the setting is a steelworkers' bar—East Chicago, not the Old West—the atmosphere still vibrates with the sound and feel of authentic Americana. The barroom walls are decorated with crossed American flags, a framed photo of John F. Kennedy, and group photos of what must be athletic clubs and veterans' groups. Men in hardhats, black and white, women in faded housedresses, and a bartender wearing an old-fashioned long apron all stand and watch the two throw punches and break up the furniture.

Little about Danilo Prozor, during his high school years or after, had identified him as foreign born. At his high school, some loudmouths do call him a "foreigner," and a prospective father-in-law, a type-cast WASP, sarcastically welcomes him as "the Yugoslav." But his dress, appearance, manners, and speech almost never signify his otherness or ethnicity. Danilo Prozor, who's renamed Danny almost the day he comes to East Chicago, lives a life that from many perspectives looks normal, Midwestern, and wholly Middle American. In East Chicago, he plays in the high school band, falls in love with his high school sweetheart, and, despite the opposition of his father, enrolls at Northwestern University. When he walks down Aberdeen Avenue, the tree-lined street in East Chicago where the entrancing

Georgia lives, he seems to be passing into the rustic Indiana that James Whitcomb Riley had mapped decades before. No matter that Ray Charles's bluesy version of "Georgia" fills the soundtrack. The camera, in these tightly framed scenes, makes over industrialized East Chicago into a replica of a small, rural Midwestern town. At such moments, Prozor's Serbian roots and his Old World parents are forgotten; his ethnic identity, however it is understood, disappears, disguised or lost in a pastoral East Chicago.

"The rhetoric of ethnic identity," the celebrated sociologist Richard Sennett has said, "is built upon the sentiment of loss." Sennett, arguing against such constructions of "symbolic ethnicity," contends that at bottom they are a "passive, backward construction" of "us" and "the past" (Sennett 206). To be sure, a sense of loss finds its way into many of the final scenes in *Four Friends*, but Tesich's rhetoric of ethnicity—the complex way Prozor's American identity and ethnic past are constructed—seems neither "backward" nor "passive." Prozor's experience of difference, to borrow from Sennett again, builds upon "interpretive, imaginative work" (Sennett 198). Displaced from Serbia, in conflict with his Old-World father, not finally willing to settle into a Serbian-American community, he's provoked to interpret himself anew, to imagine whom he will become in this New World.

Because this is a Hollywood film, because it flirts with the conventions of romantic comedy, Danilo's choice between his ethnic, Serbian self and his rebirth as an American comes to be represented as a choice between two women. Vera, a Serbian-American woman he meets in Pittsburgh, represents the Old World and his own ethnic past; Georgia, his high school love and a sixties flower child, stands for America, for endless youth and modern possibility. For a time, he romances the beautiful Vera, plays his flute and dances to Tamboritzta music, and, until his old love Georgia visits him, seems destined to marry and settle into the local Serbian community. It's Georgia who, in the closing minutes of the film, dubs him "citizen Prozor," and speaks with Walt Whitman-like confidence about the multitude of possibilities in America that lie before the two of them: "Hell's bells, it's a big country." Somewhat paradoxically, though, it is Prozor's mother who first, and most emphatically, declares him an American. In the next to the last scene, he bids his parents goodbye as they start their return trip to Yugoslavia. Then his mother runs up the gangplank of their ship and, smiling and laughing, shouts back to Prozor

that one day he will tell great stories and in the old country she will be able "to brag about my son, the American."

Not until the final scene, where the four friends gather on a Lake Michigan beach, does it become clear how Prozor has re-imagined himself. Daniel and Georgia and her child; David Levine and his wife; Tom, his Vietnamese wife and children—all of them sit around a bonfire that burns in a shallow pit. Together, the group—Jewish, Vietnamese, Serbian, and old-stock Americans—composes a melting-pot tableau, "a nation of nations." The bonfire, in this almost allegorical setting, represents Prozor's transformation from Serbian to American. In its consuming flames, he burns the immigrant chest that he and his mother had brought with them from Serbia to America. Critics, with some justice, have complained that the chest becomes too obvious and intrusive a symbol. Daniel, in an opening scene, lugs it on to the station platform in Gary. He will later take it to college, pack it for his East Coast wedding, and finally tie it to the top of his car when he leaves Pittsburgh. It represents the burden of his past, the persistence of his immigrant or ethnic beginnings. Burning it may be seen to complete his rite of passage, to symbolize the "purging flame" of the melting pot (Zangwill 185). But the consuming flames do not destroy or erase all vestiges of his old ethnic self. He saves from the fire the flute he had carried with him from Serbia and, in a clever last turn, plays a bar or two from Dvorak's "New World Symphony." That music, without a break or marked transition, melds into "America the Beautiful."

LEAVING EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA

Tesich completed his screenplays for *Breaking Away* (1979) and *Four Friends* (1981) before the publication of his novel, *Summer Crossing* (1982). Since he worked on this novel for close to fourteen years, it's likely that the writing of *Summer Crossing* and the two screenplays overlapped (Cohen 54). No narrative sequence or repeating characters join the three works, though the Indiana settings and the plots encircling the three young protagonists suggest a common inspiration and certain intertextual relations. In *Breaking Away*, Dave Stoeller—a young man from Bloomington, Indiana—lives with a near perfect sit-com family: a gruff but indulgent father, a sometimes daffy yet ever wise and loving mother. They are all Bloomington born, fully Midwestern and American. Dave, out of his love for bicycling and the Italian racing team, would have his family

be Italian, and for several months he creates and lives inside a fantasized Italian identity. Melting-pot conventions frame the story of Danilo Prozor's transformation in *Four Friends*. Turning these conventions inside out in *Breaking Away*, Tesich has Dave become the American who re-invents himself as an immigrant and foreigner.

Summer Crossing, though it falls into comic moments, avoids the fanciful devices and fluid identity changes that make *Breaking Away* such a pleasing comedy and coming-of-age story. Daniel Boone Price, the main character in *Summer Crossing*, struggles with his parents, his own uncertain identity, and what he sometimes calls his "destiny" (84, 249). His father is American born and Catholic; his mother, an immigrant from Montenegro, Yugoslavian and Eastern Orthodox. In keeping with her immigrant and national roots, his mother had wanted to name him "Marko" or "Milan." But his father insisted that, because "my son is American," he must have an American name. And so his father names him Daniel Boone, giving him a model and namesake as American as anyone might have (89-90). At the end of the first chapter, Daniel acknowledges their quarrels and his confusion, saying to himself: "I had my father's face and my mother's body. They were still fighting it out for my soul" (8).

He also fears that he will be trapped in East Chicago, that he is destined to live and work out his life in the Region ("da region," the more common pronunciation). Early in the novel, he projects these fears on to the sight of steelworkers, "trudging home," "bent-over, exhausted, joyless" (73). Young men from the Region, in the time of the novel, were generally expected to work in the steel mills of Gary and East Chicago or in Whiting's refineries, to take on the same hard and dirty jobs that their fathers had taken before them. Daniel Boone Price, like his counterpart Daniel Prozor in *Four Friends*, rejects a job in the mills and such a future. He will not follow his father into the mill, and yet he does not know what he should do. Even after his father's death, with household bills mounting, he turns away from a generous invitation to work at Blow-Knox Steel, his father's mill (73, 290). For much of the novel, for the many days of his long summer crossing, he sinks into passivity and a willful stasis, sleeping long hours and aimlessly wandering the streets.

He knows that his father—sick, sour, and "perpetually gloomy"—has been worn down by his own years working in the steel mills of East Chicago (78). What's left of his father's old ambitions and dreams of happiness are kept in an unlocked steel box: "an

expired passport," "scraps of paper torn from newspapers and match-books," "coupons for self-improvement" courses and get-rich-quick schemes (86-7). These scraps, of course, represent the fag ends of his American Dream, a dream of happiness now cold and dead. Daniel, whose own self-awareness waxes and wanes, senses his parents' conflicts, the tensions in their marriage, and his father's fading vitality. This much, he can describe with a pained precision. He notices that his father makes an unlikely mate for his exotic Montenegrin wife. His mother is "taller, stronger, handsomer than his father;" and he wonders if his father married her because "he wanted to have a live-in reminder of his inadequacies" (23).

To the young and innocent Danny, his own mother presents an inscrutable, exotic, and "Byzantine" character (22). Her language, her superstitions, her religious rituals, her fortune telling, and her tales of Montenegro—in a word, her otherness confuses, enthralls, and, on occasion, frightens him. "She had left Montenegro twenty years ago, but," he observes, "she had kept all her old ways." Although he has been with her almost every day of his life, he finds it hard to fathom these strange ways, much less define "this foreign woman with Oriental features" (22-3). Each time she reveals some strange, untold part of her Montenegrin past, he senses but does not finally or fully come to recognize his own buried ethnic identity. When his father is dying, she seems to change before his eyes:

Everything she did seemed like a ritual; even the way she walked across the floor seemed different, in keeping with the spirit of traditions I knew nothing about. . . . Her gold teeth shone as she began talking, and the rhythm of voice, like the rhythm of her gait when she walked, was once again stately and in keeping with a tradition she knew. (266)

He knows that he does not know these Old World traditions, but, much unlike the conventionally defined second-generation son in many immigrant novels, he does not ridicule them or rebel against them. He responds to her strange ways with a mingled fascination and indifference. He fails to learn any of her native language, follow her religion, honor her ethnic prejudices, or take in enough of her traditions to imitate or defy them.

Though he often wonders about the tensions in his parents' marriage, he does not define the marriage or their conflicts as a result of ethnic differences. In fact, he does not care about or seem particu-

larly aware of the ethnic divisions and signs of ethnicity around him. His father sneers at "the foreigners" that he must work with (37). His mother, in practiced Old World ways, tries to instruct him about ethnic differences. She tells him, as if he didn't know, that his father is Irish. She does not bother to mention that he's Catholic and fails to explain how she could marry him, given her strong prejudices against his religion. Openly displaying these prejudices, she will persuade her dying husband to accept burial in a Serbian Orthodox cemetery. She tells him that she would not visit his grave in a Catholic cemetery (286). When Daniel hints that he has a girl friend, she riddles him about the young woman's ethnicity, warning him away from Roman Catholics and Germans (26, 337). Later in the novel, she speaks with suspicion of Italians, and this, too, puzzles the naively American Daniel (337). Rachel Temerson, the mysterious young woman that he's romanced through the long summer, tells Daniel that she's not really Greek, but Jewish. She, like his mother, is convinced that he's too innocent and untraveled to detect such ethnic differences. When their relationship ends and she reveals her hidden ethnic identity, she confesses to an incestuous affair. None of this registers on the numbed and passive Daniel (326).

From the moment they met months before, Rachel had jabbed at his provincial attachments, once calling him "Daniel Boondocks Price" (173-74). Given that before this summer, Danny has seldom ventured beyond a few square blocks in East Chicago, her insults and the ironic use of his name cut him sharply. Late in the novel, as they are about to break up, she tells him what he has already admitted to himself: "you just haven't lived all that much. It's a wonder you've heard of anything stuck here in East Chicago." He replies defiantly, but without conviction: "I like it here, you mind?" (323). He has begun to write in fictionalized diaries, using the voices and characters of his friends. In one diary entry, he says that he knows that "there are better places than East Chicago." Confused and repelled by his own thoughts, he adds that he feels "all guilty and ashamed for liking it" (317-18).

For a time, though, he's haunted by the story of Brad Davidson, a former football star, once a hometown hero and big-time college player. Now, fat and tired, Davidson has been forced to return to the Region: "seems like anybody who leaves East Chicago comes back." (114). The story of Davidson can be read as one more version of the "Great Midwestern Joke," the joke that Midwesterners have so often

told and played on themselves. That joke, the critics Joseph Trimmer and Peter Scholl have said, springs from Midwesterners' feeling that they are "doomed to insignificance, to lives of provincial obscurity and sameness" (Scholl 153). George Ade, Garrison Keillor, and Jean Shepherd, with other Midwestern humorists, have played it for laughs dozens of times, forming it into punch lines of jokes and the narrative spine of novel-length books. Danny Price finds in the story of Brad Davidson's return a cautionary tale, a parable of a life caught and trapped by East Chicago. None of the humor in the "Great Midwestern Joke"—none of the customary comic inflation of "provincial obscurity"—adheres to his understanding of Brad Davidson's tale.

Yet there is something comic and truly absurd about the way that he leaves East Chicago. Though Rachel and his mother have long taunted and pushed against the immovable Danny, the comic muse who inspires him to act is a Miss Day, the kindly if dotty local librarian. One rainy night, he impulsively decides to look up the word "dell." He and his friends had talked of traveling to the Wisconsin Dells, though none of them had an idea what the Dells were. When he wanders into the local library, Miss Day mistakes him for a Jimmy Donovan, and, typing out a library card, presents him with a new and liberating identity. Her mistake and the new library card transform him. Assuming the character of Jimmy Donovan, he finds the energy and purpose he needs to begin writing fictional diaries exploring the lives of his friends and family. Dave Stoeller's assumed French and Italian identities in *Breaking Away* were no less spurious, but these were marked as childish play-acting, comic and transient masquerades. Daniel Boone Price, in accepting his new name, begins to invent himself as a writer.

In an unexpected and surprising turn, he decides to leave East Chicago for New York. Why he has decided to go to New York, though, is something that he never explains—to himself or anyone else. When he decides, he thinks only this: "I knew that the time had come." His mother tells him good-bye at the LaSalle Street station in Chicago: "When I was your age, I left old country for America. You are my son and now you leave. Don't come back except to visit" (341). Her words suggest that, from her perspective, he is re-enacting the dislocations of immigrant experience, what William Boelhower terms "the spatial shift from Old World to New World" (148). But Tesich chooses not to tell a conventional story of dislo-

cation. Danny boards the train, confident of his purpose, certain of his direction. He carries a suitcase full of his writings in cheap spiral-bound notebooks, an envelope with five hundred dollars from his mother, a diary with blank pages, and a borrowed library book, Maxim Gorky's *Autobiography*. The notebooks hold the imaginary diaries telling the stories of the people he knew back in East Chicago. As the train heads east, he repeats the last sentence of Gorky's book: "And so I went out into the world." Gorky's quoted words are the last words of Tesich's novel.

Daniel had recited Gorky's sentence days before, and, for that matter, he had rehearsed in his imagination the train trip that would finally take him out of East Chicago. On the night that Miss Day gives him the library card and his new name, he reads Gorky's last sentence for the first time:

I heard . . . the train along the tracks outside the library. I reread the last sentence again. And out into the world I went. I shut my eyes and hopped on to the train. I was somebody named James "Jimmy" Donovan and I was sitting inside the train, heading out into the world. I [was] imagining looking out of the window at East Chicago, at the region, for the last time . . . (230)

Where the train is headed he cannot say and, at this time, cannot imagine. *Summer Crossing* and *Four Friends*, in the end, are about setting out for a New World deemed larger and more desirable than East Chicago or the Region. For both Daniel Prozor and Daniel Boone Price, the definition of the New World they seek, accordingly, remains imaginary, elusive and indefinable. In this, their dreams of a world outside "the region" resemble the dreams of George Willard at the end of *Winesburg, Ohio*.

"The last lines of *Winesburg, Ohio*," David D. Anderson has shown, elevated "into myth the movement of . . . countless young people from the towns and farms of Mid-America to Chicago" (56).³ However close George Willard's and Daniel Boone Price's restless searches, however similar the expression of their dreams and discontents, Tesich seem, in no direct way to draw on Anderson or the familiar last lines of *Winesburg*. He builds the departure sequence and the last lines of his novel, consciously and explicitly, on the example of Gorky's *Autobiography* and on Gorky's words. And yet the Midwestern myth that David D. Anderson defines—and *Winesburg, Ohio* embodies—frames Tesich's larger story. That myth

also animates Daniel Boone Price's words and dreams as he leaves East Chicago and goes "out into the world."

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Notes

- ¹Compare the grand finale of Tesich's play with the closing of Zangwill's *The Melting Pot* (NY: Macmillan, 1909). After David Quixano, the play's hero, has paid tribute to "America, where all nations and races come," the audience hears from off-stage "voices and instruments joining in 'My Country 'tis of Thee'" (185). Throughout the play Quixano, like Yovan, runs through lyric catalogs of America's nations and races.
- ²In context, their exchange sounds like an allusion to Prospero and Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (V. i. 183-4): Miranda: "Oh, brave new world, that has such people in 't." Prospero: "Tis new to thee."
- ³David D. Anderson expands this reading in "Sherwood Anderson, Chicago, and the Midwestern Myth," *MidAmerica XI* (1984): 56-68. It's worth adding to this general discussion of *Winesburg, Ohio* and Tesich's novel that Daniel, while rummaging through Miss Day's East Chicago library, never comes across Anderson's novel. He does find and reject *Moby Dick*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *Tender is the Night* (*Summer Crossing* 230).

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THE "MIDDLE" IN DIANE JOHNSON'S MIDAMERICA: THE SPACE IN BETWEEN

CAROLYN A. DURHAM

Given the particular nature of the humor and the satire that characterize all of Diane Johnson's work, perhaps it is not surprising that the novelist's relationship to the West is itself marked by a strong sense of the ironic and the paradoxical. Although six of the eleven novels that Johnson has published to date are set in California, three in the South and three in the North, she has struggled throughout her career to resist the desire of reviewers to relegate her to a series of excessively narrow categories, the most persistent of which has been "regional novelist." Notably, the first published interview with Johnson appeared in the 1983 anthology, *Women Writers of the West Coast* (ed. Marilyn Yalom), where she is featured in the company of "ten of the best," including Maxine Hong Kingston and Tillie Olsen; and as late as 1995, almost ten years after she first set a novel outside the United States, one of the relatively rare critical essays on her work was published in *San Francisco in Fiction: Essays in a Regional Literature* (ed. David Fine & Paul Skenazy), where she finds herself in the company of Joan Didion and, once again, Maxine Hong Kingston. As Johnson put it at the time, "It's puzzling to find yourself being categorized as a regional writer of some sort from a region not your own" (qtd. in McCaffery 205).

Yet, despite this initial appearance of dislocation, the introduction to *San Francisco in Fiction* offers an overview of the relationship between the writer and the place that clearly positions Diane Johnson within its borders. Taking San Francisco as a metaphor for California as a whole, David Fine and Paul Skenazy note that the literary city is almost exclusively the creation of non-natives: nonresidents, strangers, and outsiders: "California, and particularly San Francisco, presents an unusual form of American regionalism . . . a place written about for people living elsewhere, by writers who come

from elsewhere" (8). Moreover, Fine and Skenazy sketch a portrait of a fictional California whose primary characteristics evoke the generic landscape of Johnson's novels, regardless of their specific setting, with extraordinary accuracy. This mythic California is a place of "cultural confrontations, assimilations, and resistances," defined by a process of "grafting or hybridization," which makes it "not so much a place as . . . an adventure, a kind of border crossing" for a "hybrid or hyphenated population" (9-15). In addition, the mythology of California promises, as does Johnson's fiction, both "evasion and escape" and a future marked by "mingled fear and [a] sense of foreboding" (13-15). The patterns and processes that Fine and Skenazy discover in the regional literature of California are those to which Johnson will contribute throughout her career, first by their direct development and reinscription in her own "California" novels and then by their evolution and displacement to a broader context in her more recent "European" works. In all instances, "California" remains what Wallace Stegner has identified as "America only more so" (qtd. in Fine and Skenazy 14) and what Johnson herself has called "if not anywhere in America, [then] the future of America" (qtd. in Todd 122). In all instances as well, her "America" is always a realm of diversity, viewed from within a cross-cultural framework.

One of the ironies of Johnson's reputation as a West Coast writer lies in her insistence that despite her frequent travels and extended stays in Europe, Africa, and western Asia, it is in California that she has always felt most like an outsider. Johnson was born and raised in Moline, Illinois; educated at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, and transplanted to California (first to Los Angeles, then to San Francisco) only as a result of her two successive marriages. Although she maintains that the geography of her fiction is arbitrarily determined by where she happens to be living, she has also attributed her career-long interest in cultural difference and marginal characters to the fact that Midwesterners are automatically displaced once they leave the comfort, order, stability, certainty, and security that she associates with the central United States. I quote from a 2003 interview: "I think I've always been a bit deracinated as a Midwesterner. Like other Midwesterners, once I left the Midwest and its very nourishing and womblike atmosphere, I felt a bit like a stranger. In California, for example, I don't fall in with a completely Californian lifestyle or way of feeling things" (Durham 2004).

In a further ironic twist, even if none of Johnson's published fiction is set in the Middle West, it is nonetheless the region of her childhood and pre-doctoral education whose complex and sometimes contradictory influences appear to underlie her subsequent work as a writer most profoundly. I use the term "*Middle West*" advisedly, since it is in fact the concept and connotations of "middle" that prove to be of particular significance. A self-described "DAR wasp," growing up in what Johnson characterizes as a "Scandinavian town" without the interesting ethnic origins and memories of her friends and neighbors, she came to think of herself as "a default American" long before her departure for California (Durham 2006). At the same time, however, her early experience as "a midwestern child from a rather bookish and cultivated home" led to a passion for intellectual pursuits to which she attributes the "feelings of misfittedness" she first experienced, once again, not in L.A. or Berkeley but in her own home town (qtd. in Groag Bell 124-25). This "landlocked child of the prairie who wanted to cross the seas" sought adventure in her favorite books: *Around the World with Bob and Betty*, Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, and, most importantly, the story that remains one of Johnson's most beloved, Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* (*Natural Opium* xiv). "Family lore," however, did not, in Johnson's words, "congratulate" adventurers, and the satire of the fundamental caution and conservatism of Middle America constitutes yet another aspect of Johnson's original regionalism. On the model of the novelist's (re)construction of the Midwest, her characters tend to be timid seekers of excitement who see their fundamental "Americanness" as a kind of "middle" state, a permanent uprootedness, in which they are always "in-between" the place in which they find themselves and the one from which they have come.

Tellingly, perhaps, Johnson now thinks that her first and still unpublished work of fiction, the only one set in the Midwest, may have been a young adult novel (Durham 2006). The story of a quest for evidence that the Vikings discovered Minnesota, *Runes*, as the title suggests, clearly already associates writing with foreign adventure. Only two of Johnson's so-called "California novels" explicitly feature transplanted Midwesterners as central characters. In an unexpected, albeit characteristic, cross-cultural switch, Karen's sense of disorientation in *Loving Hands at Home* (1968) stems far more from the conservative beliefs and values of the traditional Mormon family into which she has married than from the novel's L.A. setting; more-

over, Johnson's narrator conceives her efforts to escape her stultifying life in the curious form of a metaphorical return to the Midwest. She fantasizes about "being Alma," the town "bad girl" of Bede, Iowa, whose life she imagines to have been full of the risky acts of rebellion that Karen has denied herself; inevitably, in keeping with the irony characteristic of Johnson, the star of the romantic Paris adventure, which Karen imagines for Alma, turns out to have died absurdly in Iowa from an allergic reaction to penicillin. Marybeth, the heroine of *Lying Low* (1978), set in San Francisco, shares Karen's nostalgia, no doubt because she can never return to Bettendorf, Iowa. In an extreme example of Johnson's permanently deracinated characters and the only one specifically located within the space in between the Midwest and the West, the former student radical in hiding, most often referred to as simply "the girl," has not only definitively lost her real identity, but a succession of assumed names has left her with no fixed identity at all. *Burning* (1971) is the only of her novels whose California setting Johnson acknowledges to be both intentional and significant; this novel logically privileges the viewpoints of two California natives. Yet, from the perspective of Bingo and Barney's decidedly Middle American morality, a stereotypically West Coast culture of drugs, sex, and violence is seen as a fascinating but dangerously foreign world. As Barney summarizes the situation midway through the novel: "Cops, robbery, suspects, loony psychiatrists, nude firemen, unfit mothers. Tomorrow he would build a colossal, eight-foot high fence" (128).

As Annette Kolodny points out in her call for a new literary history of American frontiers, the impact of region on the creation of literary texts has traditionally met with critical condescension, leading to the underestimation of the importance of place as a source of meaning in fiction (2). If Johnson, as we know, has actively sought to escape what she, too, regards as "the stigma of 'place' novels," the concept of place, in contrast, is absolutely key to her construction of her literary world (qtd. in Todd 122). In keeping with her interpretation of California as a metaphor for America itself, the true protagonists of her fiction are more often places than characters or plots as Johnson takes us on a satirical tour of the generic spaces—the aptly named Dynamic Space Corporation in *Fair Game* (1965), the suburban neighborhood in *Loving Hands at Home*, the government agency in *Burning*, the public housing complex in *The Shadow Knows* (1974), the boarding house in *Lying Low*, the modern health care institution in

Health and Happiness (1990)—that allow her to address the broadly social, moral, and especially cultural issues that inform her comic novels of manners. In this context, the publication in 1990, twelve years after the appearance of *Lying Low*, of a final novel, at least to date, set in California is particularly telling. Johnson's comments on the functioning of spatial metaphor in *Health and Happiness* implicitly clarify both why she was able to return to San Francisco and why she would subsequently move on to non-American sites: "In a big, open society like ours, you can no longer write novels of manners . . . in which the jokes or turns of plot depend on who is out of place. *There is no place*. But in hospitals there are ranks and social rules and . . . characters [who] move within, and against, these [hierarchical] structures' (qtd. in Bruckner, my emphasis).

Given the primacy of place in Johnson's body of work, it can seem particularly ironic to learn what aspect of the writing process she finds most boring: "I hate to do descriptions. I hate to have to bother . . . so I have to *make* myself describe . . . [and] I leave it out as much as possible" (qtd. in Groag Bell 133). In fact, Johnson's resistance to the inclusion of detail is of course fully consistent with her preference for the formal composition of generic locations over the realistic depiction of specific locales. Thus, what Johnson finds most interesting about writing corresponds not only to the abstract spaces privileged in her fiction but also, perhaps, to that nostalgia for "order" she attributes to all Midwesterners transplanted to California. Indeed, her preferred moment of writing occurs during the process of revision in which she frequently reorganizes episodes and reorders material within chapters. In general, Johnson speaks repeatedly of her books as having "shape" or "form," and she specifically conceptualizes the process of their construction in spatial terms (see, for example, McCaffery 203). More intriguing still, in light of the experience of her characters and the dynamics of her plots, is her particular fascination with what she calls "the space in between" two events in preference to the events themselves: "It's not that someone climbs up the ladder and then someone pulls out the ladder; it's in that perception you have that the ladder's going to fall that interest is generated" (qtd. in Durham 2004). Appropriately, then, it is the foregrounding within Johnson's work of a particularly visible pattern of spatial form that also highlights a newly explicit cross-cultural focus in the two books that precede and follow her final "California" novel. In both *Persian Nights* (1987) and *Le Divorce* (1997), a complex sys-

tem of epigraphs functions at once as a meaningful text in its own right and as a *mise en abyme* of the novel as a whole. *Persian Nights* is suspended in the space in between the poetry of Matthew Arnold and the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*; *Le Divorce* metaphorically seeks to bridge the distance between Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* and Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*.

The particular form of intertextuality practiced by Johnson takes us back once again to her Midwest childhood, where she spent Saturdays working her way through the local library's version of the "World's Great Novels" (qtd. in Todd 121). For, in another apparent contradiction, Johnson, a voracious reader who read no living American writers before entering college, has been most strongly influenced by European novelists of the nineteenth century (with the notable exception of Mark Twain) and such displaced American writers as Edith Wharton and Henry James. Since 1994, the migratory pattern enacted in Johnson's childhood and adult life has been reproduced on a yearly basis; as an unintended consequence, once again, of marriage, the novelist now divides her time equally between her "homes" (the designation is consciously chosen, in both cases, by her) in Paris and San Francisco. This constant restaging of her original experience as a "deracinated" Midwesterner positions her literally in "the space in between." The same permanent sense of uprootedness that left Johnson bewildered to find herself paradoxically described by the highly grounded term of "regional writer" perfectly suits her alternate sense of her own self as "a natural travel writer," and her recent fiction actively seeks to revitalize the tradition of the "international novel" closely associated with Wharton and James (see Durham 2004 and 2006).

In keeping with her practice of writing about what surrounds her, between 1997 and 2003, Johnson published three novels—*Le Divorce* (1997), *Le Mariage* (2000), and *L'Affaire* (2003)—that take place in France, primarily in Paris, and together form a Franco-American trilogy. Or, alternatively, even interchangeably, a *Franco-Californian* trilogy. In a final ironic twist, it is only in Johnson's recent fiction, set outside the United States and responsible for her growing international reputation, that the importance of California to the novelist's sense of herself as a specifically American writer, addressing an explicitly American public, becomes clear. As early as 1983, Johnson characterized the thinking of critics who dismissed her characters as "unlike real people *because they live in California*,"

as "very shortsighted," and stated her conviction that "Californization" was "going to be accelerated" as it "travel[ed] eastward" (qtd. in McCaffery 205). Certainly, for the French and for a great many other non-Americans, "America" is now in many ways far more synonymous with a mythic "California" than with its "New York" counterpart. In exact imitation, then, of the paradigm of Californian regionalism set up by Fine and Skenazy (outlined above) Johnson's recent fiction features a multinational population that crosses borders to encounter cultural differences both exciting and frightening. Only the identity of the outsider has changed; a role once played by the Midwesterner transplanted to California is now enacted by the displaced Californian in Europe.

As California becomes synonymous with "Americanness" in this cross-cultural context, Johnson continues to foreground the importance of place, even as her humor becomes more broadly caricatured and parodic. In particular, a California associated with the entertainment world plays a newly prominent role. In *Le Divorce*, for example, Disneyland Paris functions at once as an internal duplication of the novel's global references and as a miniature America. After six months in what Isabel Walker calls "the make-believe world of France," she finds herself unexpectedly back in California in this more familiar fantasy world: "It was all so decorative and sweet, an idealized America, and I had to admit it was nice to be back in America, especially America refined to its ideal essence" (263). In *Le Mariage*, an American filmmaker (modeled on Stanley Kubrick, for whom Johnson wrote the script of *The Shining*) returns home to scout West Coast locations; the director's quest for "painful realism" turns into an ironic tour of a caricatured America of religious cults, right-wing radicals, and militia compounds that quickly repositions us "in the films of Clint Eastwood" (253). *L'Affaire*, set in a hotel in the French Alps, which caters to an international clientele, locates its displaced California heroine in what is literally an "in between space," indeed the epitome of the transient and intermediary "non-places" of the globalized world of postmodernity (see Clifford 17 and Tomlinson).

In the third installment of what Johnson thinks of as a "continuation of my experience of being an American in France," a newly rich dotcom executive comes to Europe in pursuit of "culture, in its broadest sense" as part of a naively optimistic "program of self-perfection" (31, 2). Inevitably, much of the satire in *L'Affaire* comes at Amy's

expense as she turns out to be much more interested in the pragmatic than the abstract, woefully uninformed about French history and culture, and a staunch defender of both capitalism and the superiority of her native country. She is, in short, irredeemably American: "like it or not, she was an American person from Palo Alto, there was no getting around this" (328). In illustration of the extraordinary coherence of Johnson's body of fiction, despite its varying topographies, Amy thus comes to the very same realization as the resident California heroine of *Fair Game*, Johnson's first novel: the curious fact that "one goes on being the same self in strange lands" (36). At the same time, however, Amy, much like the novelist herself, makes a second discovery, that she has paradoxically also "become homeless, fitting neither here, nor, she had a suspicion, there, if ever she had" (337).

Throughout a career of writing about America in the context of other societies and from the perspective of outsiders—Midwesterners in California, Californians in Europe—Johnson confirms Alfred Kazin's explanation for "the essential sense of place" that he attributes to the American literary tradition, the fact "that we are strangers to each other and that each writer describes his own world to strangers living in the same land" (qtd. in Fine and Skenazy 7). If the rigor with which her fiction can be "mapped" is what distinguishes Johnson's work from that of her contemporaries, as one reviewer argues, her fictional map clearly represents a particularly complex and complicated geographic area, one which challenges us as readers and critics to rethink not only what "Midwestern" or "Western"—or "regional" literature in general—might mean, but also, and more importantly, what value it might have (Bruckner). *Lulu in Marrakech* (2008) locates Johnson's latest deracinated American in the hybridized world of Morocco in keeping with the writer's ongoing desire to produce fiction that will contribute to cross-cultural and international understanding by helping Americans see themselves as others see them (Durham 2006).

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THE ART OF ATONEMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF THE JEWISH CHARACTER IN WILLIAM MAXWELL'S SHORT FICTION

GRETCHEN COMBA

INTRODUCTION¹

In addition to his six novels, one memoir, and one volume of essay-reviews, William Maxwell published sixty-three stories between 1936 and 1999 in magazines and journals.² Although Maxwell published two volumes of stories, two volumes of tales (one printed privately), as well as one volume of collected stories, many of the stories first published in periodicals never appeared in any of these collections, and some, when they appeared in a collection, were reprinted under different titles or as revised texts, the revisions ranging from the slight to the substantial. Among these stories is "Abbie's Birthday," which first appeared in the August 1941 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, and was later re-titled "Haller's Second Home," as well as substantially revised, to appear in the 1977 collection *Over by the River and Other Stories*. One of the most striking differences between the earlier version of the story, "Abbie's Birthday," and the later version, "Haller's Second Home," is the introduction of a distinctly Jewish character in the later version. And although Maxwell does not deal directly with social prejudice in relation to Jewish ethnicity in "Haller's Second Home," he does so in another, later, story titled "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge," which was first published in *Eudora Welty: A Tribute—13 April 1984*, edited by Stuart Wright, and later appeared in the 1992 collection *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*. In "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge," Maxwell explores social prejudice in a place and time familiar to those who know his work, Lincoln, Illinois, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, with an emphasis on prejudice in relation to economic class, nationalist sentiment, and Jewish ethnicity. In the roughly 2000-word story, the narrator comes to terms with an act he

committed as a boy, discovering not only his individual capacity for cruelty, but his part in a collective culpability with relation to social prejudice. Examination of the two versions of the story Maxwell first titled "Abbie's Birthday" in 1941, and then later re-titled "Haller's Second Home" in 1977, suggests that in the thirty-six-year span between the publication of the first version and the publication of the last version Maxwell's consciousness with regard to Jewish ethnicity, as well as the social prejudice that Jews face, heightened into the need for atonement evident in the 1984 story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge."

THE UNEASY UNDERCURRENT: SIMILARITIES IN "ABBIE'S BIRTHDAY" AND "HALLER'S SECOND HOME"

In the first and only book-length critical work on Maxwell, *William Maxwell: A Literary Life*, Barbara Burkhardt treats the later version of the story, "Haller's Second Home." According to Burkhardt, the story "offer[s] a celebration of everyday home life mitigated by unease and tragedy" (89), for "[w]hat beg[ins] as an account of the comforts of 'Haller's Second Home' ends with [the] haunting image of a young soldier's ultimate sacrifice..." (91).³ As in the later version, the earlier version is set during the build-up to World War II, and takes place on the twenty-fifth birthday of a young woman named Abbie, who lives with her parents and two younger brothers in a city apartment. Told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, the story opens from the point-of-view of Haller, the family friend who has come to celebrate Abbie's birthday; but it closes from the point-of-view of Abbie, who ultimately gains an understanding of the war, of its life and death consequences, and is thereby initiated into the world of adulthood. Had Burkhardt treated the earlier version, "Abbie's Birthday," she would have found that it does in fact support one of her main claims related to the later version, "Haller's Second Home," for it offers a portrait of the uneasy undercurrent that lies beneath the surface of a family celebration during a time of impending American involvement in war. In addition, like so many of Maxwell's other works, and not so coincidentally like the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge," the story "Abbie's Birthday" is a coming-of-age story, for ultimately Abbie Malone comes to realize the tragic nature of life and is thereby ushered into the adult world.

Although "Abbie's Birthday" opens from Haller's point-of-view, the story ultimately belongs to Abbie Malone who, by the final pages of the story, transitions from youth to adulthood in her recognition of the world beyond her bedroom door. Upon entering the apartment, Haller remarks that the table looks to be set for a birthday party, to which Mrs. Malone replies, "I don't know whether it is or not. I got home late and there were no preparations of any kind. Abbie has forbidden Renee to bake a cake and so I'm just trying to rustle something together..." ("Abbie's Birthday" 86). Abbie's refusal of a birthday celebration suggests her unwillingness to acknowledge that she is another year older, that she is, and has been, at least legally, an adult for several years. As Haller comes upon the closed door of Abbie's bedroom, he reflects on how the room is "like an island ...continuously shut off from what went on in the rest of the apartment and from what went on in the world" ("Abbie's Birthday" 86). Abbie is self-involved, and what occurs beyond her door is something of which she is not willing to be a part. Sequestered in her bedroom with Haller, she speculates on the health of one of her kittens: "Probably it's nothing but imagination...because he's only been this way since last night, but he seems thinner than the others, and his fur is dry and sickly looking" ("Abbie's Birthday" 125). She feels the kitten's backbone and announces that it is broken. Haller suggests that if the kitten's back is broken, it ought to be euthanized with chloroform, and "Abbie decided that the kitten's back was not broken. Though it was possible that somebody had stepped on it" ("Abbie's Birthday" 125). Abbie is unable to consider that a sick kitten might need to be euthanized; indeed, her attitude seems to be one of mock seriousness, again suggesting that she has yet to acknowledge and accept the reality of an adult world which includes suffering and death.

It is only with Roger Wolcott's unexpected arrival from army camp that Abbie begins to recognize that the world is partly made up of tragic circumstances. When Haller, along with Abbie and her two brothers, convene in the front hall around Roger, Haller reflects on how Roger has lost fifteen pounds, how in uniform and with his hair cut short "he looks like a prisoner, an escaped convict" ("Abbie's Birthday" 125). And despite Abbie's joke that Roger's "World War pants" are "lovely" ("Abbie's Birthday" 125), she is, seemingly for the first time, aware of the larger implications of Roger's situation: As she pulls Roger away from the others there is "no color in her face; only a rising tension, and anxiety" ("Abbie's Birthday" 125). In see-

ing Roger, as well as in listening to his stories, Abbie's transformation is brought about. Roger tells them about the train ride to the induction center, the induction itself, the psychiatric and medical examinations, and the issuance of clothing. Haller, Abbie, and Abbie's brothers realize the gravity of the coming war in a way that they hadn't in reading about it. They experience it through "the prisoner's tone" of Roger's voice, "Roger who belonged to them" ("Abbie's Birthday" 127). Roger, in essence, brings the war home, and while all of them are moved, it is Abbie who, unlike her brothers who are too young, and who, unlike Haller who already knows of suffering, is ushered into the adult world. For as Haller considered earlier, since Roger was drafted Abbie's "nice sensible world had been removed from under her..." ("Abbie's Birthday" 124); she is on the cusp of innocence and experience.

When Haller leaves for the evening, the point-of-view shifts to Abbie; and this transition structurally suggests that Abbie is now capable of a less self-involved, more adult, perspective, a perspective that includes the acknowledgment of possible tragedy. Abbie, in her bedroom, listens to Roger and her brothers talking in another bedroom, and then hears no sound except Roger's coughing. Abbie is almost asleep when the sick kitten wakes her up with his complaints. She had almost forgotten about the kitten, but she considers how "there was at least one member of the household who could be put out of his misery" ("Abbie's Birthday" 127). Roger's mental, emotional, and physical suffering has made her aware of the world outside the confines of her room: she understands that there is suffering out there in the world and that, as an adult, she must take responsible action. She considers how she is now twenty-five years old, and how so far her life has been all right, but that "I know what's coming and I'd so much rather—I'd so much rather *skip* it" ("Abbie's Birthday" 127). When she brings Roger an extra blanket from her bed, Roger wakes up and turns on his side. As she sits down he "wormed around in the bed until his thighs were at her back and his forehead touched her knee. There he stayed, without moving, without any pressure coming from his body at all" ("Abbie's Birthday" 127). Abbie thinks: "*I might as well be a rock...I might be a rock in the sea and Roger a drowned man washed up against me*" ("Abbie's Birthday" 127). She wants to tell Roger of what she knows, "but when she tried to tell him she discovered that he was no longer there. He had dropped right back into sleep, and this time she didn't have the heart to wake him"

("Abbie's Birthday" 127). Her disinclination to wake him, to allow him to ease her anxiety at the expense of his own emotional well-being, suggests that Abbie is now not only aware of the tragedy that may befall Roger in war, but is also now capable of acting responsibly to those around her.

Ultimately, the early version of the story, "Abbie's Birthday," and the later version, "Haller's Second Home" follow the same structure, with the same shifting point of view, and the same subject matter as indicated by Abbie's initiation into adulthood. As in the later version, the early version suggests the uneasy undercurrent that lies beneath the surface of a family celebration, both in the implied death of Roger Wolcott in the coming war, and in Abbie's recognition of human suffering outside her bedroom door.

FROM IRISH TO JEWISH: SHIFTING ETHNICITY IN "ABBIE'S BIRTHDAY" AND "HALLER'S SECOND HOME"

Despite the similarity of structure and primary subject matter, the earlier version of the story, "Abbie's Birthday," differs from the later version, "Haller's Second Home," in four significant ways. First, the earlier version is set in an ambiguous location, whereas the later version is definitively set in New York City. Second, the expository paragraphs of the earlier version background how Haller was first introduced to the family, which was through a letter from a cousin in Ohio. In the later version, the expository paragraphs background how Haller was introduced to the family through his friend Dick Shields's fiancé, and a love triangle between Haller, Dick Shields, and Dick Shields's fiancé is suggested.⁴ Third, while in the earlier version a love relationship between Abbie and Roger is suggested, in the later version a love relationship between Abbie and Haller is implied.⁵ Finally, and most importantly for the purpose of this paper, in the earlier version the surname name of the family that Haller visits is Malone, whereas in the later version the surname is Mendelsohn. In addition, a substantial amount of text is added to the later version, text which details Dr. Mendelsohn's background and touches upon his ethnic heritage, ultimately adding a layer to the story not present in the earlier version.

In the early version of the story the characters are not suggested to be anything other than Gentiles; indeed, the surname of the surrogate family whom Haller visits is Malone, a surname most commonly associated with Irish ethnicity. Mrs. Malone, the matron of the house, is described as Irish: "She was a stately woman with black hair and

blue eyes and a kind of Irish beauty which, despite her years, was clear and sharp enough to go on a coin" ("Abbie's Birthday" 86). In this version Dr. Malone remains a nondescript figure who "was seldom anything but kind and considerate to his family" ("Abbie's Birthday" 86), and who "did not like cats of any description and was positive that they contributed to his asthma" ("Abbie's Birthday" 124). The only other information about Dr. Malone in this version is revealed through his description of a troublesome patient. No reference to his background or ethnicity is provided and, as a character, he is all but absent from the narrative except in relation to the development of other characters.

In the later version the surname given the family whom Haller visits is Mendelsohn, a surname more commonly associated with Jewish ethnicity. In addition, the character of the doctor is much more fully painted, the economic hardship of his upbringing serving as a counterpoint to the economic ease afforded his children. Although Dr. Mendelsohn's ethnic heritage is not emphasized in the narrative, the shift from Irish to Jewish ethnicity in terms of character identity, at the very least, suggests Maxwell's growing consciousness of Jewish ethnicity. In the earlier version the matron of the house is described as having "a kind of Irish beauty," and in the later version she is described as "half Irish and a half English—at least her grandparents were" (*Over by the River* 153). In the revision, Maxwell is much more direct in terms of describing her ethnic heritage, although he is less direct in describing the ethnic heritage of her husband. Dr. Mendelsohn is described as "the oldest son of an immigrant couple who did not speak English" (*Over by the River* 161), a boy from a poverty-stricken family who had to search "for food in the refuse cans" (*Over by the River* 161). And yet he "got curiously high marks in school...[and] by a long unbroken chain of miracles he put himself through medical school" (*Over by the River* 162). Dr. Mendelsohn is baffled by the behavior of his children, who, "lacking the hardships that shaped his character", act with indolence and immaturity. (*Over by the River* 162) Dr. Mendelsohn's "Hungarian" parents are now dead and, according to his son Nathan, Dr. Mendelsohn "didn't like Gentiles...although he didn't like most Jews either" (*Over by the River* 163). Although the previously quoted line is the only reference to Dr. Mendelsohn's Jewish ethnicity, and an indirect one at that, in changing the doctor's identity from presum-

ably Irish to definitively Jewish in the revision of the story, Maxwell, perhaps for the first time, creates a decidedly Jewish character.

The introduction of a Jewish character in place of an Irish character suggests Maxwell's consciousness of ethnicity in relation to the characters he chose to portray. In addition, the decision to create a Jewish character in the later version may suggest that Maxwell, either consciously or unconsciously, was coming to terms with anti-Semitic attitudes, attitudes that he deals with directly in his story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge."

MAX RABINOWITZ AND DR. MENDELSON: THE ART OF ATONEMENT
IN "WITH REFERENCE TO AN INCIDENT AT A BRIDGE"

The introduction of a Jewish character in "Haller's Second Home" suggests Maxwell's growing awareness of ethnicity and its place in his work. While his first novel, *Bright Center of Heaven*, attempts to give voice to African American characters and, hence, bring to light issues of racism in the Midwest in the first quarter of the twentieth-century, it is not until the 15 May 1989 *New Yorker* story "Billie Dyer" and the 23 September 1991 *New Yorker* story "The Front and Back Parts of the House"⁶ that Maxwell's writing on race and racism in America is fully realized. Both of these stories later appeared in the collection *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*, along with the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge," which centers on the narrator's relationship with a young Jewish boy of limited economic means and, hence, lower social class. In this story the narrator confronts his own culpability in relation to economic, nationalist, and ethnic prejudice. Viewed in the light of Maxwell's growing consciousness with regard to Jewish ethnicity as seen in his revision of the magazine version "Abbie's Birthday" to what ultimately appeared in a collected volume as "Haller's Second Home," the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" attests to Maxwell's growth as a writer with regard to exploring ethnic prejudice in relation to Jews, and even atoning for such prejudice.

The story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" revolves around a single incident from the first-person narrator's past. As a boy of twelve, the narrator urges a group of younger boys to run from one side of a bridge to the other, knowing full well that in colliding with the railing on the other side they will inevitably hurt themselves. Set in Lincoln in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the narrator looks back on that time and place as an "Earthly Paradise, the apple

that Eve prevailed upon Adam to eat being as yet an abstraction, and therefore to all intents and purposes still on the tree" (*Billie Dyer* 61). The narrator too, at that time, is in a state of grace, and the incident at the bridge is the event that marks his fall. At twelve years old he is on the cusp of young adulthood, and eligible for initiation into two significant social institutions: the Presbyterian Church and the Boy Scouts. Once initiated into the Presbyterian Church, he recites the Apostle's Creed. The present-day narrator reflects: "That any part of this formal confession was not self-evident did not cross my mind, nor, I think, anyone else's. We said it because it was true, and vice versa" (*Billie Dyer* 63-4). Neither the youthful narrator nor the other church members reflect upon the meaning of any portion of the creed, which includes the belief in "the forgiveness of sins" (*Billie Dyer* 63). Once initiated into the Boy Scouts, he recites the Boy Scouts' pledge "with the same fervor that I recited the Apostle's Creed" (*Billie Dyer* 64). All of the Boy Scouts "were drawn from the Presbyterian Sunday school" and the scoutmaster of the troop, Professor Oglevee, "was an unordained minister and an Elder in the Presbyterian church" (*Billie Dyer* 64). The correlation between the Presbyterian Church and the Boy Scouts sets up a sphere of exclusivity marked by economic class. Professor Oglevee, who bridges the two institutions, is of the privileged class, educated and teaching "biology in Lincoln College," and living "in a beautiful old mansion at the edge of the town. It had been built by a pillar of the church, whose widow Professor Oglevee was in the position of a son to" (*Billie Dyer* 64). Professor Oglevee is urbane: it is within the walls of his home that the narrator "heard the word 'whom' for the first time" (*Billie Dyer* 64). With his participation in both the Presbyterian Church and the Boy Scouts, the narrator is entrenched within this social sphere as defined by economic class.

The narrator of the story, entrenched as he is in the world of the upper-middle class, appears to deny that ethnicity is a factor in his relationship with the young Max Rabinowitz. He first comes in contact with Max when he becomes one of the leaders of the Cub Scouts that, unlike the Boy Scouts, "did not all go to the Presbyterian Sunday school" (*Billie Dyer* 66). Although Max is first marked as different because of his Jewish heritage, the narrator later identifies that Max's economic and immigrant status are what marginalize him. Unlike the "dozen or more old families in town who were German Jews," Max Rabinowitz's "father had a clothing store on a rather dingy side street facing the interurban tracks and the Chicago & Alton depot, and was a Russian Jew" (*Billie Dyer* 66). The

narrator describes the two men of the older Jewish families: "Nate Landauer ran a ladies' ready-to-wear shop on the north side of the courthouse square, and his brother-in-law, Julius Jacobs, a men's clothing store on the west side of the square" (*Billie Dyer* 66). That Landauer and Jacobs are proprietors of stores on the courthouse square stands in direct contrast to Max Rabinowitz's father's store on a "side street facing the interurban tracks," suggesting what the narrator then states explicitly: that prejudice in 1920s Lincoln was not defined by religion, but rather by economic class. For although "the school yard had various forms of unpleasantness, anti-Semitism was not one of them" (*Billie Dyer* 66-7). According to the narrator, "In the Presbyterian church, the doctrine of Original Sin was held over our heads, with no easy or certain way to get off the hook. It was hardly to be expected that the Crucifixion was something the Jews could live down" (*Billie Dyer* 67). Considering the nature of social acceptance in Lincoln in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the narrator finds that in "Looking back, I can see that manners entered into it, but so did money. The people my parents considered to be of good families all had, or had had, land, income from property, something beside wages from a job" (*Billie Dyer* 66). Appearing in the final clause of the first declarative statement, "money" rather than "manners" is given emphasis. The second sentence elaborates on the point, once again emphasizing money as the key to social acceptance. Indeed, Mrs. Landauer and Mrs. Jacobs "both belonged to [the narrator's] mother's bridge club" (*Billie Dyer* 67). Thus, Max Rabinowitz's family is socially unacceptable not because of their Jewish heritage, but because of their lower economic status.

The Rabinowitz family is marginalized not only because of economic class, but because of nationalist sentiment. The clothing store is not situated in the fashionable area of town, and when the narrator tries "to recall what the inside of Mr. Rabinowitz's store was like, what emerges through the mists of time is an impression of thick-soled shoes, heavy denim, corduroy and flannel—work clothes of the cheapest kind" (*Billie Dyer* 67). According to the narrator, "The bank held a mortgage on the stock or I don't know Arkansas" (*Billie Dyer* 67). In addition, the members of the Rabinowitz family, as recent immigrants, do not speak the Standard American English of Lincoln's social elite. Unlike the "dozen or more *old* families in town who were German Jews" (*Billie Dyer* 66, emphasis mine) or the urbane Professor Oglevee, in whose home the narrator first learned the distinction between subjective- and objective-case pronouns, the Rabinowitz fam-

ily "spoke imperfect English, and had only recently passed through Ellis Island" (*Billie Dyer* 67). The emphasis on the type or quality of language spoken, as well as the duration of time that the Rabinowitz family, as opposed to the Landauer and Jacobs families, has been in the country points to a social prejudice stemming from a nationalist sentiment. Questioning why "Maxie want[ed] to be a Cub Scout", the narrator wonders if "in his loneliness he just wanted to belong to a group, any group, of boys his own age" (*Billie Dyer* 67-8). Until joining the Cub Scouts, Max, like the entire Rabinowitz family, is denied acceptance into the narrator's social sphere.

At the turning point of the narrator's remembrance, he and the other Boy Scouts put the Cub Scouts through a rite of initiation. Although "a footrace with blindfolds on" is suggested, the narrator then "noticed that the bridge we were standing on had low sides that came up to the little boys' belly buttons" (*Billie Dyer* 68). The present-day narrator admits:

I cannot pretend that I didn't know what was going to happen, but a part of me that I was not sufficiently well acquainted with had taken over suddenly, and he/I lined the blindfolded boys up with their backs to one side of the bridge, facing the other, and said 'On your marks, get set, go!...' and they charged bravely across the bridge into the opposite railing and knocked the wind out of themselves. (*Billie Dyer* 68)

The dual pronoun suggests the binary nature of the narrator at the time: there is the kind or innocent character who, out of a sense of unexamined duty, "help[s] elderly people across the street who could have managed perfectly well on their own" (*Billie Dyer* 68), and the cruel or experienced character who asks the Cub Scouts to propel themselves into a bridge railing. As suggested by the image of the bridge, the narrator is in transition from innocence to experience. Like Professor Oglevee, who once shocked the young narrator by using the term "piss-elm," he is a "fallible human being" (*Billie Dyer* 66). The narrator purports to "believe in the forgiveness of sins. Some sins. I also believe that what is done is done and cannot be undone. The reason I didn't throw myself on my knees in the dust and beg them (and God) to forgive me is that I knew He wouldn't, and that even if He did, I wouldn't forgive myself" (*Billie Dyer* 68). Having transitioned from childhood to young adulthood through discovering his own capacity for cruelty, the narrator is now able to reflect on the Apostles' Creed, and to decide for himself what is forgivable.

Standing on the bridge, the young narrator "tore Max Rabinowitz's blindfold off and held him by the shoulders until his gasping subsided" (*Billie Dyer* 68). In singling out Max Rabinowitz, the social outcast, the narrator acknowledges that he is responsible not only for the individual act of cruelty, but for the larger issue of social prejudice in the time and place of his upbringing. The narrator recalls the act: "But I have remembered it. I have remembered it because it was the moment I learned that I was not to be trusted" (*Billie Dyer* 69).

Just as Maxwell examines social prejudice in terms of race in "Billie Dyer" and "The Front and the Back Parts of the House," so he examines social prejudice in terms of economic class and nationalist sentiment in "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge." As Burkhardt points out in her discussion of "Billie Dyer" and "The Front and the Back Parts of the House," Maxwell "ponders the gap between the races of an earlier time and place while attempting, retroactively, to make amends in a small way through fiction" (269). In "Bridge" he similarly makes amends, acknowledging, and perhaps even atoning, for prejudice related to economic class, as well as a nationalistic sentiment that privileges well-established citizens. And yet, despite the narrator's attempts to disavow an inherited anti-Semitism—for although "[t]he school yard had various forms of unpleasantness, anti-Semitism was not one of them"—the story may connote an examination of anti-Semitism as well, as suggested by the fact that the narrator singles out Max Rabinowitz, a Jew, from all of the boys he sent flying into a bridge railing. More convincing evidence, however, that the narrator not only inherited anti-Semitic attitudes, but also is aware of this prejudice, is his assertion that he "was a grown man before I learned about the pogroms that drove the Rabinowitzes away from their homeland" (*Billie Dyer* 67). As an adult, the narrator understands the historical conditions of Tsarist and Revolutionary Russia, and the largely religious, as well as nationalist, sentiment that led to the Jewish pogroms. As his Presbyterian status is underscored in the text, his recognition that he "was not to be trusted" suggests that not only was he instilled with classist and nationalist prejudice, but that he, in his Christian heritage, is aligned with those responsible for the Jewish diaspora. Regardless of the particular social prejudice under examination, Maxwell's intention to acknowledge prejudicial attitudes and "make amends" is evident in "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge."

Viewed in the light of Maxwell's growing consciousness with regard to Jewish ethnicity as seen in his revision of the magazine version of "Abbie's Birthday" to what ultimately appeared in *Over by the River* as "Haller's Second Home," the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" takes on new significance. In "Haller's Second Home," Dr. Mendelsohn is described as the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants who did not speak English, and who lived on the "lower East Side" (*Over by the River* 161) in poverty-stricken conditions. Similarly, Max Rabinowitz is the son of Jewish immigrants, albeit Russian rather than Hungarian, who speak "imperfect English," and who are part of a lower economic class than the narrator. Presumably, the sons and daughters of a "dozen or more old families in town who were German Jews," whose mothers played bridge with the narrator's mother, spoke Standard American English. Like these sons and daughters, and their non immigrant parents, Dr. Mendelsohn's children live without struggle, either economically or socially, for they live comfortably in their parents' home, and have the companionship, and even love, of the Gentile Haller. Perhaps it is because they do not struggle, either economically or socially, that they are afforded the privilege of liking Gentiles, unlike Dr. Mendelsohn who does not like them. His dislike is not surprising, given how his character as a boy parallels that of Max Rabinowitz, whom the Gentile narrator of "Bridge" forced to run into a bridge railing. But perhaps Max's children, like those of Dr. Mendelsohn, were able to grow into a world less stricken with social prejudice.

In the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" Maxwell acknowledges social prejudices related to economic class, nationalist sentiment, and ethnicity. As in the stories "Billie Dyer" and "The Front and the Back Parts of the House," in which Maxwell maturely confronts social prejudice with regard to race in Lincoln, Illinois, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, in the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" he maturely confronts social prejudice with regard to Jewish ethnicity within the same geographical and historical context, suggesting that he re-examined and re-evaluated the past in his later short works. Finally, when the story is placed in the context of "Haller's Second Home," which was revised to shift the ethnicity of Dr. Malone/Dr. Mendelsohn from Irish to Jewish, Maxwell's growing consciousness of ethnic prejudice against Jews in the span of his career is brought to light.

CONCLUSION

Although both "Abbie's Birthday" and "Haller's Second Home" share the same basic structure and primary subject matter, Maxwell significantly changed the story in the later version to include dramatically different threads. One of these threads, the shift from a presumably Irish character to a definitively Jewish character, suggests that in the thirty-six-year span between the publication of the first version of the story and the publication of the last version Maxwell's consciousness with regard to Jewish ethnicity, as well as the social prejudice that Jews face, grew into the need for atonement evident in the story "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge." Given that Maxwell's career spanned fifty-three years, the time frame of which included both the Holocaust and the rise of Jewish literature in the United States, not to mention Maxwell's acquaintance with a number of Jewish writers during his tenure at *The New Yorker*, his heightened awareness of social prejudice against Jews is not surprising. Further inquiry into Maxwell's portrayal of his Jewish characters, particularly in relation to nationality and onomastics, may offer insight into Maxwell's consciousness of the divisions within the shared ethnicity and, thus, yield an even greater understanding of this element in Maxwell's work.

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Notes

¹All of the quotations from "Abbie's Birthday" are cited from the original magazine publication. The quotations from "Haller's Second Home" are cited from *Over by the River and Other Stories*. The quotations from "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" are cited from *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*. There are no substantive variants between "Bridge" as it appeared in *Eudora Welty: A Tribute—13 April 1984* and as it appeared in *Billie Dyer*. In addition, there are no substantive variants between "Haller's Second Home" or "With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge" as they appeared in *Over by the River* and *Billie Dyer* and as they appear in *All the Days and Nights: The Collected Stories of William Maxwell*.

²Of these stories, fifty-two originally appeared in *The New Yorker*, and fourteen originally appeared in the following periodicals: *Life and Letters To-day*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The Cornhill Magazine*, *Perspectives U.S.A.*, *Pax*, *The Paris Review*, *Antaeus*, *Tamaqua*, *Story*, *New England Review*, and *DoubleTake*. In addition, the story "Remembrance of Martinique," which originally appeared in the British journal *Life and Letters To-day*, was revised and reprinted in *The Atlantic Monthly*; and the story "The Front and Back Parts of the House," which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*, was reprinted alongside the previously unpublished story "The Old House" in *Tamaqua*. In total, Maxwell's stories appeared in periodicals sixty-five times.

³In addition to offering an analysis of the later version of the story, "Haller's Second Home," Burkhardt contextualizes the version among other pieces of short fiction that Maxwell wrote during the thirties and forties.

⁴In her discussion of "Haller's Second Home," Burkhardt claims that "[r]eaders of *The Folded Leaf* might sense that as Maxwell was writing about the college days of Lymie, Spud, and Sally, he was also working on a story that projects their potential futures...As in the novel, there is an intimation of a [love] triangle..." (90). Maxwell was likely working on the earlier version, which does not contain the suggestion of a love triangle, during the time that he was also working on *The Folded Leaf*.

⁵Although the intimation of a love triangle is absent from the earlier version, the addition of it to the later version suggests that a love triangle was at least unconsciously present as Maxwell revised the text. In "Abbie's Birthday" Roger Wolcott and Abbie are involved in a relationship that is more than platonic. In "Haller's Second Home," however, the love relationship between Roger Wolcott (whose name is changed to Francis Whitehead in the later version) and Abbie disappears; and yet the idea that Abbie's and Haller's relationship goes beyond the boundaries of friendship is intimated. In looking at the two versions together, a love triangle emerges in the subtext of the two texts: In the early version Roger is involved with Abbie, and in the later version Haller wants to be involved with Abbie. The two versions taken together, despite their significant textual differences, suggest a love triangle in relation to Roger Wolcott/Francis Whitehead, Abbie, and Haller.

⁶The story appeared under the title "The Front and Back Parts of the House" in *The New Yorker* and *Tamaqua*, and under the title "The Front and the Back Parts of the House," without substantive variants, in *Billie Dyer and Other Stories* and *All the Days and Nights: The Collected Stories of William Maxwell*. Hereafter this story will be referred to by its later title.

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MUSIC AND THE SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY IN HAMLIN GARLAND'S "UP THE COOLLY": A NIETZSCHEAN READING

MARK BUECHSEL

In "Up the Coolly," a story that is part of the original 1891 nucleus of Hamlin Garland's story collection, *Main-Travelled Roads*, Howard McLane, a successful Broadway actor, returns to his hometown in western Wisconsin after an absence of ten years. Howard finds his mother and brother Grant living in abject poverty; the latter resents Howard bitterly for neglecting his family all these years. When old friends and neighbors, all of them poor and struggling, come to throw a surprise welcome party for Howard, the gathering comes off awkwardly until it is strangely transfigured by the violin playing of old William McTurg:

The magic of music sobered every face; the women looked older and more careworn, the men slouched sullenly in their chairs, or leaned back against the wall.

It seemed to Howard as if the spirit of tragedy had entered this house. Music had always been William's unconscious expression of his unsatisfied desires. He was never melancholy except when he played. Then his eyes grew somber, his drooping face full of shadows. (77)

It is at this moment, which might be considered the emotional climax of the story, that one suspects an allusion to Nietzschean philosophy; for here we have music conjuring up the spirit of tragedy, a formulation that seems to echo the title of Friedrich Nietzsche's deeply influential book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, published in 1871, twenty years prior to Hamlin Garland's short story collection *Main-Travelled Roads*. It appears that in the artistry of McTurg, Garland is portraying what Nietzsche calls a "Dionysian" spirit, and that the distinction Nietzsche draws between Dionysianism and Apollonianism offers a key to interpreting the deeper spiritual meaning of the struggle between Howard and Grant.

While it is unclear to what extent Garland was, in fact, familiar with Nietzsche's thought in 1891, there is, nonetheless, a certain likelihood of at least a general familiarity. For Garland had studied German (Ahnebrink 65), regarded German literature as superior to American literature, had lectured on such explicitly Nietzschean German writers as Paul Heyse (Pizer 12), possessed a keen interest in contemporary philosophy (Holloway 10), and generally displayed a cosmopolitan tendency in his reading habits and a comparative literature approach in, e.g., his 1885 lecture series at Mrs. Paysen's (Holloway 13-14). To the biographical factors one may add that Nietzsche had scandalized the philological world with his book. His ideas on the nature of the tragic had first become notorious in academic circles, and, then, by the 1890s, his entire philosophical outlook, including the categories established in *The Birth of Tragedy*, had become increasingly famous and popular throughout the Western world (Lenson 6-16; Brinton 177). However, regardless of whether Garland had, indeed, absorbed the Nietzschean distinction between a tragic, substantive Dionysian art and an evasive, idealizing Apollonian one, he, in any case, had been susceptible to the same cultural-philosophical currents that had largely informed Nietzsche's vision, such as Emersonian romanticism, Darwinism and its socio-cultural applications, and writers with nihilistic-existentialist tendencies (Ahnebrink 12; 34-75; Pizer 2). Thus, reading Garland's story through a Nietzschean lens and discussing its critique of modern civilization in terms of Nietzsche's cultural analysis promises to yield relevant insights into Garland's social and artistic vision. A closer look at "Up the Coolly" reveals that what the protagonist, Howard, gains upon his return to Wisconsin is a reconnection both with nature and with the tragic aspects of human reality, a reconnection that sheds a questioning and problematic light on his previous career and mode of life, a sterile existence devoted to pleasing illusions and to a sentimental harmony that does not correlate with the human condition. What finally emerges in the text is a pessimistic and tragic perspective on the human condition that, nonetheless, celebrates the eternal creativity and vitality to which the fleeting individual can be connected, a deeper spiritual vitality that nourishes the human spirit and leads to genuine artistic expression and beauty, as evinced by the violin playing of careworn William McTurg.

The delusory mode from which Howard becomes at least partially converted in the course of the story is what Nietzsche would

call the Apollonian spirit. Apollo, the god of reason and sunlight, emblemizes, for Nietzsche, a spirit that celebrates all that is fixed and static and orderly, a spirit that seeks meaning in the phenomenal world and, as a result, mentally and artistically freezes this fleeting, dynamic world in set and stabilizing patterns. Thus, for instance, the idea of individuals being immortal is perceived by Nietzsche as an Apollonian notion, for at the heart of the Apollonian devotion to unchanging order is a defiance of death, an anxious desire to preserve the individual self, that is, the phenomenon, for all eternity. The plastic arts, especially, tend to be imbued with the Apollonian concern for the preservation of the individual phenomenon: "Here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the *eternity of the phenomenon*: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature" (104). Consequently, Nietzsche associates Apollonian art with sentimentality; it seeks to harmonize threatening differences and glosses over the inevitable destruction of all that is individual with illusions of beauty, glory, and transcendence over death.

On the other hand, Dionysian art celebrates the destruction of the individual and is exemplified best by ancient Greek tragedies:

The metaphysical joy in the tragic is a translation of the instinctive unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images: the hero, the highest manifestation of the will is negated for our pleasure because he is only phenomenon, and because the eternal life of the will is not affected by his annihilation. "We believe in eternal life," exclaims tragedy; while music is the immediate idea of this life. (104)

It is comforting to witness, in Greek tragedy, the destruction of all that is individual because we are then liberated vicariously from our individuation and, with the hero, become reabsorbed into the eternal life of the will. This "will" is Nietzsche's impersonal God—it is the creative energy pervading all of nature. Because this energy, this life force, is creative, it is also destructive; old generations must die in order to make room for new ones so that the endless work of procreation can continue. The "destruction of phenomena" is joyful in light of "the exuberant fertility of the universal will" (104).¹ Thus, when William McTurg plays his violin, his expression of unconscious and unfulfilled desires and his melancholy are signs of a longing for a larger, transcendent completeness, a longing for an end to individual suffering, individual limitation. It is those who suffer harshly and

honestly, those whose lives are blatantly tragic, who are most in tune with the spirit of nature, who are rooted in reality, and who understand the spirit of tragedy, which alone gives rise to true and natural art. Great art, as well as authentic life, in this story, is to be found in rural Wisconsin rather than on Broadway, among the toiling farm folk rather than the urban cultural elite.

And, in this Dionysian interpretation of rural Wisconsin, it is particularly music that stands out because music is the ultimate expression of a Dionysian spirit. For music expresses an infinite plenitude of phenomena "in the universal, in the mere form, without the material, always according to the thing-in-itself . . . the inmost soul, as it were, of the phenomenon without the body" (101-02). It "gives the inmost kernel which precedes all forms, or the heart of things" (102). Rather than imitating the world of fleeting phenomena and freezing them in time, music is a passionate flux that more directly than the plastic arts mirrors the creative will and expresses not the external shell of nature but its inmost spiritual energy. In the dynamic flux of harmonies we find a direct expression of the larger oneness or harmony that continually expresses itself in fleeting phenomena.

Already in the opening scene of the story, we see what with Nietzsche we might term nature's Dionysian call to Howard, who, at this point, remains deaf to it. This call is not immediately associated with music but remains more visual at first. Having changed trains in Milwaukee, Howard is now on his way to western Wisconsin and beholds a landscape with Dionysian characteristics. In this landscape, the "heavy grass" of hayfields "topple[es] before the swift sickle," "wooded hill[s] loo[m] darkly blue," and "swift streams, foa[m] deep down the solid rock" (45).² The death imagery of the harvesting sickle is followed by the mysterious dark blueness of the woods, which is, in turn, followed by an image of a rocky waterfall, an emblem of flux and jaggedness. In spite of its tragic and mysterious depth, its power and harshness, this landscape is perceived by the safely detached train passenger Howard in his reclining chair as a "panorama of delight" (45). Without having interacted with this landscape or its people for ten years, Howard claims it for himself: "It was . . . *his* West" . . . [and he] "feel[s] curious little movements of the heart, like those of a lover nearing his sweetheart . . . [the landscape] "growing more intimately recognizable" (45). At this safely sequestered moment, before Howard descends the train and actually arrives at home, he is able to feel an easy, facile identification with

rural Wisconsin that does not encounter the edge of death's sickle and sees only a picture, a panorama of beauty, a static image in which all of reality is frozen in blended harmony and beautiful proportion. If this landscape is, indeed, analogous to a sweetheart, then we must ask the same question that Howard's family will soon be asking him: where has he been these ten years? The sentimental notion of picturing his homeland as a sweetheart with whom he can have an easy reunion and communion after ten years of neglect shows that Howard subsumes all otherness in his own egocentrism and that he is profoundly detached from the realities of time and mortality, and, thus, from the reality of flux and from the procreative as well as destructive universal will; his panorama of delight bespeaks the Apollonian mindset of the plastic arts rather than the Dionysian and tragic spirit of music. Howard is unable to understand the deeper resonance of the rushing waterfall as it foams "deep down the solid rock" (45).

When Howard does alight from the train at The Corners, the small town near which he grew up, he experiences his first shock as he realizes the stark contrast between the insubstantial, paltry human world of the town and the glorious immortal air of the surrounding natural world. While the town is "poor and dull and sleepy and squalid" and "unrelieved by a tree or a touch of beauty," "the majestic amphitheater of green wooded hills that circled the horizon . . ." is, in Howard's exclamatory words, "glorious!" (46). These hills "glo[w] down upon the squat little town, gracious, lofty in their greeting, immortal in their vivid and delicate beauty" (46). Nature is the immortal, eternal amphitheater that hosts the continuous and ever-changing tragedy of constantly fleeting phenomena—in the squat, pathetic, suffering little town, Howard is forced to glimpse an emblem of what it means to be human, to be an ephemeral, dying individual. However, he chooses, at first, to remain focused on the glories of nature, largely ignoring the spiritual significance of the squalid appearance of his hometown.

The person who picks up Howard is William McTurg, whose first name already potentially links him to Nietzsche's "universal will."³ As the sun sets over the "circling amphitheater . . . [of] purple peaks" and as a blue mist rises from the upper coollies,⁴ McTurg's eyes "took on a far-off, dreaming look, as he gazed at the scene which had repeated itself a thousand times in his life, but of whose beauty he never spoke" (49). Unlike Howard, who, as he admits to himself, has lived "a restless life, surrounded by the glare of electric lights,

painted canvas, hot colors, creak of machinery, mock trees, stones, and brooks" (51), McTurg has lived in contemplative silence, watching, from the vantage point of his own peasant suffering, the eternal repetitions of Nature unfolding themselves. Unlike Howard, who, as an actor, seeks to capture and articulate life, thus, in an Apollonian sense, mastering and idealizing it, McTurg never speaks of the beauty he sees but understands that it transcends the scope of individual utterance: in his silent contemplation, he wordlessly surrenders to the larger natural reality of which he is but a transient part. Though tempted to gush over the beauty of nature, Howard "knew the peculiarities of his companion too well to make any remarks or ask any questions, and besides it was a genuine pleasure to ride with one who understood that silence was the only speech amid such splendors" (49). Thus, the profound contemplativeness of the mystical peasant silences the gushing of the Apollonian actor, who is used to inhabiting a culturally produced, idealized but dead stage version of nature rather than the actual immortal splendor that casts in humbling pathetic relief the real-life tragedies of individuals.

Soon, the silence of nature is broken by music: "Once they passed a little brook singing in a mournfully sweet way its eternal song over its pebbles" (49). Rather than constituting a disruption of Nature's transcendent silence, the mournful music of the brook participates in that silence, for the brook's song is called eternal and is, thus, identified with the immortal flux of the creative will. Its song is mournful, for in this flux is contained the tragedy of the passing generations. Howard seems to intuit this meaning of the brook's song when he remembers his and his brother Grant's childhood pastime of trout fishing and asks McTurg, "Any trout left?" (49). It is as though Howard wants to be reassured that in spite of the fleeting nature of each generation, the larger cycle of life continues undisturbed. However, McTurg's laconic reply points to ecological problems and fails to provide that reassurance. He says, concerning the presence of trout, "Not many. Little fellers" (49).

When McTurg drives the carriage past Howard's old home and informs him that his folks no longer live there, Howard is shocked, a sensation that prepares him for the farm scene he is about to encounter. As the actor leaves McTurg's carriage and walks to his brother's house, he is once more surrounded by the music of nature: "The katydids sang a rhythmic song of welcome to him. Fireflies were in the grass. A whippoorwill in the deep of the wood was call-

ing weirdly, and an occasional night-hawk, flying high, gave his grating shriek, or hollow boom, suggestive and resounding" (50). The weird calls and shrieks of the suggestively named whip-poor-will and of the transcendent, high-flying hawk disrupt the lulling, comforting pulsation of the rhythmic song of the katydids: the eternal and vital pulsations of the life force, this Nietzschean music of the spheres, is punctuated with grating expressions of individual suffering and tragedy, and, thus, when Howard comes upon a miserably squalid farm scene, he instantly forgets "the beautiful, peaceful valley" (51). What Howard sees is "a barnyard full of mud, in which a few cows were standing, fighting the flies and waiting to be milked. An old man was pumping water at the well; the pigs were squealing from a pen near by; a child was crying" (51). From the mud and the flies emerges Howard's brother Grant who has just been milking: "'Well, I'm glad to see you, but I can't shake hands. That damned cow had laid down in the mud'" (52). Grant appears initially as a Dionysian character: covered with mud, he appears familiar with the soil from which we came and whence we must return; the flies buzzing about the cow he milks are perhaps symbolic of death, and the very act of milking indicates a connection to the source of life, to Mother Nature. The child that cries is Grant's; unlike the childless, unmarried Howard, Grant has participated on a literal level in the cycle of life. Sex and death are both palpable realities in Grant's life, and in this way, he is connected to the procreative and destructive universal will that animates all of Nature. His refusal to shake Howard's hands for sanitary reasons shows that he views the elegantly dressed Howard correctly as an Apollonian figure, detached from life, death-defying, well-preserved, and antiseptic.

Howard's Apollonianism is elaborated throughout the story and lends it a comic edge, for he is ridiculously out of tune with reality. On his first morning back "home," Howard sails into his family's kitchen with a glib theatrical vivacity at a time when his brother is already laboring in the fields. Dressed in "a negligé shirt, with a Windsor scarf, light-colored, serviceable trousers with a belt, russet shoes, and a tennis hat," Howard enters the room and kisses his mother "with a bright smile, nod[s] at Laura, [Grant's] young wife, and tosse[s] the baby, all in a breath, and with the manner, as he himself saw, of the returned captain in the war-dramas of the day" (59). The self-consciously casual quality of Howard's carefully selected attire with its upper-class tennis connotations, his consciously styl-

ized *élan*, and the breathless quickness of his series of gestures, which betokens an airiness diametrically opposed to the heavy-laden state experienced by his hard-working brother—all of these aspects of Howard's demeanor testify to his enacting an inappropriate, illusory version of reality that remains detached entirely from his poverty-stricken surroundings. That he is playing the jaunty, cheery part of the "returned captain in the war-dramas of the day" reiterates the superficiality of his spirit: for it becomes clear that the fashionable dramas from which Howard has borrowed his glib carriage gloss over rather than evoke the horrors of war. Here we realize that Howard's art embodies his life; the plays in which he performs are just as far removed from the Dionysian spirit of Greek tragedy as is the sentimental part he plays in life. When Howard goes out to the hayfield to help his brother, Grant immediately points out the inappropriateness of Howard's clothes and also resents his brother's pretensions at being a cheerful farm laborer: "'Mighty funny to come out here and do a little of this. But if you had to come here and do it all the while, you wouldn't look so white and soft in the hands . . . Give me that fork. You'll be spoiling your fine clothes'" (61). Shrinking from the ridiculous role he is beginning to play in the hayfield, Howard retreats and leaves Grant and his helpers to their work. As he watches Grant, he sees power and majesty in his brother, briefly glimpsing his brother's Dionysian depths: "Grant was a powerful man, and there was something majestic in his action as he rolled the huge flakes of hay through the door. The sweat poured from his face like rain,⁵ and he was forced to draw his drenched sleeve across his face to clear away the blinding sweat that poured into his eyes" (67). Powerful, majestic, and earning his living by the raining and pouring sweat of his brow, Grant exemplifies a suffering yet vital peasant figure connected profoundly to both life and death.

And yet, despite his occasional majestic or tragic aspect, Grant does not fully realize the heights of Dionysian identity, for Dionysus is the god of ecstasy, of surrender, the god torn apart by Maenads in a sexual frenzy—a Dionysian spirit implies an ultimate yielding to the tragic condition of life, a metaphysical comfort in the overcoming of individuation. Grant, however, speaks in a "hard, gruff tone, full of rebellion" (52) and displays bitterness against the foppish, wealthy brother who neglected his family while they lost their farm and labored under crushing burdens. Grant's bitterness freezes him in an immobile expression, an expression that seems like the mere

flipside of static Apollonian idealization. Thus, we learn that Howard has "not seen Grant smile in so long—he couldn't quite see him smiling. He had been cold and bitter for years" (60). And so it is not Grant who provides Howard with the central epiphanic revelation of the story but the gentle, musical "soft-voiced giant" William McTurg, who, as an artist and a contemplative, has found a spiritual outlet for his suffering (47). At the aforementioned surprise party for Howard, the revelatory moment of McTurg's violin playing is subtly contextualized within the tradition of slave spirituals. When Howard speaks of the only things he knows to speak of, namely, his varied and cultured work and life in New York City, his rural listeners grow sober and melancholy, yearning to escape the stifling poverty and unceasing repetitive toil of their rural lives. The story's narrator then observes that the reader must leave behind any illusion that these country people's lives are idyllic:

A casual observer would have said, "What a pleasant bucolic—this little surprise party of welcome!" But Howard, with his native ear and eye, had no such pleasing illusion. He knew too well these suggestions of despair and bitterness. He knew that, like the smile of the slave, this cheerfulness was self-defence; deep down was another unsatisfied ego. (75)

It is significant that Howard is described as emerging from a state of illusion—he is finally being converted from his Apollonian panorama of delight to a clearer perception of the harsh and tragic aspects of life. The reference to the bucolic myth and then to slavery points to the deconstruction of the supposed rural happiness of slaves on Southern plantations, a myth promulgated by minstrel songs and Southern romances but denounced by Northern abolitionists⁶—the story's narrator appears to propose a similar deconstruction of America's pastoral myth. The passage echoes a famous moment in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), in which Douglass discusses the singing of slaves:

I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears.⁷ (28)

Just as Douglass's first-hand knowledge of suffering helps him to interpret reality correctly rather than clinging to an illusion of order and harmony, so Howard, with his "native ear and eye" is able to eschew a "pleasing illusion" and, thus, the trap of the Apollonian denial of death. Simultaneously, Howard enters into true life and true art as McTurg plays "wailing Scotch tunes," "mournful Irish love songs," and "a wild, sweet, low-keyed negro song" (77). It is at this point that Howard has truly arrived home.

As the story concludes, Howard is able to confront his own personal reality: "Howard could not speak. His throat ached with remorse and pity. He saw his forgetfulness of them all once more without relief—the black thing it was!" (83). When Howard buys back the old family farm, his brother, Grant, tells him that the help comes too late because he has been worn out by a life of failure and suffering. Nonetheless, the gesture softens Grant towards Howard, and a reconciliation of sorts takes place. The two brothers clasp hands and look into each other's faces, and Howard is finally able to see Grant: "The two men stood there, face to face, hands clasped . . . [Grant] tragic, somber in his softened mood, his large, long, rugged Scotch face bronzed with sun and scarred with wrinkles that had histories, like saber-cuts on a veteran, the record of his battles" (87). Away from Broadway, and with the help of Dionysian music, Howard has finally learned to perceive the deep and majestic tragedy that is life. He has caught sight of what amounts to an essentially Nietzschean understanding of Nature, art, and civilization, a perspective that in its pessimism, nonetheless, promises to keep grounded in potentially creative and vital authenticity the person strong enough to face the human condition squarely and to seek transcendence in an impersonal force larger than oneself.

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NOTES

¹Nietzsche defines the "mystery doctrine of tragedy" as follows: "The fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of restored oneness" (74).

²Garland's landscape description in the opening paragraph of the story reflects some of his ideas on impressionism expressed in *Crumbling Idols* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1960). For instance, he practices the kind of juxtaposition he admired in painters like Dennis Bunker: "The late Dennis M. Bunker, in painting a meadow stream, did not hesitate to paint the water blue as the sky, nor to paint the red band of rust-like silt on the mar-

gin of the stream in close juxtaposition to the vivid green of the meadow grass. . . . This placing of red, blue and yellow side by side gives a crispness and brilliancy, and a peculiar vibratory quality to sky and earth which is unknown to the old method. And if the observer will forget conventions and will refer the canvas back to nature instead, he will find this to be the true concept" (101). Besides "this world of frank color," "the timid apologies and harmonies of the old-school painters [are] depressing" (103). In other words, Garland admires (and seeks to realize in his own works) a depiction of the world that juxtaposes clashing, vital realities rather than seeking artificial harmonization. Such a technique concords with Nietzsche's detestation of falsely harmonizing, idealizing art.

³The name Will figures prominently in another story in *Main-Travelled Roads*, namely, in "A Branch Road." Here, the story's first two sentences already establish the name's meaning as the protagonist pits his own singing breath against "a windless September dawn": "In the windless September dawn a voice went ringing clear and sweet, a man's voice, singing a cheap and common air. Yet something in the sound of it told he was young, jubilant, and a happy lover" (13). The Will in this story is so full of vitality that his spirit suffuses a cheap product of contemporary civilization ("a cheap and common air") with authentic life and transforms the still atmosphere into one of creative motion and dynamism. It, thus, appears that Garland associates the name William with concepts related to vitality, authenticity, and nature elsewhere in his fiction, and, perhaps, in "Up the Coolly" as well.

⁴While the mention of an amphitheater quite explicitly points to the ancient Greek tragedies celebrated in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, the other details of this passage bear particular references to the romantic tradition in which Nietzsche, to a large extent, participated. "Purple peaks" are a common motif in romantic painting and poetry, images of the lofty vantage point from which the individual, in splendid isolation, might behold the sublimity of the divine spirit in Nature. "Blue mists" are a literary cliché associated with the spiritual depths in nature. Blue, of course, is the color of romanticism, especially since Novalis's famous "blue flower" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) became the emblem of German romanticism. Novalis and other romantics associate the color blue with the sea and the sky, and, thus, with infinity, depth, and transcendence.

⁵Rain, of course, is a symbol of fertility; it can, however, also be associated with hardship and the onslaught of nature. Grant's sweat, of course, also bears reference to the tragic human condition in a fallen world as it reminds the reader of the curse pronounced on Adam in Genesis 3:18-19: "And you will eat the plants of the field :/ By the sweat of your face/You will eat bread,/Till you return to the ground/Because from it you were taken" The image of sweat resembling rain, therefore, contains the dual connotation of the life force in nature: fertile and creative, yet also destructive and harsh.

⁶Maryland writer John Pendleton Kennedy's popular novel *Swallow Barn* (1832) laid the foundation for romantic depictions of Southern plantation life, and four years before the publication of *Main-Travelled Roads*, Thomas Nelson Page, descendant of two of Virginia's "First Families," had published what is generally considered the height of post-Civil War nostalgic plantation romanticism, the short story collection *In Ole Virginia* (1887).

⁷Douglass's description of the slave songs, quoted only in a brief excerpt above, conveys powerfully their tragic nature and deserves to be quoted at length: "They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness" (27-28).

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ROMANCING THE DESIRING-MACHINE:
EDNA FERBER'S *CIMARRON* AND SANORA BABB'S
THE LOST TRAVELER

DOUGLAS WIXSON

The problematic nature of America's last grand land giveaway proved attractive to novelists Edna Ferber (1875-1962) and Sanora Babb (1907-2005), who employed their critical skills in laying bare the romantic interpretation of Anglo settlement coloring personal narratives and local histories. Ferber's *Cimarron* (1930) and Babb's *The Lost Traveler* (1958; 1995) measure the human costs of crossing borders into unfamiliar and unsettled territory both real and metaphorical. Set during Oklahoma's raw, at times violent emergence as a state, the two novels provide alternative readings of early Oklahoma settlement that, stripped of the stereotyped elements common to popular versions, embody the spirit of rebellious iconoclasm seen in certain works of Midwestern literary radicalism.¹

The glamour and excitement of the land runs; the outlaws, bootleggers, renegades—flamboyant entrepreneurs of the territories; the economic opportunity sought by boomers and Sooners; the colorful presence of Native American tribes are prominent elements of early Oklahoma history that distract from an equally valid alternate history: the role of businessmen and railroad interests in promoting and settling the new small towns and in so doing, establishing pecuniary values and middle-class conventions that, as Normal L. Crockett suggests, make them bear "a marked resemblance to towns in Illinois in the 1850s and Iowa in the 1870s" (95). It is this alternate history of Anglo settlement as viewed through two families, the Tannehills (Babb) and the Cravats (Ferber), that I wish to explore.² Both novelists, I argue, focus on the competing claims of domesticity and personal freedom inherent in the clash of conflicting orders and individual motivations as viewed within the intimacy of family life and the emergence of community. And both dramatize, through the pair-

ing of stratification and lines of flight, the violent issue of these conflicts when strong-willed, restless protagonists engage in them.

In both novels the Kansas-Oklahoma border is a place of fateful crossings as well as a symbolic line that represents competing orders. And for both the setting is a newly formed culture area created by the opening of Indian lands to settlement. Borders introduce questions, as Gloria Anzaldúa argues in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, of construction of identity, keeping intact one's wholeness in a marginal area of shifting and multiple identities in order to achieve political and social empowerment and cultural expression. Historically, early crossings of the Kansas-Oklahoma border created a raw frontier order that soon conflicted with a new order of commercial development, genteel values, and Republican politics.³ In the two novels, the Kansas-Oklahoma border is a symbolic line across which the values and practices of old and new orders compete, dividing an earlier order, in which conventions are defied, from a new order that imposes law "in a lawless community" (*Cimarron* 265).⁴ Stifled by this new order of respectability, status, and conservative mores are restless, audacious figures like Ferber's Yancey Cravat and Babb's Des Tannehill whose vitality and spirit of adventure, for better or worse, energized early settlement.

In the older order of early settlement, lawlessness was sometimes a form of resistance, a rejection of or flight from legal and governmental restraints. Thwarting the emerging new order of class distinctions, power and wealth that followed inevitably with the establishment of town sites and property ownership, outlaws like Al Jennings became populist folk heroes and subjects of fiction. If the open borders of the territories attracted fugitives, boomers, former slaves, gamblers, shysters and romantic adventurers, then what followed was the stratification and over-coding that had characterized the evolution of small towns in the Midwest. For the majority of settlers in the northern lands of Oklahoma Territory, the unsettled territories offered "*lignes de fuite*," to use Gilles Deleuze's useful term (*Mille Plateaux*). Prohibitions were few in the early days of settlement, permitting the Anglo newcomers to depart from the paths of dominant codes and conventions in order to choose their own course. Both Ferber and Babb portray in their protagonists, Yancey Cravat and Desmond Tannehill, the impulse of desire that seeks release from constrictive circumstances—family responsibilities, social conventions, small-town pecuniary values, and legal restraints. With the consolidation of communities, passivity and subjection, the condi-

tions of stillness in Deleuze's figurative construct lead to sedimentation in which strata form, solidifying into hard, unyielding, rigid entrapments.

In their seminal studies of capitalism and schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari examine the working components of the unconscious, the "desiring-machine," capable both of productivity and destruction. Lines of flight permit movement (flows) rather than blockages, freedom rather than repression. When lines of flight are closed off, a self-destructive "machine" intercedes—or one that operates in a void. "To flee, then," writes Ronald Bogue, paraphrasing Deleuze, "is to trace an uncharted course and depart the paths of convention and sense and preexisting codes" (154). In "betraying" the established order and dominant significations (with reference to writing) resides the possibility of creating something new: "On lines of flight there can no longer be but one thing, life-experimentation" (*Dialogues* 47). Flight conceived of as escape, however, signifies only a way out without means to continue one's flight or remain free of limitations. Without the reconnection of desire to new determinations and the construction of new "assemblages" mere escape is self-destructive, undermining others' freedom, causing disruption and turmoil in its wake.

Such is a bare-boned schema drawn from the famously difficult texts of Deleuze and Guattari. Applied to the two novels in question, the schema provides rather interesting results. Ferber's *Cimarron* and Babb's *The Lost Traveler* offer insights of considerable psychological and sociological subtlety, disclosing the destructive side of initiative and imagination, the acting out of desires that in differing instances either produce or destroy. The very open-endedness of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas permits me to take certain liberties with concepts elaborated variously in *Mille Plateaux*, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, and *L'Anti-Oedipe*. These serve to illuminate the entrepreneurial dynamic and individualist ethic of a new commercial order, the invisible loyalties of dysfunctional family relationships, and the ideology of gender and construction of identity in borderlands where new and old compete on untried terms.⁵

Cimarron is the work of a popular fiction writer whose talent of close observation and exhaustive, whirlwind research resulted in rollicking good tales that capture essential truths about a people in a particular place and time. Fresh from the success of *Show Boat*, the basis of a hit musical in 1927, Ferber turned to Oklahoma's raucous, colorful period of settlement.⁶ Sanora Babb's *The Lost Traveler*, by con-

trast, draws almost exclusively upon personal experience and memory. The settings are those of her youth and early adulthood; the characters are based loosely upon her own family. Ferber's *Cimarron* appeared a little less than two years following its inception. Babb struggled some fifteen years to give shape to the hardship and emotional turmoil she had known growing up. Product of Babb's long apprenticeship in the craft of writing, *The Lost Traveler* is an empathetic act of literary vindication by means of which the daughter-author reaches a mature understanding of the circumstances that led her parents to their condemnable actions long ago.

In this patchwork quilt of early Anglo settlement in the Territories were romantic adventurers and enterprising boomers like Ferber's Yancey Cravat and Babb's Des Tannehill, the model for which was the author's father. Walter Babb was a smart, high-spirited, quick-witted man of little formal education who first came to Oklahoma Territory as a boy in the company of his father, Alonzo. Later, as an apprentice in his father's bakery in Lansing, Kansas, Walter preferred to earn his living through gambling, a trade he had learned in the taverns of Mulhall, Oklahoma Territory. *The Lost Traveler* portrays Walter as "Des," a man of great personal magnetism and native ability who, like his real counterpart, speaks several Indian languages, coaches Indian baseball teams, and wins his bride by promising her he will settle down as a baker in the new town of Red Rock. Both the Tannehills and the Cravats move to Oklahoma Territory from Kansas, where both wives had grown up in genteel circumstances. In Ferber's *Cimarron*, Yancey Cravat is the fictional figurehead of a new type of restless American caught between two conflicting orders and ultimately defeated by both. The new order that steers the growth of new towns in Oklahoma is already a familiar presence to Sabra and Belle as native Kansans. Their childhood families embody the very essence of gentility and social convention from which Yancey and Des hope to escape. The lines of flight involve courses of movement, unpredictable trajectories in uncharted territories, and the possibility of "becoming-other" (*Dialogues* 72-3; Bogue 155).

In both novels the uniqueness of the respective culture areas plays an essential role.⁷ The setting of *Cimarron* is based upon Ferber's brief visit (following statehood) to north central Oklahoma, an area roughly defined by Ponca City, Guthrie, and Perry. This, like Babb's Oklahoma Panhandle, is a border zone, settled by Anglos, whose ancestors migrated to Kansas and Missouri from the Ohio Valley, Kentucky, and Virginia.

They were, for the most part, literate, schooled people with a deep attachment to ideals of individual liberty and initiative. Oklahoma was settled in several contrasting culture areas: southeastern Oklahoma, for instance, was populated by impoverished tenant farmers, black and white, from the Reconstruction South, who rented land owned by Cherokees or Anglo landlords. For the tenants there was little difference among their landlords; most tenants lived like serfs, illiterate and exploited. Deriving from two distinct heritages, each group tended to replicate the religion, politics, economics, and manners they had known before they decided to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (Twain 362), which was, in effect, an internal migration, a crossing of borders.

The same energy that animates lawlessness in Babb's and Ferber's novels provides the entrepreneurial dynamic and individualist ethic of the new order. The Cravats start a successful newspaper in their new town of Cimarron; Yancey rises to prominence until, filled again with restless energy, he wanders off seeking new adventures. Left to take care of the family, Sabra assumes the management of the newspaper and later is elected a Republican Congresswoman. Both Yancey and Des feel deep loyalty to their families yet are unavailable at critical times as fathers to their children or husbands to their wives. After absences and periods of estrangement they appear unexpectedly to do a worthy deed for the family, make a sacrifice, surprise them with an extravagant gift. Undependable in everyday ways, Yancey nonetheless remains a fatherly presence to his children, whose admiration, indeed awe, overrides the lack of emotional sustenance they receive from him.

The relationship of Des and his two daughters is far more problematic and complex than that of Yancey and his children. The Tannehills are knit together through invisible bonds of loyalty reinforced by shared hardship and marginal status. Leaving a thriving bakery trade in the Oklahoma Panhandle, Des moves his family back across the border to Apache (Garden City, Kansas), a prosperous wheat and sugar beet town, where money flows freely. Community standards place gambling off limits and impose other social taboos. The new order in the small Kansas town exacts a heavy duty on violators of these standards. The Tannehills suffer humiliation and scorn; Robin and Stevie are shunned by the "good" families. Des finds refuge across the Oklahoma border, waiting for the ire of the offended and the pursuit of law to cool so that he can return to gambling.

Both novels explore the tensions between a rooted existence and homelessness. Homelessness for Des and Yancey is an expression of desire to keep moving. Home is a place to return to, a temporary quarters between moves. The poetics of migration in these two novels involves crossing real or metaphorical borders, a process that for both men rejuvenates, provides a new start, represents a kind of freedom *from*. The tension between migration and going home, Joseph R. Urgo argues in his study of Willa Cather, is "the great fact of American existence" (57). When the connections sustaining them are lost, however, flows become restricted and blockages occur that constrict and destroy human relationships—the "self-destructive machine intercedes" (Bogue 77). Deadly tensions divide the Tannehills. Robin rebels against her father. A line of flight is a way out, departing the paths of convention and oppressive codes, exploring the possibility of a new life. For Yancey Cravat the lines of flight are increasingly erratic, concluding in loss of identity and finally annihilation. His wife Sabra exemplifies the strong-willed, determined, competent woman we encounter elsewhere in Ferber's novels, for whom the process of "becoming-other" succeeds without sacrifice of family stability.

In each novel a woman questions and ultimately confronts the ideology of gender that circumscribes her life through prevailing mores, customs and patriarchal practices. Inscribed in this ideology are notions of a woman's place, the scope of her freedoms and personal autonomy, and the realization of her selfhood—the potential within her for self-fulfillment and a constructive existence. Sabra Cravat in Ferber's novel has these possibilities thrust upon her when her husband leaves and she is left to take charge of the household and a newspaper business. She emerges from the margins of the narrative to a central position of authority and competence in a male-dominated business world, assuming a man's role without reconstituting a patriarchal self.⁸ The much younger, unmarried figure of Robin in Babb's novel claims her personal autonomy by finally freeing herself from a possessive and sometimes tyrannical father, whose failure as a provider and stable parent figure initiates her personal emancipation and break from equivocal authority. In the tumultuous and unstable conditions of young adulthood she selectively rejects and appropriates the terms of authority and the ideology of gender, turning these into the constituents of a new personal discourse of individual freedom and selfhood.

The emotionally charged settings of family life have provided themes for literature from the time of Sophocles's *Antigone* and *Electra* to the present day, including popular television fare. In classical Greek theater and plays such as Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the eccentricities of a family member dislocate family harmony, giving rise to conflicts that likewise are central to *Cimarron* and *The Lost Traveler*. Both novels explore family relationships, revealing the discordant contradictions between private and public selves. *The Lost Traveler* is autobiographical in its broad outlines. Sanora Babb's early childhood was edged with frequent privation and the burden of disreputability, the lot of a gambler's daughter. Having spent her early childhood during the transitional period before Oklahoma became a state in 1907, Sanora knew home as a place between frequent moves. The family followed the charismatic but improvident Walter from Red Rock to Waynoka, a small railroad town in western Oklahoma, where he opened a bakery for a brief time. Short stays succeeded in the oil boom towns of Ponca City and Blackwell, where gambling was lucrative, followed by a disastrous four-year period on a dry land farm in eastern Colorado; from there to the Oklahoma Panhandle, where Sanora graduated from high school; and finally Garden City, Kansas. In 1929, she left home for Los Angeles to pursue a career as a journalist and short story writer.⁹

The Lost Traveler condenses the events of her youth, focusing on the last two homes in which her family lived together: Forgan ("Tumbleweed") in the Oklahoma Panhandle and Garden City ("Apache"). The climax of the novel occurs when the transformation of Walter has come full circle: from boomer in the free-wheeling, virtually lawless territories of Oklahoma to "businessman," plying his trade in the town's best hotel, and finally to renegade, forced to escape the laws enacted by his former clients. These include prominent men in the community who, after a certain length of time, feel it necessary to make a display of their obedience to law and "respectability." In Des's eyes his trade is no less legitimate than that of his clients. His transformation parallels the evolution of values occurring when a semifrontier attracting adventure seekers, renegades, and fortune hunters absorbs the conventions, laws, and mores of a settled community that prizes respectability and commercial gain, values that often translate as pretense and hypocrisy. The flows of migration in settlement and adventure undo codes and permit new modes of being. In re-territorializing, lines of molar or rigid seg-

mentarity (*Thousand Plateaus* 213; 223) evolve, imposing "broad social categories, fixed identities and pathways discretely divided into clear segments" (Bogue 159). Such is the dialectic of flight and stratification.

For Yancey Cravat and Des Tannehill, risk-taking, often to the point of arrogance, is essential to personality, character, and humanity. Each begins as a life-embracing adventurer and ends, like Shakespeare's tragic heroes, metaphorically blinded by his obsession. Their forthright acceptance of obsession is part of their fascination as strong, willful figures flouting society's norms. The territory's absence of restrictions intensifies their individualism and chance taking, traits that take them to the borders of ordinary existence, to dangerous, forbidding areas of risk and gain that investors and land speculators know. Here the narratives of both novels connect the pathology of Yancey's and Des's respective obsessions to their "respectable" counterparts—in brief, the bourgeois values and commercial life in the new small towns of the Middle West.

The capitalist businessman knows these borders—their demarcations are speculative enterprises such as grain futures, land deals, and capital leveraging. If in Des's case this borderland of risk and reward offers the adventure he craves, then it also sponsors the destruction of personal relationships and financial ruin. The burden of expense falls upon his family, who become agents both in the adventure and their own destruction.

Babb's tale of a gambler and the underside of small-town commercial life functions like a moral parable by exposing folly and greed and unmasking hypocrisy. It suggests that by defining the conventions of "respectability," a patriarchy of pecuniary-minded "good people" are able to maintain the status quo, excluding the undesirables. Des is a decent man who nonetheless violates his own private code of ethical behavior when winnings are low and his family is in need. He would rather match his intelligence and skill fairly but at times chooses to cheat to recoup losses. The balance of cheating and fair play tips finally beyond the limits that respectability allows. The city fathers send Des packing. Unable to provide economic security for his family and humiliated in his own eyes, Des is alienated from both community and home. The lines of flight are broken; Des's unattached nomadism is a form of hard segmentarity "without discernible coordinates for future action" (Bogue 160). Hardly more than a domestic servant in the family, Belle finally breaks the terrible yoke

of submission that her marriage has placed on her. Complicit in the lie that has bound the family together, Robin finally breaks with childhood family loyalties, setting herself free to make commitments outside the family. Stevie, the younger daughter, withdraws into a shell of protective dependency, martyred by what Freud called the family romance.

The family's coherence is destroyed, but within the ruins, new commitments are made that offer the possibility of renewed human bonds beyond the invisible loyalties that have bound the family together as victims. It is a complex story of acute emotions without clear borders or simplistic moral lessons. Tensions build to a crisis that serves violently to correct an imbalance that is created in the loyalty fabric of affiliative needs. The intensely personal nature of Babb's novel suggests that its tale of a young woman's efforts to achieve a balance between obligations to self and to family is one that the author felt compelled to tell, but only long after she had lived the events. Little wonder: the affective drama of her childhood occupied and in turn shaped Babb's psyche throughout her entire life.

In the anarchic, lawless circumstances of prestatehood Oklahoma, the pathology of risk taking finds expression in the individualistic rebellions of Des and Yancey. They are good men who gamble with life, often at the expense of those who love and depend upon them. Their belief in luck is antithetical to the new industrial-economic order, which calls for rational explanation of cause and effect in order to attain the efficiency for which it strives—the oedipal mode of repression that, according to Deleuze and Guattari (in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*) a capitalist society requires as its psychic mechanism of production.¹⁰ Marginal to this segmented social and economic order are gamblers (and adventurers) who, as Irving Kenneth Zola writes, are “aware of the major goals and values of middle-class society but are either unwilling or incapable of achieving them by the use of the ordinary methods” (30-31). This awareness takes the form of rebellion. “Out of inner necessity . . . [the gambler] becomes a specialist in reducing bourgeois values to absurdity, because all who hold such values are a source of inner reproach to him” (Bergler 130).

Early Oklahoma was different from western states despite a shared history of Indian life, pioneering, open range, and homesteading. Sovereign domain was vested in the Five Civilized Tribes, whose tragic removal from the Southeast had occurred some seventy

years earlier. The Five Tribes, in contrast to the Plains Indians, opened schools, observed their own formalized laws, and adopted Anglo economic practices, including, in the case of the Cherokees, enslaving Blacks. In eastern Oklahoma before statehood, Whites had limited rights and a second-class status, many working as sharecroppers on Cherokee land. A series of land runs and lotteries opened the western half of the state-to-be to white settlers after 1889. Railroads such as the Santa Fe, which brought the Babbs from Lansing, Kansas, to Red Rock, Oklahoma, led the way in establishing new towns such as Ferber's fictional Cherokee (based upon Ponca City). Into the raw, uncooked territories of pre-Oklahoma poured boomers, Sooners, adventure seekers, homesteaders, outlaws, and drifters.¹¹

An experienced attorney and newspaper publisher, Yancey Cravat finds an initial challenge in bringing law to a lawless community and setting an honest standard in newspaper publishing. In building an empire “out of the last frontier in America,” as he says, Yancey is determined to avoid the mistakes made in earlier settlements. He leaves, he says, “all the goddamned middle-class respectability of Wichita, Kansas, behind us” (36). A man of powerful intelligence and physical strength, Yancey is nonetheless powerless against the weight of repressive mores and small-town conventions.

Sabra Cravat brings to the territory the genteel values and customs of her Kansas home, confirming the observation of a family friend that “There's no such thing as a new country for the people who come to it. They bring along their own ways and their own bits of things and make it like the old as fast as they can” (49). With satiric delight Ferber traces the rise of genteel manners and concern for appearances in the new Oklahoma town. Sabra sets about creating “some sort of social order for the good wives of the community” (166). “Grimly,” Ferber continues, “Sabra (and, in time, the other virtuous women of the community) set about making this new frontier town like the old as speedily as possible” (166). Tensions grow between the headstrong, at times quixotic Yancey and his practical, strong-willed, and capable wife Sabra. “In all this welter of red clay and Indians and shirt sleeves and tobacco juice and drought he [Yancey] seemed to find a beauty and an exhilaration that eluded Sabra quite,” Ferber writes (101). For Sabra, on the other hand, “Life here was an anachronism, a great crude joke.” The joke in fact is Ferber's, whose delicious sense of irony threads its way throughout the story. “It was hard to realize,” she writes, “that while the rest of the United States, in this year of 1889, was living a

conventionally civilized and primly Victorian existence, in which plumbing, gaslight, trees, garden, books, laws, millinery, Sunday churchgoing, were taken for granted, here in this Oklahoma country life had been set back according to the frontier standards of half a century earlier" (101).

The inspiration for *Cimarron* resulted from a visit with William Allen White, the renowned editor from Emporia, Kansas. During a cross-country train trip in the spring of 1927, Ferber stopped off in Emporia to visit her old friend and his family. The Whites recounted for Edna a trip they had made the previous fall to Oklahoma. "Their keen observant eyes, their brilliant humor sense," Ferber recalled, "their trained reportorial noses had missed nothing of the fantastic, the dramatic, the tragic, the absurd in that bizarre commonwealth so newly oil-rich. Their stories stunned me" (qtd. in Gilbert 359-60).

Some twenty years after statehood, Oklahoma still retained its reputation of unbridled entrepreneurship and illicit practices (outlawry, bootlegging, corrupt practices defrauding Native Americans of their mineral rights). Before embarking on her novel, Ferber knew nothing about the early days of Oklahoma, had never visited the state, and certainly had no personal experiences from which to draw. What she could bring to the story, however, was a keen eye for social peculiarity and a strong sense of political and social justice, a legacy of her liberal Jewish upbringing. "I knew nothing of the history of the spectacular opening of the Territory; of the discovery of oil; of the Indians so basely treated by the white man and so ludicrously revenged when the vast oil strike was made on the arid Indian reservation to which they had been herded" (qtd. in Gilbert 360).

A visit to Oklahoma, arranged for Ferber's subsequent visit with the Whites, led to an intensive period of interviews and researches in the Oklahoma state archives. *Cimarron* was an instant success as a novel, resulting in a hit film starring Richard Dix and Irene Dunne. Criticism was loud from Oklahoma historians, faulting her for inaccuracies, and from offended Oklahomans. It was reported, perhaps erroneously, that at a party held in her honor in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, while she was researching *Cimarron*, a local historian offered to help with facts. "Never mind giving me facts," she interrupted. "I am a fiction writer and don't want facts" (qtd. in Gilbert 361).

Conceived as a family novel, Babb's *The Lost Traveler* evolved into a study of dysfunctional relations, the homeless mind, and the

conflict of competing social and moral orders. In quite opposite ways, Ferber set about tracing the passage and settlement of newcomers in a late-frontier community and ended up probing the intimacy of a family who experience the social nightmare of starting anew in an untested land.

Both novels have a certain timeliness and timelessness. Postmodern, one might argue, in their perception of dislocation, fracture, and decenteredness, they seem very relevant in our day of high divorce rates, new alignments in sexual politics, and the shifting emotional dynamics of family life. Both novels offer strikingly pertinent insights into the psychology of compulsive adventurers in an earlier time when lines of flight from perceived entrapments crossed figurative and geographic borders, confronting new stratifications. Tracing uncharted routes produces new deformations. A line of flight loses its impetus, finding nothing further with which to conjoin, then falls back into its own self-destruction. Abandoning his family, Yancey Cravat dies, a broken man, in the muck of a wildcat oil well. His sight failing, Des Tannehill overplays his hand, losing what he most cherishes, his family. The fathers struggle like prairie titans to escape the entrapments of dominant social and moral conventions, the sedimentation of an emerging commercial order, the territorializing legal codifications of human relations, the countless blockages that stifle a person's becoming. Within the ruins of both families new commitments are made that offer the possibility of renewed human bonds and productive lives. Such are the ever-changing tides of human existence, the authors appear to tell us, ebbing and flowing with Arnold's "eternal note of sadness" and compensatory joys.

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NOTES

¹For example, Brand Whitlock's *The Turn of the Balance* (1907) and Edgar Watson Howe's *The Story of a Country Town* (1883). I refer the reader to my forthcoming entry on Midwestern literary radicalism in the second volume of the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*. Babb's literary radicalism apprenticeship in the little magazine circuits of the 1930s is told in Wixson, chapters 13 and 14.

²Useful reference works here are Goble, Joyce, and Thompson. As Goble writes, "Parts of Oklahoma's past, including its progressive, even radical past, go largely ignored, forgotten" (xi).

³Interesting historical parallels to the role of conflicting orders in early Oklahoma settlement are found in David Thelen's *Paths of Resistance*. Focusing on Missouri history between the end of the Civil War and 1920, Thelen studies the tensions that arose when a new eco-

conomic order of competition and growth began to conflict with an older order of individual autonomy and personal honor.

⁴Diane Dufva Quantic makes a similar point. Early explorers of the Great Plains, she notes, used metaphors to describe the vast landscape. Later authors personified nature "as a force that resists man's efforts to control it" (30). "As settlements were established, writers raised questions about political and economic control of the new land; to some it was important not as a natural phenomenon but as something to be exploited" (30).

⁵The psychological-sociological focus of the Babb and Ferber novels, I argue, requires special methods of interpretation. In order to disclose the conflicts and contradictions that, as the authors show, bind communities and families together constructively—or create destructive ruptures—critical methodologies such as the Deleuzian concepts of stratification and lines of flight serve our purpose better than thematic or myth/symbol study such as employed by Thatcher, Quantic, Slotkin, Fetterly and Pryse.

⁶See Gilbert, 359-62. Also, Ferber, *A Peculiar Treasure*, 325-331.

⁷On the importance of diverse cultural areas in early Oklahoma settlement, see Doran, *passim*; Morgan, 57-63.

⁸See Smith, *Poetics*, chap. 3.

⁹Babb's three novels, *The Lost Traveler* (1958), *An Owl on Every Post* (1971), and *Whose Names Are Unknown* (1939; 2004), portray High Plains people who settled in the Oklahoma Panhandle, southwestern Colorado, and western Kansas, where she grew up. Together they form a perceptive social study of early settlement, community life, and ensuing dispersion in the drought years of the 1930s. Journalist by experience and poet by inclination Babb situated a region (the central High Plains) that has produced few significant chroniclers or novelists.

¹⁰See Goodchild 75. Also, Bergler 111-113.

¹¹On early Oklahoma history, my sources include Joyce, Goble, Morgan, and Thompson.

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A MYSTICAL MIDWEST: LOUISE ERDRICH'S TRACKS AND THE MIDWESTERN TRADITION

NANCY BUNGE

On the cover of Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks*, HarperPerennial prints this quotation from the *New York Times Book Review*: "Ms. Erdrich's novels, regional in the best sense, are 'about' the experience of Native Americans, the way Toni Morrison's are about black people, William Faulkner and Eudora Welty's about the South, Philip Roth and Bernard Malamud's about the Jews. The specificity implies nothing provincial or small." Since the category Native American (or Black or Jewish) has nothing to do with region, the editors at *The New York Times Book Review* apparently cannot bring themselves to acknowledge that Erdrich is from and often writes about the Midwest.

Seeing Louise Erdrich as a Midwestern writer makes sense even though her Midwestern links are less obvious than the American Indian ones: she peoples her fiction primarily with Native American characters, some of whom see the world in such a deeply mythic way that even Midwestern students must struggle to understand her work. In the specific case of *Tracks*, Erdrich bases the entire book on the conflicts that emerge as a result of the differing perspectives held by Native Americans and whites even though the same region shapes them. Nonetheless, Erdrich's *Tracks* meets the major criteria for the Midwestern novel set down by Hamlin Garland in *Crumbling Idols*, standards that anticipated with remarkable accuracy the shape Midwestern fiction would assume, not only in Erdrich's work but also in that of writers like Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Wright, Saul Bellow and Toni Morrison.

Garland believed that this new fiction would realize the principles at the heart of Walt Whitman's poetry and, as a result, take seriously groups previously excluded from literature, like women and children. Moreover, Garland wrote that while "the past celebrated lust and greed and love of power, the future will celebrate continence

and humility and altruism." As a result, rather than a history of "a few titled personalities riding high on the obscure waves of nameless, suffering humanity," the future will see "the peaceful walking together of brethren, equals before nature and before the law, and fiction will celebrate this life." Garland predicted that religion also will become more tolerant, ceasing to demand "sacrifices to appease God, using creed as a club to make men conform to a single interpretation of man's relation to nature and his fellows." Instead, "there will be granted to individuals perfect freedom in the interpretation of nature's laws . . . and to fiction is given the task of subtly embodying this splendid creed" (39).

As Garland predicted, Erdrich's novel takes groups seriously that have previously not played important roles in literature, like the Ojibwe. Along with the other Ojibwe, the book's protagonist, Fleur Pillager, endures epidemics, starvation and the loss of her land, all because of white determination to intrude upon the Minnesota Ojibwe. Nanapush, another Ojibwe, tells Fleur's story because he wants her daughter, Lulu, to know her mother's history; Nanapush has few illusions that the whites persistently closing in on the Ojibwe will attempt to preserve it. Moreover, most of the significant characters in *Tracks* are women and Nanapush, the book's most prominent Ojibwe male and its primary narrator, admires all but Pauline, the one who yearns to be white. Nanapush considers Fleur so powerful he believes ghosts lead those attempting to collect her property taxes to their deaths:

The Agent went out there, then got lost, spent a whole night following the moving lights and lamps of people who would not answer him, but talked and laughed among themselves. They only let him go at dawn because he was so stupid. Yet he asked Fleur again for money, and the next thing we heard he was living in the woods and eating roots, gambling with ghosts. (9)

Nanapush would have died had not a woman, Margaret, rescued him. Deprived of Margaret's company, he ceases to care about his life and, as a result, almost starves: "Without her presence, there was little to remind me what life was good for. I got too lazy to feed myself, let the last potatoes rot, then I became too weak to set new traps in the woods" (127). Nanapush not only cherishes the women in his life, he marvels at all women's power: "Many times in my life, as my children were born, I wondered what it was like to be a woman, able to

invent a human from the extra materials of her own body" (167). He sees saving Lulu's feet from frostbite as an opportunity for him to get a sense of how giving birth feels: "I gave birth in loss. I was like a woman in my suffering, but my children were all delivered into death . . . but now I had a chance to put things in proper order" (167).

Nanapush also understands the importance of children. He narrates his story only to Fleur's child, Lulu, because he wants her to know and embrace her Ojibwe heritage, as she did naturally when young. The book ends with Nanapush's hopeful description of Lulu as one who will resist the orders the whites would impose on the Ojibwe as fiercely as her mother has. He describes to Lulu the scene when she returned from boarding school wearing the kind of orange dress "that any child who tried to run away from the boarding school was forced to wear . . . But your grin was as bold as your mother's, white with anger that vanished when you saw us waiting." As she springs towards Nanapush and Margaret, they cannot resist her: "We gave against your rush like creaking oaks, held on, braced ourselves together in the fierce dry wind" (226).

In order to take seriously groups shut out of the traditional power structure, one must cultivate kindness. Accordingly, Garland predicted that in Midwestern fiction, humility and altruism will supplant greed and love of power. Erdrich assigns greed and love of power to the whites and humility and altruism to the Ojibwe. So the struggle between these two groups becomes a fight between two value schemes. Pauline, who associates herself with white religious values, uses them to satisfy deep sadism. Pauline enjoys witnessing people's deaths and has a vision that Ojibwe deaths not only release those she watches, but help God fulfill His plan:

I saw them dragging one another in slings and litters. I saw their unborn children hanging limp or strapped to their backs, or pushed along in front hoping to get the best place when the great shining doors, beaten of air and gold, swung open on soundless oiled fretwork to admit them all.

Christ was there, of course, dressed in glowing white. "What shall I do now?" I asked. "I've brought You so many souls!" And He said to me, gently: "Fetch more." (140)

As whites take possession of Ojibwe land and chop down the trees, Pauline sees this destruction as "the work of Christ's hand" and has visions of the ways Christ's influence will continue to make itself felt:

The land will be sold and divided. Fleur's cabin will tumble into the ground and be covered by leaves. The place will be haunted, I suppose, but no one will have ears sharp enough to hear the Pillagers' low voices, or the vision clear to see their still shadows. The trembling old fools with their conjuring tricks will die off and the young, like Lulu and Nector, return from the government schools blinded and deafened. (204-5)

She herself hates children, but she vows to spend the rest of her life coaxing Ojibwe children to accept her point of view so that she can help fulfill Christ's vision: "I have vowed to use my influence to guide them, to purify their minds, to mold them in my own image although I do not like children very well, their scratching voices, eagerness, the way they bawl and screech . . . I will add their souls to those I have numbered" (205).

Nanapush, Fleur, and Margaret, those who cherish the traditional ways, meet Pauline's arrogance and anger with kindness and humility, even though they know she seeks them out only to undermine them. Although Pauline does not respond to Fleur's cries for help when men rape Fleur and although Fleur clearly senses Pauline's hostility towards her because she sees Fleur as the central representative of religious beliefs contrary to the Catholicism Pauline believes will save her, Fleur is kind to Pauline, much to Pauline's wonderment: "Still, Fleur forgave me, left an unguarded spot to attack. She allowed me to stay in the warmest chair and fed me bannock" (143). As Pauline vows to separate herself from the other Ojibwe, she talks of becoming "wiped clean of Fleur's cool even hand on my brow" (196). When Margaret, Fleur and Nanapush are starving, Pauline appears. They completely understand her hostility toward them and their culture, but all the same, Pauline reports that Margaret gives her own food to Pauline, even though it means going without herself:

There was a small bit left over which she gave to me. I drank it down before I saw that she had taken none for herself.

Nanapush handed his nearly full plate back to Margaret, who took a spoonful and passed the dish to Fleur, whose bowl was already cleaned by Lulu. (145)

This generous treatment of each other seems characteristic of Ojibwe who even respect those who have passed away and continue to haunt their lands. Nanapush fears losing the woods and with it, all the voices that have found a home there:

The moment I entered, I heard the hum of a thousand conversations. Not only the birds and small animals, but the spirits in the western stands had been forced together. The shadows of the trees were crowded with their forms. The twigs spun independently of wind, vibrating like small voices. I stopped, stood among these trees whose flesh was so much older than ours, and it was then that my relatives and friends took final leave, abandoned me to the living. (220)

So although the Midwestern whites in *Tracks* fail to manifest the kindness and humility that according to Garland supplies the basis for genuine democracy, the Ojibwe Midwesterners do.

Garland's third prediction, that the Midwest would become the home of religious tolerance, also applies to the Natives in *Tracks*, but not to the whites. Pauline aspires to become a Catholic nun because that will connect her firmly to the powerful whites. Despite a vision where Christ tells Pauline that she is white, her compulsion to violate her natural feelings and needs suggests she feels deep dissatisfaction with herself, perhaps because she understands that she is not and never will be white. She wears a burlap sack under her habit: her version of a hair shirt. She wears her shoes on the wrong feet so that it hurts to walk. And she only allows herself to use the toilet twice a day. All these activities clearly demark her from the Ojibwe, whom she sees as uncontrolled. Pauline reviles nature so completely that she condemns her own child, Marie, at birth, saying "Look . . . she's marked by the devil's thumbs" (136) and later refers to Marie as "the bastard girl" (198). But while Pauline looks to Catholicism for salvation, Father Damien, the priest who serves the Ojibwe, has much more limited success with the other Indians. For instance, when he tells Nanapush and Margaret that he hears they may get married, Nanapush replies, "I'm having relations with Margaret already That's the way we do things" (123). Undaunted, the priest immediately and fruitlessly asserts the importance of obeying Catholic dogma: "Make a confession, at any rate" (124). Nanapush eventually marries Margaret because it pleases her; if she wants to embrace Catholicism, he can accept that.

Indeed, each Native American in this book seems to have a distinct relationship with the spirits he or she believes manifest themselves through nature. The Ojibwe seem utterly accepting of these different approaches and give every indication they believe that they can all work. Moses Pillager, Fleur's cousin, has gone off by himself, living as though history has no impact on him: "He had survived but, as they later said of Fleur, he didn't know where he was anymore, this place of reservation surveys or the other place, boundless, where the dead sit talking, see too much, and regard the living as fools" (7-8). Margaret takes what Father Damien says seriously but will also willingly spend an evening observing while Nanapush acts out a ritual that came to him in a vision. Fleur is rumored to have a relationship with the man in the lake and lives by herself on her ancestral lands although "a young girl had never done such a thing" (8). The other Ojibwe take note but leave her alone. Pauline wants to kill off the man in the lake and undermine Fleur's powers because she thinks if she does so, Christ will feel obliged to save her: "If I did not forsake Jesus in His extremity, then He would have no other choice but to make me whole. I would be His champion" (195). Only Pauline sees the relationship between the Ojibwe spirituality and Christianity as a conflict where one side or the other must triumph. The Ojibwe other than Pauline understand that when it comes to religious views, the world accommodates many perspectives.

Erdrich's book, therefore, meets the three major standards Garland proposed for Midwestern fiction: it treats seriously groups previously ignored in literature, like women and children; it embraces humility and kindness rather than arrogance and power; and it recommends religious tolerance, not righteousness. While Garland presented these distinctions as differences between the past and the future as well as, he implied, the East Coast and the Middle West, Erdrich uses them to distinguish the whites and the Ojibwe. But all of these oppositions rest on and reflect different relationships to nature: one sees oneself as dominating and shaping it or as participating in it. Euro-Americans like to possess the land, while the Ojibwe, like other native groups, considered land held in common until Euro-Americans began to appropriate it. The Christianity that shapes the white character sees nature as evil, while the Ojibwe believe spirituality rests in nature rather than transcending it. Euro-Americans considered it their obligation to conquer nature and, in so

doing, conquer others, while the Ojibwe, like most native groups, embrace living with nature.

The Ojibwe understand that those who lose their connection with nature lose the ability to live fruitfully with it. As Fleur becomes angry, her visions no longer reveal the truth. When the Ojibwe are all starving, she has a dream of where they can find deer, but her sense of direction proves faulty because, Nanapush suggests, she has lost the peacefulness and trust that her sense of unity with nature gave her:

Her dreams lied, her vision was obscured, her helper slept deep in the lake Though she traveled through the bush with gunnysacks and her skinning knife, though she worked past her strength, tireless . . . Fleur was a different person than the young woman I had known. She was hesitant in speaking, false in her gestures, anxious to cover her fear. (177)

Nanapush tries to get her to reacquire her powers: "'Go down to the shore,' I told her. 'Make your face black and cry out until your helpers listen'" (177). But Fleur says she is too tired. Nanapush believes she made a fatal mistake when she got the notion, common to whites, that she owned her powers: "As soon as you rely on the possession it is gone I never made the mistake of thinking that I owned my strength, that was my secret" (177).

Nanapush should know because his powers in the book are considerable. When he and his friend Eli are starving, he dreams Eli towards game and then safely home. He ignores the white doctor's warning that Lulu's feet need amputating because that would transform her body in a way that would inhibit her ability to express her spirit and then nurses Lulu back to health his own way. Although Nanapush hears the spirits of the Ojibwe who have passed away in the trees, he reveres tolerance and acceptance so deeply that he believes he made a mistake by refusing to adjust to the ways of the whites; his insistence on remaining pure of bureaucracy has crippled his abilities to help his people with the whites. Nanapush has too much humility and too much wisdom to insist on absolute truth so he makes no claim to own the truth himself. As a result, he accepts and sees value in practically everything, placing him in the midst of a rich, resonant world. He can even take pleasure in Pauline's company, especially when she supplies material for his jokes.

That an Ojibwe perspective saturates Erdrich's novel may help explain why it meets Garland's criteria so well since Hamlin

Garland's model is Walt Whitman. Garland argued that Midwestern fiction would transplant Walt Whitman's philosophy to the Midwest. And at the center of Whitman's universe is an attitude that regards every object and every person with religious awe. This reverence for all objects and beings leads naturally to respecting all, including the socially powerless and those who worship differently. As Whitman puts it in "Song of Myself":

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and
each moment then,
In the faces of men and women, I see God, and in my own face
in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd
by God's name. (Section 48, Lines 1283-1286)

Nanapush, the narrator whose voice and values the reader of *Tracks* most trusts, shares these values with Walt Whitman. Fleur's loss of them leads to her fall.

Awareness of and reverence for the spiritual dimension of all people and all objects constitute the standard from which the other differences between the whites and the Ojibwe flow. First, revering the divinity in all this involves giving oneself over to sensing the goodness of other beings rather than attempting to control and shape them in terms of some supposedly superior set of values. Cultivating this perspective naturally leads to tolerance for both other people and other ethical standards. But conceding control and superiority to others while relaxing into confidence that spiritual laws shape the world more wisely than any individual allows one to rest peacefully in what happens rather than resist it. The transcendent faith in nature and in the world that Nanapush brings to his life pervades Walt Whitman's poetry, helping explain why Erdrich's novel, like Walt Whitman's poems, celebrates all human beings and ridicules all attempts at exclusion; why both works validate the humility that leads to acceptance and condemn the arrogance that produces a need to control, and why they both reject righteous ideologies and recommend a faith that the earliest Midwestern writers like Sherwood Anderson, Vachel Lindsey and Carl Sandburg claimed comes from the ground. It is no accident that Huck Finn finds freedom floating down a raft on the Mississippi. This religious regard for ordinary landscapes and people subsequently surfaced in the works of many

Midwestern novelists, including Cather and Hemingway and persists in modern Midwestern writers such as Saul Bellow, James Wright and Jim Harrison. Erdrich's work reminds those who may have forgotten it of the spiritual thread of the Midwestern tradition. *The New York Times Book Review* is right: Erdrich is a regional writer: a Midwestern one, for among its other qualities Midwestern literature has a strain of persistent mysticism born of a salutary unity with nature. When Erdrich's work recalls this element, it evokes not only Ojibwe roots, but Midwestern ones.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2006

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, during 2006. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence within the twelve-state area that defines the Midwest. Fiction and poetry using Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including (if applicable) designations of locale within square brackets at the end of each citation. However, because of space constraints, primary source materials are limited to separately-published works; those appearing in literary journals and magazines are generally not included. Secondary sources, usually journal articles, books, or doctoral dissertations, are listed by subject.

Periodicals published for the first time in 2006 that relate in some way to Midwestern literature, either in subject, content, or locale, are listed alphabetically by title in the third and final section of this bibliography.

Not included in this bibliography are the following types of material: reprints or reissues of earlier works, except for some new or revised editions; baccalaureate or masters theses; entries in reference books; separate contents of collected essays or *Festschriften*; audio or video recordings; electronic databases; and internet websites which have the tendency to be unstable or ephemeral.

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

A	Anthology	juv	Juvenile fiction
bibl	Bibliography	lang	Language; linguistics
biog	Biography	M	Memoir
corr	Correspondence	N	Novel
crit	Criticism	P	Poetry
D	Drama	pub	Publishing; printing
I	Interview	rev	Review essay
jrn	Journalism	S	Short fiction

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

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