

MIDWESTERN  
MISCELLANY IX

*being a variety of essays  
on a variety of topics  
by members of*

The Society for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature

*Edited by*

DAVID D. ANDERSON

The Midwestern Press  
The Center for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature and Culture  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan

1981

Copyright 1981 by  
The Society for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature  
All rights reserved

To  
Jack Conroy

## PREFACE

With the appearance of *Midwestern Miscellany IX* The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature begins its second decade of existence. This year marks, too, the continuation of the annual scholarly symposium The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest and the rapidly growing Midwest Poetry Festival, at which Midwestern poets read from their works. *MidAmerica VIII*, the yearbook of the Society for 1981, with a variety of essays on Midwestern literature, including the symposium "Midwestern Writers and the Nobel Prize," and the annual Bibliography of Midwestern Literature for 1979, will appear shortly.

In this issue the *Miscellany* continues its tradition of exploring a broad spectrum of the Midwestern cultural background. The essays included range in subject matter from an examination of Missouri fiction to the fictionalized treatment of a Chicago baseball tragedy and from the mythical kitchen of Michigan's Della Lutes to the spirit with which the Chicago Renaissance was imbued by its brilliant women editors.

The variety of the contents of this issue reflects both the vitality and scope of Midwestern culture and of the Society itself. As the Society begins its second decade, it becomes increasingly evident that the organization has come of age, that the work of its members is a worthy adjunct of the culture of the region of which it is a part.

DAVID D. ANDERSON

April, 1981

## CONTENTS

Preface	4
Three Generations of Missouri Fiction David D. Anderson	7
Midwestern Civilization and Its Discontents: Lewis's Carol Kennicott and Roth's Lucy Nelson James B. Carothers	21
"A Word for What Was Eaten:" An Introduction to Della T. Lutes and Her Fiction Lawrence R. Dawson	31
Harriet Monroe, Margaret Anderson, and the Spirit of the Chicago Renaissance Marilyn J. Atlas	43
"Come Back Ceaselessly Into the Past:" The Autobiographical Fiction of Sherwood Anderson Roger J. Bresnahan	54
<i>The Natural</i> and the Shooting of Eddie Waitkus James Barbour and Robert Sattelmeyer	61

## THREE GENERATIONS OF MISSOURI FICTION

DAVID D. ANDERSON

Nowhere in the Midwest is the Midwestern search for meaning and fulfillment in American life more evident than in Missouri, nor has any other Midwestern state contributed more to the creation by its writers of the American dream in epic terms. Located between two great rivers at the point where they become one; the stopping-off place before the great leap westward; progenitor of the first and greatest of Midwestern writers and of the man who went from Independence to the White House; situated in the heart of the American heartland; microcosm of a nation gone to war against itself; goal of great migrations and point of departure for others, Missouri sent many of its young people from the towns and the farms to the West and the East, up and down its rivers, to its own city, St. Louis, and to Chicago, the metropolis of the heartland, and beyond. And of them, many Missourians wrote of their origins and their search.

Of this latter group there are three about whom I shall comment: in effect, three generations of Missouri writers, the first and greatest of Midwestern writers, one who deserves better than the obscurity into which he and his works have passed, and the third who has seen his works gain renewed popularity. The greatest is, of course, Mark Twain, and there is little I can add to describe his accomplishment; the second, lesser but worthy writer, is Homer Croy, who went out from the town, from Marysville, Missouri, and who remembered and wrote about the town and its dream. The third is Jack Conroy, the Sage of Moberly, Missouri, and author of a modern classic.

To Mark Twain we are indebted for the language and the substance of Midwestern prose, the language that, through Sher-

wood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway, both of whom acknowledged their debt, has become that of the mainstream of modern American fiction. The substance of his contribution is that which, in Sherwood Anderson's words, was rooted in "the old brutal ignorance that had in it also a kind of beautiful childlike innocence," the qualities of the town and of the human condition, those that led to departure, by train or by raft, and the beginning of the search for freedom and success.

Just as Mark Twain himself had gone down the river, toward the setting sun, and then to the glitter of the East, encompassing in one lifetime the search that had occupied generations of his contemporaries, in his greatest work, the solid foundation upon which generations of his successors have built their work (the continuum from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* is fascinating) he created the archetypal story of the youthful flight from the human condition and the confidence that freedom lies down the river or off in the Territory, before cities and success had been discovered, and it tells us what Twain himself had learned, what each young writer, young person, must learn for himself: that the human condition is universal, that brutal ignorance and childlike innocence, hand in hand, mark out the paths of civilization and of human life.

Huck had followed the path of the past, the path of exploration, of adventure, of commerce, as it had been in the youth of Mark Twain, Missouri, and the nation, but it was inevitable that he turn West at the end, to the path that provided (and still provides for a good many Midwesterners who seek sun and sin in California) an apparent but elusive freedom. In Twain's lifetime and in his own life that path was to turn once more, to a new age and a new promise, in the East and the city, to a more attractive and promising fulfillment, and to "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" and "The Mysterious Stranger."

But I digress. In 1883, at the time Mark Twain, at 48, at the peak of his powers and in the midst of his life, ensconced in Elmira, New York, with his beloved Libby, had completed *Life on the Mississippi* and turned again to the manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn*, a Missouri writer of the new age of glitter that is

not gold was born, to mature in a still newer age in which success is often compounded of moving shadows on a silver screen. This writer was Homer Croy of Marysville and New York.

If Mark Twain is the prince of Missouri—Midwestern—American writers, Croy is perhaps the pauper, but he had a lot of fun and did a good deal of writing, most of it humorous. But he wrote two novels that are respectable, real, and in earnest. Born and raised on a farm near Marysville, Missouri, on March 11, 1883, Croy spent his early years working on the farm, attending a one-room school, and writing bits of funny doggeral. After four years of riding a horse eight miles to the high school in town and back again at night, he went to the university at Columbia, where he was one of the first students in the school of journalism. He edited the school paper, the magazine, and the annual, and when he had learned enough he left without a degree and went to New York. There he went to work reading manuscripts for Theodore Dreiser, then editing the three Butterick publications, the *Delineator*, the *Designer*, and *New Idea Women's Magazine*, all of them mechanisms for peddling dress patterns by mail. Whether or not Croy wrote home that he had a "lucrative job" in the city, as did Sherwood Anderson when he was rolling barrels of apples in a Chicago warehouse fifteen years earlier, is unknown, but in 1909 he published his first humorous sketch in *The Bohemian Magazine*, then owned, published, and edited by Dreiser, who paid him fifty dollars.

The years from that point to Croy's death in May, 1965, were perhaps best described by the late O. O. McIntyre, a fellow Midwesterner in the big city, who remarked that "No one has more fun out of the business of writing than Homer Croy." Like his mentor and fellow Missourian Mark Twain, Croy's writings were varied, with, in most of them, an underlying ironic humor. Also like Twain he was fascinated by the new technology, at times to his regret. But whereas Twain's fascination was with the linotype, Croy's was with the movies, and he formed a close relationship with his Oklahoma neighbor Will Rogers that lasted until the latter's death.

In addition to hundreds of magazine articles, stories, and sketches, Croy wrote at least sixteen books, including *Boone Stop*

(1918), *How Motion Pictures Are Made* (1918), *They Had to See Paris* (1926), which became Will Rogers' first talking picture, *Fancy Lady* (1927), *Caught* (1928), and three novels rooted in his Missouri past, *West of the Water Tower* (1923), *R.F.D. No. 3* (1924), and *Sixteen Hands* (1938). Like Twain, he traveled around the world, but his purpose was not to follow the equator and write a book; it was to take motion pictures. Although he remained in the East all his life, he continued to own the family farm until his death in 1965.

Out of this varied production during a writing career of more than forty years, two of Croy's novels, those from the early twenties, are pertinent to our discussion here. These two novels, which I think are his best works, suggest a continuum in the making of a Midwestern myth, a continuum that extends over the distance from Hannibal to Marysville, Missouri, by way of Clyde, Ohio, in space and time, and the same distance from St. Petersburg to Junction City, Missouri, through Winesburg, Ohio, in the continuing unfolding of the search for success.

The novels are *West of the Water Tower* (1923) and *R.F.D. No. 3* (1924). Curiously, Croy published the first anonymously, and although he later asserted his authorship of it, he omitted the second from lists of his book publications in his later years. Both are competent novels, they are realistic in the Howells tradition, and they have a common setting. If either had been published a bit earlier it would have been suitable for discussion in Carl Van Doren's unfortunate 1921 essay, "The Revolt From the Village."

Both novels are set in Junction City, Missouri, a farming and trading town in the northern part of the state, and, although both are set a generation later than *Winesburg, Ohio*, or *Poor White*, Junction City, like Winesburg and Bidwell, is only two generations removed from its frontier origins. "Old" families have lived there little more than a generation; "good" families are those who have risen in the town's socio-economic structure; others have not, but advancement is possible for their children. Indeed, as in Winesburg, the townspeople encourage the bright, the hardworking, the ambitious, and they make it possible for the young people of poor backgrounds to rise if they have the ability to do so.

Croy's Junction City is very much like the town described by Sherwood Anderson, by Floyd Dell, and other Midwestern writers; the town's social structure is open and clear, its mores and values are clearly defined, and its aristocracy is natural. It took a great deal of pride in those who were self-made, that is, those who had risen through virtue, hard work, and a touch of sharp dealing. Conversely, it dealt harshly with those who abused its mores or violated its values. As each novel opens, the protagonist is about to seek success in the larger world beyond Junction City.

In the first novel, *West of the Water Tower*, set just before World War I, the protagonist, a young man named Guy Plummer, is much like George Willard of Winesburg. With his quick mind, mild-mannered sympathy, and skill as a debater, he is, in the town's opinion, destined for greater things. His origins are humble: his family, headed by his itinerant evangelist minister father, had recently arrived in town and had been marked as eccentric by its people, but Guy was encouraged by the townspeople to rise. Not only was he the best orator in a town in William Jennings Bryan country, but his essay on "Government—What Is It?" had won a state prize.

For the first generation of the twentieth century the path to success had become more complex if more certain, and Guy would go to the state university and thence to the city. He had worked hard and saved his money for college. But Guy's departure was delayed by a test which he failed, and which, when it became public knowledge, precluded, at least for a time, success in the town or the world beyond.

Just as in *Winesburg, Ohio*, George Willard had loved Helen White, the daughter of Winesburg's banker, so Guy loved Bee Chew, the daughter of the town's ablest and richest lawyer. But whereas George and Helen had shared only a chaste kiss, Bee found herself pregnant. Determined to keep the pregnancy secret so that his success will not be impeded, Bee, in the manner of small town girls in an age in which abortion was impossible or unthinkable, determines to "visit" an aunt in the city. Guy's savings are not enough to see her through; he seeks a loan and is rebuffed, and in desperation he robs the office of the town's

commission merchant. In the manner of towns elsewhere, the pregnancy becomes common knowledge, gossip links him with the robbery, and he is arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to jail. To this point the novel seems to support those who see the Midwestern town as narrow, provincial, and abusive.

The second novel, *R.F.D. No. 3*, set just after World War I, parallels the first, and it, too, reflects the new age. The protagonist is a young lady, Josie Decker, the most beautiful and presumably the most virtuous in the county, and in a town in which such standards were rapidly being re-shaped by the images of the Gish sisters on the local movie screen, her ambition, to become a movie star, is supported by both her prosperous, "good" family and the townspeople at large. She is enthusiastically supported by both family and friends in a state-wide beauty contest in which a screen test is the prize, but, in what is essentially a popularity contest, she only wins third place. Disappointed, as is the town, she becomes enamoured of a traveling salesman who also has movie ambitions. He promises to marry her and take her to Hollywood to gain her success. They run off, but in St. Louis he is arrested and imprisoned for car theft, and she has no choice but to return to the town, pregnant and unmarried.

Each of Croy's young people revealed a flaw that led to a serious transgression of the town's moral code, and for both the town's punishment is harsh, not only, however, because of the transgression but because the town's expectations and support had been abused. But in Junction City the condition is not permanent. Expiation and redemption are possible in the town, and with their attainment, a new search for success, perhaps lower-keyed but no less determined, becomes possible.

For the girl, the redemption that follows humility and expiation is predictable for the time and place: an older, wealthy, widowed farmer whom she had earlier spurned and who, it is rumored, had worked his wife to death, offers to marry her and give a name to her child. She accepts, convention is satisfied, and somehow an obscure justice has been served. But her vision of success is narrowed to respectability and acceptance in the town and its environs.

For the young man in the first novel, *West of the Water Tower*, the double standard of the time and place is also evident in his expiation and redemption. After his release from jail and a series of menial jobs, each of which he loses because of town pressure, he is hired as a clerk by the manager of a hog-breeding association, the officers of which are scattered about the state and hence immune to town pressures. Five years of hard, menial work expiate his sin, and he and Bee find each other again. Then a crisis occurs in the town. Lawyer Chew suddenly dies, and there is no one eloquent enough to present the town's case before the state highway commission in the attempt to secure a badly-needed highway for the town.

Then someone remembers Guy; he is approached hesitantly, and his ambition stirs again: to speak eloquently and secure the highway for the town, and then to read law, to marry Bee, and to seek success beyond Junction City. The novel ends on a note reminiscent of *Winesburg, Ohio*, as Guy leaves for St. Louis to present the town's case:

The train came in . . . The crowd pushed forward. Somebody rushed ahead with the new bag; hands beckoned to Guy; a hundred wanted to help him. The conductor waved his hand, the bell began to ring, and Guy looked down into the eyes of Bea at his side. Quickly he bent over and she lifted her lips. Usually at such demonstrations in Junction City there were catcalls, hoots, and sly remarks, but now there was none.

Guy found his way down the aisle. The train started to move and he rushed to the rear platform. He looked back and had the confused picture of hankerchiefs waving, people cheering, hats going up in the air. Over the roar of the train he could hear the honking of the automobiles, like geese going over. Somewhere a whistle was blowing—blowing—and he recognized it as being the one at the water works. He began to cry a little. At last the train turned the bend.

For Guy departure from the town is not flight or rejection but the continuation of something in a larger arena that had begun in the town, an ambition and determination that had been part of his heritage from the town and its people. Not only is

he not rebelling or rejecting the village of his origins, but he has become part of the tradition that had created the village, the Midwest, and the nation. Not only had the town become "a background upon which to paint the dream of his manhood," but the dreams that he was to paint, perhaps even to build, had, in little more than a century, built an orderly society in a wilderness and then had embarked on an even greater transformation: that which would make the rural nation an industrial power and make the twentieth century American.

For Guy, as for countless others, the dream had been part of their initiation into life in the Midwestern towns, each of them a microcosm of the greater open society. The Lincoln story had been part of that nurturing, the log cabin to White House story; for each of them myth and reality had become one; the towns had shown them the path to success, to fulfillment; it began at the railroad station and followed the iron rails to the city.

Homer Croy and dozens of other Midwestern writers have recorded in their portrayals of the town the origins of that search, the human search, American search, Midwestern search for the success, the fulfillment, that lies, at any given time, where the action is, and each of their central characters, nurtured on the dreams that had taken their creators beyond the town, takes up a search that has taken on the dimensions of a new myth created upon the foundations of the old.

The myth they have created is that which takes the young men out of the towns, the myth of the search that is their natural right, the search that brought New Englanders and Southerners across the mountains and down the Ohio, the myth that made them Midwesterners as the Old Northwest became the Midwest, the heartland of a continental nation. As George Willard left Winesburg, Guy Plummer left Junction City; the old myth in a new age, the myth that had made the Midwest, the Midwestern myth of the search, took them not away from the towns but toward the goal that, ever elusive and yet ever attainable, the towns had taught them to seek in the compelling arenas of life.

The third Missouri writer whom I shall discuss is, unlike Mark Twain and Homer Croy, a product of our own time, and his work appears at first reading to contrast with the others. Jack

Conroy is a man of the twentieth century, whose best work defines in human terms the great depression of the 1930s, a set of circumstances that for many of us is, together with World War II, one of the two great events of our lives, our experience, and our century.

Consequently, for Jack Conroy, born in Moberly, Missouri, in 1899, the search that takes his fictional young people out of the towns and into the greater America beyond is not the product of a search for success and fulfillment in the traditional sense but an attempt to survive economic upheaval and enslavement as the American dream seems to have failed.

Both Mark Twain and Homer Croy are products of a simpler time in a simpler society, in which it is possible for the oppressed, the frustrated, to flee, to escape, to go West or South or to the City and there find whatever they seek. But Conroy's Missouri, his Midwest, his America, is that of the complex industrial twentieth century, when nature and human beings have become little more than raw material to feed an insatiable industrial appetite. It is a time, too, when the economic system which industrialism has created is so complex that it reaches into the towns and the countryside in every section of America, a time in which the conditions that prevail in New York or San Francisco prevail also in Moberly, Missouri. We can run, we can attempt to escape, to do better elsewhere, in the American tradition, but we learn, as do Conroy's people, that escape, freedom, and fulfillment are no longer possible, no matter where we go.

In many respects, Jack Conroy's works begin where Mark Twain's stopped, with the disillusionment and bitterness of Twain's last years, the years in which Twain in the East was learning about man's inhumanity in the East of his success, and Conroy was learning the same lesson in the mining town in which he experienced the new America. For both men, the substance of the new century was a bitter disapproval of what they had been taught was the American way: a path to success limited only by our ambitions, our dreams, our willingness to work, the dream that said every small boy, no matter how humble, was potentially an Abraham Lincoln, a Ulysses Grant, an Andrew Carnegie.



Jack Conroy's best work and his best known, a modern classic, is *The Disinherited*, published in 1933, as the nation was enmeshed in an economic depression that seemed hopeless and that for many marked the end of the American dream. It was also the year in which Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a personable man who seemed little more capable than his predecessor but who had a way with words, was elected to the Presidency and coined a phrase that captured the imagination of the American people.

The depression years have recently become the subject of a good deal of nostalgic revisiting, and occasionally we hear older people, whose memories have become dimmed and, disgusted with a younger generation whom they don't understand, comment that perhaps this country needs another depression. To them, I suggest reading—or re-reading—Conroy's *The Disinherited*, the product and recreation in human terms of a time that is best understood as the human tragedy that it was.

*The Disinherited* opens and closes in the coal mining camp and company town of Monkey Nest, a town that is not truly a town. The novel covers the period during which we like to say that modern America came of age, that is, from the time just before World War I to the beginning of the 1930s. These are the years during which the United States became the most powerful, most prestigious, most prosperous nation in the world, and its people presumably enjoyed greater liberty and a higher standard of living than any other in the world.

The novel's central character is Larry Donovan, a small boy as the novel opens, a young man as it closes. It is the story, too, of his family and friends, all of whom see their work vital to American growth, as the first step in eventually sharing in the good life promised by the American dream. Donovan's father is determined that if he works hard—and he does, eventually paying with his life for his dream—his sons, particularly Larry, can become educated and not only escape the mines, but enjoy a dignified, respectable life. It is, in effect, the same dream shared by the people of Homer Croy's Marysville and even of Mark Twain's Hannibal.

But there was an important difference. Twain and Croy portrayed a younger America, peopled by individuals, with much

more room for individuals—although we see many instances of attempts to deny Huckleberry Finn's individualism. Conroy's people have one function: to dig coal to fuel trains, factories, and homes in an America in which the individual had become defined and limited by his function, his place in an industrial-economic complex. They can—if circumstances warrant and permit—move horizontally from mine to factory, from Missouri to Michigan, but it is impossible for them to move up. Larry, as learner and participant in a struggle dominated by personal tragedy, is a seeker after success, in the American tradition, but he learns eventually that hard work, ambition, and talent are not enough. Early in the novel, in Part One, Monkey Nest Camp, as a result of strikes and unemployment in what were presumably the good years early in the century, each of his older brothers goes into the mines to help the family, but each is killed before he is sixteen. Finally, his father determines to do what he must do to save Larry:

"It's all I can do, and I must do it. . . . I could tend the garden in the morning, go to work at noon and dig till four, then fire the shots. Four dollars extra on the day will soon pay up our debts and leave enough over to send Larry to school in town. The way it is now, we're like the frog in the well. Every time he jumped up one foot, he slipped back two. . . ."

Mother protested that shot firing was a single man's job, and that nobody ever lasted long at it. Shot firers were paid a premium rate for an hour or two of work after the other men had finished. When a man accepted the job it was considered that his days were numbered. . . .

His father's plan is successful until the inevitable happens. His mother then takes in laundry until a strike drives them out of the mining community. In Part Two, Bull Market, they move to the nearby town, where Larry finds work in a railroad car shop and goes to night school. He has escaped the mines and is still determined to rise. "Lincoln had only a burning log to study by," his mother reminds him, and he tells himself, "This was the way of escape. When I saw the broken, apathetic old men about the shops, I told myself that I would study all night, if need be, to save myself from such a fate. . . ."

However hard Larry works and however determined he is, a prolonged strike, the importation of scabs, and unemployment defeat the dream, and he is forced to find what work he can in a variety of low-paid jobs. Finally, with countless others displaced from farms, mines, and factories, he decides to become a part of the industry that more than any other symbolized the new age and the prosperity of the 1920s; he goes to Detroit, to the booming automobile plants. Again, prosperity, success, and the realization of the American dream seem not only possible, but within his reach.

Part Three, *Hard Winter*, is, however, a denial again of his dreams, and he and his people become truly *The Disinherited*, for the first time with neither hope nor dreams in a nation economically destitute. There is no work anywhere on any terms for anyone. It is a time of wandering, of bare survival, of defeat. Larry returns to Monkey Camp, now deserted except for the decrepit shack where his destitute mother and widowed, destitute aunt exist on edible weeds. There is no hope for any of them.

The novel to its end is a study of the degeneration and defeat of a people and of individuals, not through their own fault but that of a heartless economic system and those who serve it. Significantly, however, Conroy's people never surrender to defeat, nor do they accept the fact that they are disinherited by the nation and the society they have built. Larry's life is, as I commented earlier, a life of learning, and in the course of the novel—particularly in Part Three—he learns an important lesson: the old individualism, that of the nineteenth century, in which the individual was tested and permitted to escape or rise or not, according to his or her merits, was dead. It had no place in the new mass industrial society, in which individuals rose only at the expense of others. Larry learns that we must care for others, that we are our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. Part Three, the hard winter of the depression, is full of vignettes of such caring—in soup kitchens in Detroit, in Hoovervilles on the road, in the abandoned Monkey Nest, as farmers conspire to defeat dispossession, and above all as selfless men teach the workers to unite and to fight. As the novel ends, Larry goes off with his boyhood friend Ed and a labor organizer, Hans, to carry on the fight.

*The Disinherited* is one of the many of what are called "proletarian" novels engendered by the economic upheaval and human suffering of the depression, novels that used common people, the proletariat of the shops and farms, as their subject matter, and, with World War II, world crises, and new problems, the proletarian novels have largely, deliberately or not, justifiably or not, been forgotten. Many of them—not Conroy's—were weak novels, and we prefer to view the 1930s through the haze of nostalgia rather than the sharp etching of reality.

The proletarian novels of the thirties deserve better than to be forgotten—nowhere can we find more eloquent expression of the reality of that time, of human beings coping with a world that they neither made nor understood—and Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited*, as the best novel to come out of the turmoil of that time, is getting the recognition that it deserves as perhaps the truest recreation of that time that any American writer, Midwesterner or not, Missourian or not, has produced.

But Conroy's *The Disinherited* deserves its belated recognition for another reason: unlike most of the others of the time, *The Disinherited* is not apart from the mainstream of American life and literature; it is part of it.

*The Disinherited* carries on in the tradition—the American, Midwestern, Missourian tradition—that we have seen in microcosm in looking at the works of Mark Twain, of Homer Croy, of Jack Conroy. Larry, like Huck Finn, like Guy Plummer, has been tested, and where others might have surrendered, he passes and determines to go on. For Huck, it is freedom in the territory, the success of a simpler individualistic age. For Guy, the modest success in the small town. But for Larry, it is the liberation, the re-established American inheritance, of his people.

Curiously, too, each of the novels concludes on a note of hope, a re-affirmation of traditional American optimism in spite of the odds against its realization. Larry's position at the end is the most difficult, his chances of success the least, but his determination to make his dream real is no less great, and, in spite of the odds against it, we find ourselves convinced that he—and the people and the country—will win. Perhaps here, in the

worst economic trouble the nation has endured, is the American faith that FDR exemplified that same year when he proclaimed that we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

I think, too, that this brief look at three generations of Missouri writers tells us much about the region and the people out of which they came, a region that has demanded no less than the best that is in us, a people courageous, determined, ambitious, a people possessed of a dream that has become the American dream, a people worthy of their region. In the works each writer—Mark Twain, Homer Croy, Jack Conroy—has created a tradition that each of us can be proud to share.

Michigan State University

## MIDWESTERN CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS: LEWIS'S CAROL KENNICOTT AND ROTH'S LUCY NELSON

JAMES B. CAROTHERS

In *When She Was Good* (1967) Philip Roth treats explicitly and consistently several themes and situations explored less systematically by Sinclair Lewis in *Main Street* (1920). Both novels center on young women who react neurotically to marriage and motherhood, and to the exigencies of small-town life in the upper Midwest; but while Lewis vacillates between satire and sympathy in his presentation of Carol Kennicott, ultimately he shows her reconciling herself to life with her husband and child in Gopher Prairie, whereas Roth maintains a constant clinical attitude toward Lucy Nelson, describing her deterioration from neurotic rigidity through hysterical breakdown to suicidal despair. Many similarities between the two works support the conjecture that *Main Street* served as at least a partial model for *When She Was Good*, but substantial differences between the two novels and their two central characters may be taken to illustrate the radical transition from a pre-Freudian to a post-Freudian psychology of fiction that began about the time *Main Street* was published.

Although Lewis included in *Main Street* enough significant details to support a Freudian explanation of certain aspects of Carol Kennicott's behavior, his novel is nevertheless grounded in a predominantly social psychology. Carol Kennicott seeks and discovers her identity within the social matrix of Gopher Prairie. For all that her relationship with her husband, Dr. Will Kennicott, is given sustained attention and specificity, and for all that the influence and memory of her father, Judge Milford, are given important though infrequent stress, Carol's essential being is

defined by the Gopher Prairie society of which she is at best a reluctant part. Virtually all of her hopes and fears, her expectations and frustrations, proceed first from her initial ambition to "get [her] hands on one of these prairie towns and make it beautiful," and from her consequent battle against "the Village Virus."<sup>1</sup> Roth, by contrast, shows Lucy Nelson's personality forming and disintegrating almost exclusively by reaction to tensions and traumas within her immediate family. A detail illustrative of the significant difference between the two characters is that Carol is always Carol *Kennicott*, defined and identified by her married name, while Lucy remains Lucy *Nelson*, whose character is essentially unchanged by her marriage to Roy Bassard. Thus, though both novelists are concerned to describe the consequences of a rigidly limiting small-town Midwestern morality, Lewis maintains a double purpose to his satire, showing alternately the stultifying conventionality of Gopher Prairie and the patent foolishness of the self-admittedly "flighty" (p. 19) and "culturine" (p. 97) Carol Kennicott. Roth, however, sustains an essentially single attitude toward Lucy Nelson and Liberty Center. Though he holds no brief for Liberty Center and its principal spokesman, Willard Carroll, the dream of whose life is "Not to be rich, not to be famous, not to be mighty, but to be civilized —" (p. 3), Roth presents Lucy Nelson, the exquisite product of this "civilization" as a horrifying angel of destruction.

*Main Street*, taken as a whole, tends to explain all human behavior, and particularly Carol Kennicott's behavior, in terms of immediate social environment. The novel projects Lewis's deeply ambivalent attitude toward his central character, and it concludes with an arbitrary and sentimental resolution of her central conflict. *When She Was Good*, conversely, manifests a personal psychology of individual behavior, a subtle consistency of point-of-view, and an inexorable movement toward the fatal resolution of Lucy Nelson's dilemma. Yet the two novels not only display obvious similarities in geographical setting (Liberty Center may well be an ironic renaming of Gopher Prairie), but they also feature central female characters who, though they differ otherwise in significant particulars, have in common a fear of men, a brittle self-esteem, and an inchoate yearning for "higher things." Each of these attributes, which contribute

immediately to the novels' conclusions, may be explained in large part by the two heroines' "abnormal" relationship with their fathers.

In the case of Carol Kennicott, to adapt a remark of Freud's, "You must be content with a hint that the girl was in the grip of an erotic attachment to her father whose beginnings went back to her childhood."<sup>2</sup> In the case of Lucy Nelson, this conclusion is quite explicit. In order to explain the striking similarities and differences between *Main Street* and *When She Was Good*, then, I would like to suggest that Lewis and Roth proceed from radically opposing views of Freudian psychology, that this opposition accounts for their differing assessments of their central characters, and that it has demonstrable consequences for the narrative structure of the two novels.

One of the principal tenets of Freud's work, particularly of "Civilization and Its Discontents," is that guilt and desire are sublimated into public works. Carol Kennicott's career as a reformer of Gopher Prairie is in many ways a textbook case of literary exemplification of this theme. But if this is so, it is apparently the result of Lewis's artistic instinct, rather than the result of his conscious application, for Lewis himself seems to have been indifferent or antagonistic to the Freudian theories that fascinated and influenced so many of his contemporaries. Lewis's biographer reports, for example, that during his Greenwich Village period the novelist "was apparently unsusceptible . . . to the exciting discovery of Freud."<sup>3</sup> And in October, 1923 Lewis attacked Freud, whom he admitted not having read, saying: "He has been responsible for all sorts of professional charlatans who are doing great harm—men who put their dirty fingers into the delicate machinery of the mind and distort it."<sup>4</sup> Freud, in fact, is given only a single cryptic allusion in *Main Street*: Carol hears and remembers his name in a list of discussion topics for the group of Chicago bohemians with which she was uneasily affiliated (p. 15). Dr. Will Kennicott, moreover, explicitly rejects the treatment of "neuroses and psychoses and inhibitions and repressions and complexes" (p. 298), though he admits to his patient, Maud Dyer, "You have a perfectly well-developed case of repression of sex instinct, and it raises the

old Ned with your body." If it is questionable whether Will Kennicott speaks for Lewis here, it may be worth noting that his physician-hero of *Arrowsmith* (1925) devotes himself to a bacteriological explanation of disease, and that in pre-publication publicity plans for that novel Lewis suggested that his publisher seek "adverse comments from Freud, Jung, and Adler."<sup>5</sup> In other novels, particularly *Babbitt* (1922), *Dodsworth* (1929), and *Cass Timberlane* (1945), Lewis concentrated on the surface realism of social satire, rather than on the exploration of the individual psyche.

But though Freud played but a minimal and negative role in the development of Lewis's fiction, he is extremely important for Roth, who writes within a literary and cultural milieu in which a knowledge of Freud is assumed, and assumed to be important. From his first novel, *Letting Go* (1962), which features Gabe Wallach's conscious acts of oedipal dissociation from his father, through the psychoanalytic satires of *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) and *The Breast* (1972), to his most recent novel, *The Ghost Writer* (1979), Roth has informed his fiction with Freudian allusion, situation, and theme. One excerpt from *Portnoy's Complaint* was even published separately under the title of "Civilization and Its Discontents,"<sup>6</sup> and Roth's comments on both Portnoy and Lucy Nelson emphasize the psychological affinities of the two characters. Though he admits that Lucy is "seen to destroy herself within an entirely different fictional matrix," he maintains that she is very much Portnoy's "soul mate."<sup>7</sup>

In spite of these differences, Lewis and Roth both create central female characters whose personality and behavior lend themselves to Freudian analysis. Their situations are superficially different, for Carol Kennicott's father appears only occasionally in Carol's consciousness and memory (and then as a remote and benign presence), while Whitey Nelson remains a constant, terrifying, and present threat to his daughter Lucy. Both women react negatively to male physicality, Carol apparently in part because of her father's genteel aloofness, Lucy because of Whitey's drunken violence. Both women's attitude toward their fathers and, by extension, to all other men, including especially their husbands, is fixed in early adolescence. Carol's father, "the

smiling and shabby, the learned and teasingly kind" (p. 12), is a judge who entertains his daughter with pleasant fictions. "The beasts in the Milford hearth-mythology were not the obscene Night Animals who jump out of closets and eat little girls. . . ." (p. 12) Already a widower, Judge Milford himself dies when Carol is thirteen. His legacy allows his daughter to indulge her "perilous versatility" at Blodgett College, where "Every man fell in love . . . with religion and with Carol" (p. 3). Thus Carol Milford's personality develops in a world without any men who constitute either a realistic sexual threat or a genuine sexual opportunity.

Lucy Nelson has a very different sort of father. Whitey Nelson, overcome by the Depression, places himself, his wife, and finally his infant daughter under the protection and patronage of his father-in-law, Willard Carroll. Unable to maintain his self-esteem in this arrangement, Whitey is given to alcoholic binges, which perpetually embarrass and disgust Lucy. The paradigmatic trauma of the Nelson family history occurs when Whitey returns to his father-in-law's house after a session of drinking at Earl's Dugout of Buddies to find his wife, Myra, soaking her feet in a pan of Epsom salts. Taking her attitude as a personal rebuke, Whitey harangues Myra, tears down a window shade, and pours the pan of Epsom salts out on the rug. Lucy, aged fifteen, observes the entire scene, and exacts her retribution against Whitey. "After calling upon Saint Theresa of Lisieux and Our Lord—and getting no reply—she called the police" (p. 80). The effect of Lucy's action in this episode is to fix her in a permanently alienated relationship with her father and, to her surprise, with her mother and grandmother as well. In Freudian terms, Lucy equates Whitey's violence against her mother with violence against herself, and she is unable to comprehend Myra's continued love for Whitey, in spite of his "lack of character" (p. 18). For the rest of her life Lucy exists in a schizophrenic state of self-justification, holding herself and the other members of her family to an impossible trinity of ideals: truth, purity, and independence.

Such ideals, in Roth's view, are impossible for living human beings to attain, and in holding desperately to them Lucy is

forced to deny her own human nature. She lies to herself repeatedly, in spite of her assertion that she always tells the truth. Her sexual desires, including the desire to be treated as a sexual object, are strong, in spite of her shrill insistence to the contrary. And she is deeply dependent on the love and approval of others, though she insists that she doesn't need anybody. Morally rigid and stridently unforgiving, Lucy is intolerant of people who are themselves tolerant and forgiving, so she rejects the love that Whitey and Myra continue to offer her. Succumbing to the blandishments of Roy Bassard, who features Lucy in an ethereal photographic study he calls "Aspects of an Angel" and supplements this artistic approach with extended wrangling in his '46 Hudson at Passion Paradise, Lucy becomes pregnant. At first Lucy determines to have an illegal abortion, but she changes her mind, marries Roy, and bears his child, all the while burning with resentment over the interruption of her plans for college, which promises her a means of escape from Liberty Center and from Whitey. What finally sets her against an abortion is that Whitey himself proposes it, revealing in the process that Myra had also had an abortion during the early years of their marriage.

In spite of her strident proclamation that she refuses to live her mother's life over again, Lucy actually repeats her mother's life in important ways. In Roy Bassard Lucy selects, against her insistent consciousness, a husband who is as weak and scattered as her own father. And just as Lucy had unmanned Whitey by calling the police, she also seeks to unman Roy, calling him a "pansy" (p. 263). Throughout their troubled marriage Lucy alternates between loathing Roy for his weakness, his independence, and his masculinity, and loving him for submitting to her will. Finally incapable of reconciling herself to coping with Roy and motherhood in the confusion of their two families, Lucy breaks down completely and rushes mindlessly into the snow, where she dies of exposure.

Carol Kennicott manages to avoid such a melodramatic conclusion, though she returns to Will and Gopher Prairie only when she has apparently exhausted all of her other available options. Like Lucy, Carol chooses a husband who resembles her father. Will Kennicott, an older husband, provides Carol with the social

standing and the economic means to indulge her passion for civic betterment. Carol rejects the insipid proposal of her Blodgett College classmate, Stewart Snyder, who, she feels, would condemn her to a life of "nothing but dish-washing" (p. 15). "What's better," Snyder pleads, "than making a comfy home and bringing up some cute kids and knowing nice homey people?" (p. 14). Will Kennicott succeeds by appealing to Carol's sense of her own heroic possibilities. "It'd be you that would transform the town," he tells her (p. 19).

His courtship of Carol is conventional and restrained, allowing Carol to repress any impulse she might have to recognize and appreciate Kennicott's physical attractiveness. This pattern continues to be observed after their marriage. Though her honeymoon is "transforming," Carol "had been frightened to discover how tumultuous a feeling could be roused in her" (p. 26), and she represses the memory. "She did not believe that she had ever slept in his arms. That was one of the dreams which you had but did not officially admit" (p. 30). Carol takes nervous pleasures in outraging the morality of Gopher Prairie in matters of dress and conversation, but she habitually combines public sophistication with private puritanism. She eventually hides a daring chemise "beneath a sensible linen blouse" in her drawer. She had a moment at her first party in Gopher Prairie where she is aware that she has enchanted both her husband and Guy Pollock: "For a second she saw nothing in all the pink and brown mass of their faces save the hunger of the two men"; but she quickly shakes off the spell and seeks to escape: "She longed for her father, that artist at creating hysterical parties" (pp. 80, 81). Even several years into her marriage, she seeks "to maintain privacy by undressing behind the screen of the closet door" (p. 161), and she eventually opts for separate bedrooms (pp. 285ff). Finally she achieves a kind of sexual truce with Kennicott, predicated on his forthright admission: "I don't expect you to be passionate—not any more I don't" (p. 381).

This last remark occurs during the resolution of the greatest crisis of the Kennicott's marriage, brought about by Carol's ambivalent flirtation with Erik Valborg. Valborg's artistic aspirations and his worshipful attitude toward Carol fulfill her need

for the kind of romance absent from her relations with the prosaic Kennicott, but Carol has no wish to consummate the affair, and she quickly assents to Kennicott's injunction "—you better cut it out now" (p. 389). Carol interests a number of Gopher Prairie men, and is herself in turn interested by them to one extent or another, but she is invariably shy of actual physical union with them. One explanation of this aspect of her personality may be inferred from a passage in which Lewis describes his lonely and frustrated heroine preparing for bed:

Like a very small, very lonely girl she trudged up-stairs, slow step by step, her feet dragging, her hand on the rail. It was not her husband to whom she wanted to run for protection—it was her father, her smiling understanding father, dead these twelve years. (p. 98)

More characteristic of Lewis's method and of Carol's personality, however, is a passage describing Carol's reaction to the view from her bedroom window and her fears of pregnancy:

What she saw was the side of the Seventh Day Adventist Church—a plain clapboard wall of a sour liver color; the ashpile back of the church; an unpainted stable; and an alley in which a Ford delivery-wagon had been stranded. This was the terraced garden below her boudoir; this was to be the scenery for—

"I mustn't! I mustn't! I'm nervous this afternoon. Am I sick! . . . Good Lord, I hope it isn't that! Not now! How people lie! How these stories lie! They say the bride is always so blushing and proud and happy when she finds that out, but—I'd hate it! I'd be scared to death! Some day but— Please, dear nebulous Lord, not now! Bearded sniffly old men sitting and demanding that we bear children. If *they* had to bear them—! I wish they did have to! Not now! Not till I've got hold of this job of liking the ash-pile out there! . . . I must shut up. I'm mildly insane. I'm going out for a walk." (pp. 35-36)

This scene immediately precedes Carol's famous first tour of Main Street, and it establishes the characteristic pattern of Carol's behavior throughout the novel. Unable and unwilling to articulate and act upon her deepest fears and desires, she turns away

from the bedroom, out of the house, and into the community. By doing so, she manages at last to achieve a sense of identity and a partial sense of self-fulfillment. "I've never excused my failure by sneering at my aspirations," she is able to state at the end of the novel, "by pretending to have gone beyond them. . . . I may not have fought the good fight, but I have kept the faith" (p. 432). Lucy Nelson also turns away from her husband and child and away from her family, but unlike Carol, she is incapable of turning to the community. In the end she fails to recognize her own insanity, and wanders into the killing snow. When it snows in Gopher Prairie, Carol put on her "heavies" and organizes a skating party.

*Main Street* and *When She Was Good* begin with different fictional promises. Lewis presents the contradictions of Carol's character—her virtues of energy, determination, ambition, and idealism, and her vices of timidity and superficiality—places her in the Gopher Prairie setting and asks: What will happen? Roth's opening chapter reports the ultimate narrative conclusion—the death of Lucy—and asks: Why did it happen? The different questions are given different answers, contained within radically different fictional structures. Carol Kennicott, determined to bring a new harmonious order to Gopher Prairie, chooses for herself the role of savior and redeemer of the town. If she fails in her heroic quest, she nevertheless manages to save herself. Lucy Nelson, unable to face the contradictions of her own character, becomes a rigid perfectionist who is destroyed by her inability to cope with the world outside her own mind. Unable to accept the conditions of created nature, the limitations of human society, or her own humanity, Lucy refuses to recognize any power greater than her own, and her *hubris* kills her. Lewis develops the action of *Main Street* in a straightforward, episodic narrative, which allows him to comment at leisure on the multiple objects of his satire. Roth employs the technique of Bergsonian *duration*, presenting facts and explanations in an achronological order.

While both novels lack the richness of social texture and the extended character analysis of *Madam Bovary*, with which they have been often and unfavorably compared,<sup>8</sup> they nevertheless define between them an important change in the psychology of

character and place in the American novel. Like Sherwood Anderson, Lewis was uneasy with the Midwestern setting that he knew, and he balanced his sentiment with his satire. Two years after *Main Street* appeared, Joyce published *Ulysses*, making explicit art of the unconscious and subconscious elements of human experience, and linking the patterns of contemporary middle class characters with the patterns of epic heroes. In 1929 Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* provided the definitive exposition of a family-centered psychology within a highly localized setting. By Roth's time the mythic method or the epic method have become mock-forms. In setting *When She Was Good* in the upper Midwest, he may have merely been attempting to answer those of his critics who maintained that he was too limited by his preoccupation with Jews and New Jersey. But *When She Was Good* remains a powerful and somewhat neglected novel. Roth, following both Lewis and Freud, draws in important ways upon both. Whether either novel continues to attract scholarly attention beyond the momentary uncertainties of critical fashion depends, I think, on whether we can continue to relate the common dilemma of Carol Kennicott and Lucy Nelson to issues beyond the region.

University of Kansas

#### NOTES

1. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*. Signet Classic edition, pp. 11, 153. Subsequent citations of this edition are noted parenthetically in the text, as are citations from the 1967 Random House edition of *When She Was Good*.
2. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton Liveright edition, 1977, p. 269.
3. Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*, New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill, 1961, p. 181.
4. Quoted by Schorer, p. 406.
5. Schorer, p. 411.
6. *New American Review*, 3 (April, 1968), pp. 7-81.
7. Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975, p. 26.
8. For a thorough sampling of reviews of *When She Was Good*, including allusions to both *Main Street* and *Madame Bovary*, see Bernard F. Rogers, Jr., *Philip Roth: A Bibliography*, Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1974, pp. 22-32. Rogers also comments on connections between Roth and Flaubert in *Philip Roth*, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978, especially pp. 64, 76. On Lewis and Flaubert, see Leslie Fiedler's exasperated allusion in *Love and Death in the American Novel*: "An explicit *Madame Bovary* did not appear [in American fiction] until the '20's of the present century—and that turned out to be *Main Street!*" Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books edition, 1962, p. 46.

## "A WORD FOR WHAT WAS EATEN": AN INTRODUCTION TO DELLA T. LUTES AND HER FICTION

LAWRENCE R. DAWSON

In his discussion of the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, Thomas DeQuincey asks, "What do you learn from *Paradise Lost*? Nothing at all. What do you learn from cookery book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph."<sup>1</sup> The quotation has at least this application to a discussion of the writings of Della T. Lutes: she stands as an author who found a special place for *cooking* in her *fiction*. At least in DeQuincey's way of thinking, then, she produced works which represented both kinds of literature—which is more than can be said for John Milton.

Those familiar with the Romantic English essayists, of course, will know that DeQuincey next asked a third question: "But would you therefore put the wretched cookery book in a higher level of estimation than the divine poem?" And he argued, well, of course not, because what you "owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe is *power*—that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth."<sup>2</sup>

I will not try to contend that the writings of Della Lutes "ascend to mysterious altitudes above the earth." She was not trying that. She did, though, think that some of the dozens of dishes prepared by late 19th century southern Michigan farm



wives were foods for the gods and otherwise participated in celestial heights of gustatory beatitude. But I am not going to follow her very far, either, in those metaphorical flights.

I will contend that her writings are unusual and that their uniqueness urges that they deserve to be more widely known than they are, these days. That "different" quality, as our students would say, that uniqueness, was quickly recognized when the first of her series of six autobiographical novels appeared in the fall of 1936. The American Booksellers Association voted *The Country Kitchen* one of its five awards—"The Most Original Book Published in 1936." It would be interesting to know what Christopher Morley had to say about it, when he made the announcement; it would be interesting to learn what Mrs. Lutes said on that occasion, too. Just to give a sense of the chronological context of that award: on the same occasion, two of the other four awards went to Van Wyck Brooks, for his *The Flowering of New England* (the Most Distinguished work of general non-fiction) and to Margaret Mitchell, for *Gone With the Wind*. Though Mrs. Lutes's book may not have achieved the success of the latter, it yet had an immediate and continuing popularity: it was reprinted eight times in the next five months and went through a total of fifteen reprintings during the five years between September 1936 and October 1941.

And so the rest of her novels established her as a writer of originality and her originality was recognized both by publishers and by the reading public. She published one work of fiction each year, from 1936, to her death in 1942: *The Country Kitchen* was followed by *Home Green*, *Millbrook*, *Gabriel's Search*, *Country Schoolma'am*, and *Cousin William*. Those years, of course, were the beginning of the Second World War. It was not a time exactly suited to the quiet cultivation of a literary reputation based upon recreations of pioneer life, and a few months after her death, July 13, 1942, the reprintings of her books stopped. I think that conditions today might well be suited to another look at her contributions: in the past four decades, we have seen merge a new sense of regional history, the women's movement, and a more inclusive way of looking at the nature of literature. Any one of these three elements would be a sufficient justification

for re-examining the life and works of Della T. Lutes, but it happens in her case that all three apply.

We might begin, then, with a look at her career, since it figures importantly in her writings and helps to give them their unique character. Not much about her life has as yet been published: the sources of information are scattered in brief notices in newspapers and magazines which accompanied the appearance of her final six novels, and little has been said about her preceding fifteen books of greatly varied types. Besides those twenty-one books, she contributed more than forty-five articles, poems, and stories, most of them, from the mid-thirties on, appearing in the *Atlantic*, *Forum*, and *American Mercury* magazines.

In an article from *Forum*, in 1937, Mrs. Lutes explained at length her title, "Why I don't Tell My Age." Her reason does not strike me as coy, in any way. Essentially, it is one which middle-aged people today understand pretty well; viz., when we are forced to state our age, even those close to us are so stunned by the datum that they no longer believe the qualities of whatever evidences of liveliness that meet their senses, but instead, in an immediate and irrational change of face, start to think of us as dangerously feeble and otherwise so verging on senility as to require the gentle care demanded of bone china. Della Lutes had seen that happen to others, and she therefore chose to deflect all questions about her age. In fact, she was born sometime in 1866, if the record of the 1870 Census of Jackson County—open to all comers—is to be believed.

She was the only child of Elijah Bonnett and Almira Frances Bogardus Thompson, who had come to farm in Jackson County, Michigan, from New York state. When she was twelve, her father, then in his late sixties or so, twenty years older than Della's mother, sold the farm and moved into the southern part of the town of Jackson, near the Griswold Park school.

After graduating from Jackson High School, she qualified by examination to teach in the district schools—she was then sixteen—and had assignments in or near the communities of South Jackson, Horton, Hanover, and Grass Lake during the next

three years. When she was nineteen, she accepted a teaching position in Detroit, where she taught for a time at the Grove School, until her marriage, in 1893, to Louis Irving Lutes, the owner of a bicycle business in the downtown area. They had two sons, Ralph Irving and Robert Brosseau. While in Detroit, the Lutes home became a center for neighborhood life. Mrs. Lutes is credited with organizing the women's club, Detroit Homemakers, and remained a life-long honorary member of it. She was also active in the Womens Writer's Club of Detroit.

She said that the first writing for money that she did appeared in *The Detroit Free Press*. A five-part story, entitled "Deestrick No. 5," began publication in the *Delineator* magazine in the October issue of 1905. This first substantial publication shows her to have three basic convictions as a writer: first, the subject-matter is autobiographical; second, the form is narrative; and third, the colloquialisms often reflect her keen ear for dialect—about which more later.

Her second publication appeared in 1906. It was a small book, called *Just Away: A Story of Hope*.<sup>3</sup> Reflecting the recent death of her first son, Ralph, it is, as its subtitle says and her Dedication more fully explains, a novel directed "to the mothers who sorrowed with me in my sorrow . . . hoping that somewhere in its pages there may be a ray of hope or a gleam of comfort for the tear-dimmed eyes and anguished hearts." Its style is that of the dedication: formal language, selected with the purpose of dealing gently and helpfully with grieving readers.

As a result of her publications and, presumably, also from her activity with the Detroit Homemaker's Club, she was offered and accepted a position on the editorial staff of the Curtis publication, *American Motherhood*, in 1907. The family moved to Coopers-town, New York, in the same year. Five years later, in 1912, she became editor of the magazine, and when they were purchased, she also edited *Table Talk* and *Today's Housewife*. These magazines were sold in 1923 or 1924, and she then became House-keeping Editor of the *Modern Priscilla* magazine and the director of its "proving plant," a kind of Betty Crocker institute, in Boston. She remained in that position, making her home in Holliston,

Massachusetts, until, under the pressure of the depression, the company was dissolved, in 1930.

During her editorial years, most of Mrs. Lutes's writings, both books and articles, reflect her professional journalistic assignment. By 1930, she had published eleven books and booklets, two of them collaborations. Representative titles express the subjects that would be expected from this phase of her writing career: *Bible Stories from the Old Testament, Retold for Children*; *The Story of Life for Children*; *What Parents Should Tell Their Children*; *The Gracious Hostess*; and *Table Setting and Service for Mistress and Maid*. Presumably having little time for contributions to other journals, during that period she published only two articles, in *American Home*, "Serving Breakfast without a Maid" and "Substitutes for the Breakfast Nook," in 1929, the year of The Crash.

As might be expected, her free-lancing during the early years of the 1930's was a continuation of her specialized journalism. She wrote two books, *Bridge Food for Bridge Fans* (1932) and *A Book of Menus with Recipes* (1936). During these years she also placed five articles in *Parents Magazine*, *House Beautiful*, and *American Home*, dealing with such practical concerns as announced by the titles, "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes," "Is There Actual Economy in Doing the Family Wash at Home?" (there is), and including a co-authored article appearing under the exclamatory invitation, "Meet the Bratwurst!"

But that vocationally-oriented, home-economics-minded phase of her writing career ended in 1936, with the publication of *The Country Kitchen*. In fact, three of its chapters had already appeared in revised form in *The Atlantic Monthly*. From that time on, her works dealt almost exclusively with her new writing purpose; namely, the fictional creation and the autobiographical reminiscences of late nineteenth-century rural Michigan. The subjects, it is to be noted, were not entirely new; they still centered around her professional preoccupations of the preceding decades: "Breakfast, Old Style," "Church Supper," "Mis' Draper's Parlor," and "Settler's Grub." And she also continued to publish occasionally in some of the same magazines: *Parents Magazine*, *American Home*, and *Women's Home Companion*. But her style

had changed; her method was usually narrative; and she was now appearing in journals that were more nearly representative of that literary focus that she was cultivating: *The Atlantic Monthly*, *American Mercury*, *Forum*, *Saturday Review*, and at the end of her life, the literary section of the *Christian Science Monitor*.

It is appropriate, now, to explain the title of this essay. It derives from another quotation. Speaking in 1928, Virginia Woolf observed: "It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. It is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Whether Della Lutes took that observation as a specific challenge and theme for her own fiction, I cannot say. She may have done so, but she already had sufficiently compelling reasons of another kind for her recognizing the importance of food. Anyone imaginatively projecting himself into the existential "feel" of the life of pioneering farmers will understand how the preparation and eating of food would become the embodiment of life at its most complete and satisfying. After all, it is not accidental that the Lord's Supper is the central sacrament for Christians. In little Dolly's case, that country kitchen was not merely the place where the food was made ready, cooked, and eaten—the kitchen was where most of her young life was most deeply lived. She makes no reference to going to her bedroom to study—to say nothing of going into a library: the farmhouse bedroom was too cold for studying in during the school year, and there just was no library. Nor does she speak about the family or living room as a center of social life, where she carried on the important conversations with her parents and their friends. The most important room was, in fact, the kitchen. It was the family room, the dining room, the study—all of them—combined. And, for her own life, inciting her to her career, there was displayed on one of its walls, presumably placed there by her father, a large map—the world to be opened up by education. For her, the country kitchen was the central source of nourishment—not only nutritional, but social, spiritual, and intellectual.

In the novel which commemorated the room, she spared for food enough words to include at the end an index, called "For the Cook's Convenience," listing references to descriptions of, or recipes for, sixty-seven different dishes. She included the same device in the second of her novels, *Home Grown*, the following year; but she dropped the practice in her remaining four books.

Her decision to omit the index, as a matter of fact, signals a shift of emphasis in these six books: in the first two, the recipes are pretty straightforward instructions. For instance, when she refers you to the recipe for apple butter, you find that "you put ten gallons of sweet cider into the cauldron and let it boil away to half. Then you added—a quart or so at a time—three pecks of pared, cored, and quartered apples," and so on. But only relatively straightforward, I must say, because even in these early books, her stylistic verve delights as I expect few cookbooks do. Listen to the way she completes her account of how to make that apple butter:

This you let cook over a slow fire for four or five hours. Then you added (stirring all the while with a long wooden paddle) ten pounds of sugar and five ounces of cinnamon and boiled it until it thickened, never forgetting to stir, lest it stick to the kettle.

And there you are with your apple butter, and welcome. To be out of doors on an October day with a blue sky overhead, sun on your back, and only the gentle l!p! with which an autumn leaf breaks its loose hold upon a parent stem to mar the silence, would be a joy under any circumstances—almost. To have to stand and stir, stir, stir, for five, six, or more hours—well, I do not like apple butter anyway.<sup>5</sup>

Even though she is giving a recipe, she has other things cooking. Being a young pioneer was not, for Della Lutes, all lovely colors, cozy feelings, and sweet tastes filtered through rose blossoms a la Hallmark Cards. She was a sturdy individualist, who wrote with exactness about what she had seen, known, and felt—even during the period she called the "golden decades." In her following books, the characterization becomes stronger, the plotting tightens up, and thematic development increases. The art of her fiction grows.

Having seen that *The Country Kitchen* was awarded recognition as an unusual book, does it and her subsequent novels merit further attention? Was her writing "unusual" in any larger sense? Yes—I think that four qualities should be noted about them.

First, Mrs. Lutes's writing was "unusual" because she wrote with respect about American "country folk" when it was still not the respectable thing to do. Dorothy Canfield recognized this in her review of Lutes's third volume, *Millbrook*: "When in a Beethoven scherzo we hear a clear echo of lusty country dancing, big shoes clumping rhythmically, calloused hands joyously clapping out the accents, or in a Grieg song catch the wistfulness of a lonely saeter-girl, or when Dvorak uses Negro spirituals in the 'New World Symphony,' we nod in approving recognition and tell ourselves, 'Ah yes, use of country folklore by the artist.' Why has it, I wonder, taken us so long to emerge from an uneasy, embarrassed self-consciousness about our own country folklore?"<sup>6</sup> That "country" thematic content came during a decade when America's leading writers had other concerns: Sinclair Lewis on the attack, Ernest Hemingway expatriated and writing about foreign adventures, and John Dos Passos administering his Marxist fictional dosages. (Incidentally, I have found almost no comment by Mrs. Lutes upon the major American writers, but there is one that she made about Dos Passos: in a letter, she mentioned having read his *The Big Money* and added, "but then I felt pretty well besmirched after I had." She is also said to have detested Faulkner.) In some sense, then, Della Lutes's fiction can be seen as a defense of American character and life.

Secondly, she had an unusual sense for the uniquely characteristic detail, an eye for the lively real. Her defense of America certainly was not a matter of blind patriotism; she rendered people with their warts. She presented the truth in its wholeness, and if that meant that even her portrayal of her fictional father came over with traits of meanness and arrogance and not always restrained sadistic tendencies, his counterbalancing qualities of liveliness and large-scale dramatics and his general gusto for life added up to a wholeness of character that was beauty enough.

This sense for accurate detail appeared, of course, in the accounts of food and its preparation that made *The Country Kitchen* distinctive. She not only described recipes (or "rules," as the women called them) clearly enough so that the reader could try them out in the kitchen, but she brought out the distinctiveness of ingredients that the pioneer cooks used. This was what Edward Weeks remembered about her writing. Editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* at the time when Mrs. Lutes submitted her first selections, he said in a recent letter, "there was a recipe of one of her family's favorite dishes with little touches which most cooks never heard of, such as adding a touch of clove to a chocolate cake, much to its improvement."

A third "unusual" element of her writing was her ear for dialect. In *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw made, as he says, a "desperate attempt to represent Liza Doolittle's dialect without a phonetic alphabet," and gave up after giving her six lines. Lutes stayed with her effort much longer. I don't know whether rural American speech patterns were quite so rich in nuances as Cockney; at any rate, her recording of dialogue most of the time is easier to read than those few lines of Shaw's. Nevertheless, she does capture a number of speech habits which strike me as being both unusual and convincing. The pronunciations and other locutions, seem not merely arbitrary—and clumsily invented—, but sharply-perceived curiosities.

This point may be illustrated in some examples of dialogue. "Talking don't go with ager," said the doctor, feeling pulse and brow. Gabriel, himself, is called by some of the characters "Gaberl"—not all of them and not all of the time. Baberl, one of the characters explains, had come from York State, where he had lived in Rome on "the canawl." Those examples come from Lutes's fourth novel, but she introduced this kind of acute recording of speech in her first one. The specific instance which first caught my attention to this trait of her writing was her use of the clipped "t" to indicate "to" or "it." For instance, Aunt Sophrony, speaking of young Delly's father, says, "I wish't 'Lije had a pumkin pie big 's this table and he 's right in the middle of 't." That bit of dialogue, come to think, is pretty close to the kind of detail that Shaw put into his "desperate attempt."<sup>7</sup>

"I wish't" uses one apostrophe to connect the two words that would formally be written as "wish that." That seems to me to be a fine perception: it might have been elided as "wish't" or written as "wishut," which would have resulted in an ugly-looking and over-clever attempt, or it could have been written as "wishit," which would have been closer to capturing the sound of speech, but would then have gone too far beyond a convincing duplication. As it stands, it is accurate—unusually so, I think. And so are the apostrophes in "big 's" and "he 's" and "middle of 't." In those three, the single letters stand apart from the preceding words, with the clipped sound indicated by attached apostrophes in front of each.

But this all probably needs to be examined by a linguistics specialist. I have a strong notion that Della Lutes's effort would be found to be an exceptionally accurate rendering of the dialect of the period and locality. I would not be surprised, either, to learn that she fought some battles with editors to get her dialogue written as we find it.

Finally, a fourth element is her sense of distinctive form. Her fiction is carefully patterned. In *Home Grown*,<sup>8</sup> for instance, her second novel, she alternates between incident and object as symbolic representations of pioneer life, as her chapter titles show. The one called "Cousin Saryette Goes into a Decline" begins the grouping of twelve chapters that comprise the novel. It tells of the jilting of Cousin Saryette, who takes to her bed in the fall of the year, after Jerry Oliver took her to a "bow'ry dance" and then took a different girl home. Seventeen-year-old Sary is unable to leave her bed until Spring, when she learns that Jerry has now jilted her rival: the news removed the cause of her grief: "You see, she didn't have to feel ashamed no longer—alone. There was the Worden girl too." Throughout this selection, we learn of methods and potions used for treating such invalided people, we have a colorful account of the advantages of riding a pung in snowbound weather, and we find out about the methods for treating winter colds.

That chapter is followed by one titled, "The Tin Dinner Pail," which relates Delly's experiences of attending a country school, mainly those specifically centered in the contents of the lunch

pails and the customs of sharing them, but also affording a chance to become acquainted with the shiftless neighbor, farmer Covell and his deprived, shoeless daughters, who frequently wheedled the younger Della's tastier food from her, since their mother had so little to offer, the male "pervider" being such a failure.

This technique of objectifying a theme through either anecdote or an object is illustrated by other titles in the collection: "Jodie Acts as Pallbearer," in which nine-year-old Jodie Bouldrey and three of his classmates are mustered into service for the burial of an infant child; and in "The Strawberry Festival," which not only presents the colorful details of the social activities of that occasion, but also gives further point to it by describing recipe for the strawberry dessert—in language that entices even the indifferent: once the shortcake is baked, you are to "Turn your hot cake out on a platter and split it in two, laying the top half aside while you give your undivided attention to the lower. Spread this most generously with butter just softened enough (but never melted) to spread nicely, and be sure to lay it on clear up to the very eaves. Now slosh your berries on, spoonful after spoonful—all it will take. Over this put the top layer, and give it the same treatment, butter and berries, and let them drool off the edges—a rich, red, luscious, slowly oozing cascade of ambrosia. . . ."<sup>9</sup> And so on.

I am told by a bookseller that requests for copies of Della Lutes's *The Country Kitchen* are rather frequent, these days. That is likely to be symptomatic of a favorable climate for the reprinting of her fiction. Carlton F. Wells, Emeritus Professor of English of the University of Michigan, who chaired a committee of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English that produced a literary map of Michigan in 1965, thought enough of her writings to bring them to the attention of historian Bruce Catton, and Catton commended *The Country Kitchen* and made use of it in his bicentennial history of the state. Recently, Professor Wells has written to me, "I regard her *The Country Kitchen* as an American classic." These testimonials, underscore my own conviction that her writings should be reprinted—and not just *The Country Kitchen*.

Finally, Della Lutes was impressive not only as a writer but as a person. She began her career as a novelist at an age when most people shovel off their responsibilities to life. Edward Week's comment in a letter reminded me of this fact: "She must have been in her mid sixties when she began writing for us and I was sorry when she stopped." If my calculations are right, she was sixty-nine in 1935, when her first story appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*; and she was in her seventies when then late-thirtyish Mr. Weeks wished that he might have received more of her work. That, to me, is a graceful acknowledgement of the creative, liberated potentiality of old age made by a truly liberal young editor. The liberality should be recognized, and the creativity should be toasted.

Central Michigan University

#### NOTES

1. "The Poetry of Pope," *The Collected Words of Thomas DeQuincey*. Edited by David Masson. Vol. XI. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890, p. 55.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 55-56.
3. Cooperstown: Grist, Scott, and Parbhall, 1906.
4. *A Room of One's Own*. "A Harvest Book." New York: Harcourt, p. 10.
5. *The Country Kitchen*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1936, p. 178.
6. *Atlantic*. 163 (January, 1939), p. XII.
7. Quotes from *Gabriel's Search*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1940, pp. 7-9.
8. Boston: Little, Brown, 1937.
9. *Home Crown*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1937, p. 129.

## HARRIET MONROE, MARGARET ANDERSON, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE CHICAGO RENAISSANCE

MARILYN J. ATLAS

Since the 1887 Haymarket riots which strongly influenced such radical women as Voltairine de Cleyre and Emma Goldman, Chicago has proven to be a place where women learn and grow. Chicago's Columbian Exposition, held from May to October, 1893, demonstrated women's influence in the city. The World's Fair had a board of women managers, a woman's building designed by a woman architect, Sophia Hayden, and it served as a place where American women could gather and talk about the significance of their own past and the goals they wished to achieve in the future. The women who participated in the fair associated themselves with the Woman's Congress Auxiliary held during the same time and in both locations individuals lectured on women's place in history, drama, and industry. Chicago had made space for women to grow, and the women of Chicago were doing just that.

In the second decade of the twentieth century Chicago was feeling the impact of socialism, anarchism, and populism. The genteel tradition, an urban, upper class tradition, was giving way to a group of young artists from small towns who had made their way to Chicago in hope of developing their creative talents. These people were less interested in good manners than in creating new art forms and expressing themselves. Women, more than ever before, were in the forefront of the Chicago art circles: Ellen Van Volkenburg became one of the founders of the Chicago Little Theatre, Alice Gerstenberg wrote some of her best experimental drama, and Susan Glaspell began her publishing career.

During this decade two of Chicago's most important small journals were started by women. In 1912 Harriet Monroe began

*Poetry*, a journal that fostered the new poetry movement; and in 1914 Margaret Anderson began the *Little Review*, a journal which established itself as the radical voice of the Chicago liberation. Both women had different visions of how to generate creativity in the city and of the purpose of such creativity. While Monroe insisted that artists must speak to the people and that they could only create if they had a worthy audience, Anderson believed that individuals must find their own freedom, and if they did this, with or without an audience, they would be able to create. Their roles in the Chicago Renaissance complemented one another: Harriet Monroe brought recognition to Chicago as a legitimate center for the arts and Margaret Anderson gave the city a mirror of its unactualized passion.

Before Monroe began *Poetry* she had a long career as a Chicago writer. Between 1889 and 1912 she had frequent articles or regular columns in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Times Herald*, the *New York Sun*, *Leslie's Weekly*, the *Atlantic*, the *Chicago American* and the *Chicago Evening Post*. At two different periods, she served as art critic for the *Chicago Tribune*. She also wrote poetry and plays although her success at publishing these was only modest. She received her greatest notoriety as a poet in 1892 when her "Columbian Ode" was recited at the opening program of the World's Columbian Exposition.

But Monroe had been appointed the laureate of the fair only after protesting to the program committee that the art of poetry was insufficiently honored in the planned exposition. Poetry was not respected in America and this was underscored for her when *New York World* reprinted her ode without permission. She sued the paper for violation of copyright and won five thousand dollars. In bringing the case to court, she felt that she had served all poets whose works had been routinely reprinted without permission.

Monroe was only beginning her career as a defender of poets. She believed that the poet was the natural touchstone to honesty in a world rotted with cowardice and hypocrisy. According to her perception, poets were the most natural revolutionaries and they, better than anyone else, could help others create an organic and harmonious community. She would help artists give poetic

expression to modern life by paying them for their contributions and helping them find an audience. If she could free them from financial strain and provide them with a receptive audience, she felt certain that they would create new forms out of modern conditions. Her poetry journal would provide a context where poets could create freely. Ellen Williams in *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance* hypothesizes about Monroe's motivation in beginning her journal:

Perhaps the extra spark that drove Harriet Monroe into action came from the breakdown of her own literary career. Her combined failures to get a play on the stage and to get a book of poems published gave her, on return to Chicago from a trip to the Orient, a choice of retiring the literary figure Harriet Monroe or finding something new for her to do. She would not quit; she did not feel that her failure was personal.<sup>1</sup>

As long as magazines were indifferent to poetry or insisted on no experimental form or content, American poetry could not develop. Monroe knew she wanted to start a poetry journal but she also knew that she could not do it without financial backing. She needed to find poetry the same powerful friends that other art forms such as theater, music, and painting had. Monroe decided to approach the same circles that had supported Chicago's earlier literary groups and cultural institutions and received the funding she needed.

Monroe contacted the poets whose work she found scattered in various journals and asked for their artistic contributions. In the circular she sent out in 1912, she explained her desire to foster new poetry and stated her policy: "We promise to refuse nothing because it is too good, whatever be the nature of its excellence." She kept her office open so that poets could drop in to look over manuscripts and debate the new movement of free verse. Monroe mentioned in her memoirs that among her early callers were Arthur Davison Ficke, Agnes Lee, Edith Wyatt, Helen and Dorothy Dudley, Sara Teasdale, and Maurice Browne.

Monroe wanted to be perceived as a democratic editor, one who published the best poets from any school. She did not want to be associated with only one type of poetry or one class of



people. For instance, when John G. Neihardt of Bancroft, Nebraska, attacked free verse she defended not only it, but her editorial policy. She believed she was being both democratic and objective:

You ask, "Why make your magazine a freak?" I don't see why a few poems or editorials that we print would place it in that category, even if they seem to you freakish, for surely we have been hospitable to all kinds and have not confined ourselves to any one school.<sup>2</sup>

Monroe tried to remain open to all forms of poetry, but she found that she was afraid to offend her upper class and upper-middle class guarantors by appearing too radical. Monroe knew that she had created her magazine out of Chicago's willingness to make poetry a civic institution and that without her guarantors she would have no journal. When she did not find her relationships to bohemian artists threatening, she enjoyed them and helped them as she could: she realized that Carl Sandburg's poem, "Chicago" would be perceived by some as vulgar, but she delighted in publishing it. The poem's images were unusually physical.

Hog Butcher for the World  
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,  
Player with Railroads and the Nation's  
Freight Handler;  
Stormy, husky, brawling,  
City of the Big Shoulders.<sup>3</sup>

She defended its unusual, physical imagery with pleasure against the *Dial's* attacks and enjoyed the excitement of controversy: "Next to making friends, the most thrilling experience of life is to make enemies. Neither adventure being possible to the dead. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

But when more than a passionate argument was at stake, Monroe withdrew. She recorded in her memoirs that *Poetry's* war poem issue was almost impounded by the Post Office because of the realistic detail in a poem by John Russel McCarthy. She was afraid that her guarantors might desert her journal and in the next months she was careful not to offend the government again. "Nothing in this for us," she noted on a passionate protest against the censorship of works of art in the United States. She

printed neither an editorial protesting the tariff on books imported in the United States, nor an article that asked that contributing poets get paid \$25.00 a page instead of \$8.00. Monroe was too frightened of losing her journal to realize that embracing Carl Sandburg's controversial poetry was not enough to foster creative freedom.

But Harriet Monroe did what she could. She was brave enough to fight her foreign correspondent, Ezra Pound, who believed American poets were unequal to those in Europe. Convinced that American poets would burgeon if allowed an audience, she refused to give in to Pound who kept asking her to leave American poets out and print more material from Europe. She consistently refused to allow Pound the control over the journal he wanted.

Monroe remained editor of *Poetry* until her death in 1936 and continued to provide a place for the best poetry she could find. She saw herself as a bridge between the American genteel tradition and the new bohemian wave and this gave her editorial style an individualized texture. The writing style of her memoirs also reflects her careful ability to balance and her need to defend the middle stance she often took. Although she herself never became one of the great new poetic voices, Monroe succeeded in helping other voices, stronger than her own, be heard. Among the artists she sponsored were T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, and Vachel Lindsey.

In her memoirs, Monroe made clear that she perceived herself as an important person in the new poetry movement. In them, she reiterated several times that *Poetry* fought for innovative technique, for modern diction, and for a more vital relation with the poet's own time and place. *Poetry*, she reminded her readers, was the first journal to devote itself to innovative poetry. She was angry at critics like Babette Deutsch who dared write a history of the modern poetry movement and leave her journal out.<sup>5</sup> Margaret Anderson, the founder of the *Little Review*, also offended her by failing to give *Poetry* proper recognition:

As for Margaret Anderson, founder-editor of the picturesque *Little Review*, . . . her autobiography simply makes blanket claim to most of the poets whom *Poetry* had



introduced a year or two before her first issue, and presents Mr. Yeats' *Poetry*-banquet speech . . . as if he had written it for her magazine.<sup>6</sup>

Monroe wanted the credit she earned. Her journal began in 1912 and it was not until 1920 that most of the major new poets began to appear in Scofield Thayer's new *Dial* instead of *Poetry*.<sup>7</sup> But even if she stopped serving as the first publisher of the new poets, she was the first harbinger of the modern poetry movement, and its first editor, and for that she deserves the recognition for which she asks.

A generation younger than Harriet Monroe, Margaret Anderson had few connections with members of the older art circles and few loyalties to traditional Chicago. Her identification was with Chicago's bohemian wave: for part of her ten year editorship of the *Little Review* she considered herself a philosophical anarchist. If Harriet Monroe represented balance and brought prestige to the Chicago Renaissance, Margaret Anderson represented exuberance.

Margaret Anderson was a firm believer in self-expression and because her world did not foster it, she became a fighter:

I wasn't born to be a fighter. I was born with a gentle nature, a flexible character and an organism as equilibrated as it is judged hysterical. I shouldn't have been forced to fight constantly and ferociously. The causes I have fought for have invariably been causes that should have been gained by a delicate suggestion. Since they never were, I made myself into a fighter. Once you start such an idea you find that it creeps up on you. I remember periods when I have been so besieged that I had to determine on a victory a day in order to be sure of surviving.<sup>8</sup>

Originally from Columbus, Indiana, Chicago represented to her a place where she might learn to express herself. Her first Chicago job was writing for the *Interior*, a religious journal edited by Clara Laughlin. But she was soon writing for the *Friday Literary Review*, Chicago's most lively book review, edited at that time by Francis Hackett and Floyd Dell.

Anderson was almost magically charismatic; when she was sure of what she wanted her enthusiasm almost effortlessly won

her backers. In 1914, she thought of beginning the *Little Review*, a magazine of the arts "making no compromise with the public taste." In her memoirs she stated that she had no anxiety about finding a sponsor: "I knew that someone would give the money. This is one kind of natural law I always see in operation. Someone would have to. Of course someone did."<sup>9</sup>

The first individual she found to sponsor her magazine was Dewitt C. Wing, an agricultural journalist she had met through Floyd Dell and his wife, Margery Currey, another talented, bohemian Chicago writer.

Wing's response to her was not untypical:

I was bowled over by her vitality, her beauty, and her voluble enthusiasms. On a winter Saturday I took her to Long Beach, Long Island, not yet spoiled as an overcrowded public resort, and we had a long walk on the hard sand, refreshed by the clean winter air. Western breezes blew spume back from the tips of charging breakers, while seagulls wove their patterns of flight not far above the sea and beach. We talked about the sorry state of American letters, and the trashy bestsellers which publishers promoted in their competition for profit. We agreed that something new and adventurous must be done to encourage writers of integrity and talent.<sup>10</sup>

Wing was not alone in responding so strongly to her. She quickly found additional guarantors. Anderson had confidence that the universe would protect her and that she would get what was essential to her. One of her essentials was getting a Mason Hamlin piano. She had no money but was willing to trade advertisement for the loan of one. It was better than a Steinway, and she needed to have the best. The manager agreed, and she picked her piano out from among a hundred.<sup>11</sup>

The *Little Review*, from its very first issue, represented Margaret Anderson perfectly. She set no limits on the magazine, assembling it each month according to the principle of inspiration that was most strong in her at the moment. The *Little Review* demanded no consistency and specialized in "call to action" editorials addressing the need for personal freedom. The journal enjoyed a conversational tone, and frequently printed spoofs of

more serious art. The first public response to the printing of "Prufrock" appeared in the *Little Review* for September 1915 when Arthur Davison Ficke began his poem "Cafe Sketches" with, "I want to see dawn spilled across the blackness/Like scrambled egg on a skillet."

Margaret Anderson was no dull professional: she enjoyed flirting with chaos. But this did not diminish the seriousness of either her interest in fresh experiments or in getting the middle class to understand new ideas. A teacher and revolutionary, in March 1916, she wrote an essay for the *Little Review* explaining the relationship, as she saw it, between anarchists and artists:

An anarchist is a person who realizes the gulf that lies between government and life; an artist is a person who realizes the gulf that lies between life and love. The former knows that he can never get from the government what he really needs for life: the latter knows that he can never get from life the love he really dreams of. . . .

Who ever told you that an anarchist wants to change human nature? Who ever told you that an anarchist's ideal could never be attained until human nature had improved? Human nature will never "improve." It doesn't matter much whether you have a good nature or a bad one. It's your thinking that counts. Clean out your minds!

If you believe these things—no, that is not enough: if you live them—you are an anarchist. . . .

And finally when you see that you never get all the love you imagined from life; that you are trapped, really, and must find a way out; when you see that here where there is nothing is the way out, and that the wonder of life begins here—when you see all this you will be an artist, and your love that is "left over" will find its music or its words.<sup>12</sup>

Anderson perceived relationships where few others did: anarchists rely on themselves as do artists; life for them is beneficent because they insist on its being so.

Margaret Anderson embraced challenge, and was eternally interested in performance and response. She was not afraid of

being offensive. If she felt she received no art worth publishing she simply sent out an issue of the *Little Review* that was blank; if the government wanted to fine her for publishing James Joyce's *Ulysses* she would be docile only up to a point: when it came to getting her fingerprints taken she gave the registers as complicated a time as possible and at the end of the ordeal simply stated that it could happen again because she still had no idea how one recognizes obscenity.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Harriet Monroe, her loyalty was not to Chicago, not to America, not to her journal, not to artifact, but to her own human development. After working in Chicago for five years, she felt that it was time to move to New York and then Paris. She believed in stretching, and that human growth was everything.

When Sinclair Lewis, not liking her abstractions, cancelled his subscription to the *Little Review* stating, "I no longer understand anything in it, so it no longer interests me," she responded with playful mockery, "Please cease sending me your socialist paper. I understand everything in it, therefore it no longer interests me."<sup>14</sup>

Because Margaret Anderson believed that growth came organically, she tried to create, not by forcing her nature, but by allowing her nature to be. In *My Thirty Years' War*, she attempted to explain her theory of creativity:

Jane and I began to construct a good sense program of piano technique. I was a good subject, having never been able to follow the precepts given me by any teacher—that is, I could follow them but they seemed to me to mean nothing.

First, we had to establish how small a part the hand and fingers play in piano technique. Second, how small a part practice plays in acquiring technique. Practice is a stupid thing. Painters don't practice—they paint. Poets don't practice—they make poems. They correct, revise, or reconceive, but they don't sit doing the same thing over and over for hours, days, months. . . . But it is silly—supremely silly—to sit and practice the piano. I partake of this silliness.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout her memoirs, Anderson presented herself as a serious woman who was trying to make her behavior parallel her theories and trying to achieve an increasingly beautiful life. The metaphor with which she ended *The Thirty Years' War* reflected the fact that she felt by 1929 that she was getting closer to being in control: "I think of Chicago and the lighthouse sending its searchlight into my window. I no longer look out upon a lighthouse. I live in one."<sup>16</sup>

Margaret Anderson's life and her journal represent her eternal quest for truth. In her second autobiographical work, *The Fiery Fountains*, she was still trying to attain her full humanity, to be the pianist and not the piano, and to find the natural order of eternal laws. After she stopped editing the *Little Review* she studied mysticism, searching for the art beyond the artifact. In creating the *Little Review* she helped to create a climate of feeling and opinion of which art of a certain kind was almost inevitable, but when that artifact, that art, ceased to be enough for her, she left it behind.

Bernard Duffey, in his ground breaking work, *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters*, does not see the motivational power behind her idealism. He found her theory about people's need to be independent absurd and introduced it with "In October of 1914 humanity was relieved of its interdependence."<sup>17</sup> This is the specific theory of human integrity which his comment mocks:

That human being is of most use to other people who has first become of most use to himself. . . . Only on such a base is built up that intensity of inner life which is the soul compensation one can wrest from a world of mysterious terrors . . . and of ecstasies too dazzling to be shared.<sup>18</sup>

To laugh at Anderson's stance on human integrity is to laugh at the spirit of the Chicago Renaissance. Although she and the *Little Review* left Chicago in the midst of it, both she and her journal were very much part of its strongest years. Her editorials and memoirs, if not major works of art, are interesting mirrors of the period, and of her search not so much for art, as for art's *raison d'être*.

The differences between Harriet Monroe and Margaret Anderson, differences in generation, in vision, in sensibility, and in style, present well the diversity of the Chicago Renaissance and the intensely different and serious roles that women played in creating and defining it. To study them is to get a little closer to the complex spirit of the Chicago liberation.

Ohio University

#### NOTES

1. Ellen Williams, *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 13.
2. Letter from Harriet Monroe to John G. Neihardt, June 24, 1918, as reprinted in Williams, p. 51.
3. Carl Sandburg, "Chicago," reprinted in *American Literature*, Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren, ed. (New York: St. Mark's Press, 1973), p. 1849.
4. Editorial in *Poetry*, May, 1914, as reprinted in Williams, p. 101.
5. Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 362.
6. Monroe, p. 363.
7. Williams, p. 221.
8. Dale Kramer, *Chicago Renaissance* (New York: Appleton-Century), p. 245.
9. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930), p. 36.
10. Kramer, pp. 246-7.
11. Anderson, p. 67.
12. Margaret Anderson, "Art and Anarchism," *Little Review*, III, 1 (1916), pp. 3, 6.
13. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, pp. 221-2.
14. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 128.
15. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 202.
16. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 274.
17. Bernard Duffey, *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), p. 192.
18. Duffey, p. 192.

"BORNE BACK CEASELESSLY INTO THE PAST":  
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION OF  
SHERWOOD ANDERSON

ROGER J. BRESNAHAN

I begin this essay with a memorable phrase from Fitzgerald, not because I wish to stress any similarity between the writings of Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald but because, wrenched out of context, these words—"borne back ceaselessly into the past"—effectively describe the artist's progress from *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916) to *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) to *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926). What occurs in these three novels is a shaping of Anderson's memories and observations. At first, in *Windy McPherson's Son*, the shaping process is an awkward one which ends in artistic failure.

In *Winesburg, Ohio* Anderson is more successful as he uses his imagination to reshape his memories and impose a new pattern upon them—a pattern less trite and more acceptable to the sophisticated reader than in *Windy McPherson's Son*. He was more successful with *Winesburg*, too, because he used a form he was more at home with at that time—the series of short sketches interrelated in theme though not in narrative. He was also more successful in this novel because he wrote of what he knew rather than, as in *Windy McPherson's Son*, projecting images of a life he knew very little about either directly or from observation. *Winesburg* also avoids the topic of fatherhood with which Anderson tried to deal in *Windy McPherson's Son*.

Having achieved a certain artistic and human maturity as the years passed, Anderson goes back to the theme of fatherhood in *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* where the form which had succeeded so well in *Winesburg* is given a narrative consistency.

In *Tar* Anderson finally creates believable images, having filtered memory and experience through his imagination. As his imagination is "borne back ceaselessly into the past," Anderson himself mellows somewhat. The bitter images of an inept father and the unrealistic projections of the ideal father have been scrapped, leaving us in *Tar* with a realistic portrayal of the less than ideal father who remains human and thus embodies in some degree the human comedy which gives rise to the characteristic humor of Anderson's ironic vision.

It should be stressed at once, however, that this essay in no way has for its object determining which of the three novels most justly portrays the family of Irwin and Emma Anderson. While it is true that Sherwood Anderson has constructed much of his fiction from his own past, it is also true that his memories and observations have been modified by the imagination. Ray Lewis White has established this in his annotations to *Tar*, and even though White considers this book an autobiography I think he would concede that it reads just like a novel. Without disparaging the textual work of Ray Lewis White—which I consider exceptional and without which interpretation would be next to impossible—I would stress that alert readers are bound to be aware that Anderson is a tricky persona residing behind the narrator. Even *A Story Teller's Story*, which is substantially autobiographical, filters experience through a shaping imagination. Indeed, the title of that work indicates we cannot expect autobiography in the conventional sense. Thus, we must abandon any dreams of hagiography if we are to understand the workings of Anderson's imagination.

*Windy McPherson's Son* is, like *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*, a novel of seeking. The boy, Sam McPherson, seeks to find some meaning in life, some role other than that of his father trapped in the meaninglessness of small-town life. In this he is like the boy, Tar, as well as many of the characters portrayed in *Winesburg, Ohio*. At first Sam seeks meaning by somehow separating people's impressions of him as the son of the town braggart. Significantly Anderson opens the novel with the tale of how Sam each night contrived some trick to beat Fatty, the newsboy on the 7:45 train, and sell all

his newspapers. To the avid reader of Sherwood Anderson it is a variation on a story appearing in *Tar*, as well as in *A Story Teller's Story*, and the *Memoirs*—the young capitalist cleverly scheming to best a competitor or collect from a deadbeat. The appearance of the newsboy vignette as the first chapter of the novel separates Sam from Windy as far as the reader is concerned, although for the boy himself the margin of separation can never be too great. Sam is continually embarrassed by the drunkenness, idleness, and boastfulness exhibited by Windy. The hilarious incident after which the son rejects the father occurs when the town puts on a big celebration for the Fourth of July. Windy's claim that he had been a bugler in the Civil War is accepted without question by the enthusiastic townspeople, and he is chosen to begin the festivities at dawn sitting on a white horse and blowing reveille.

Even Sam McPherson begins to believe that his father will be the center of attention and bring honor to the family for a change. Money the mother earned by taking in washing got Windy a new blue uniform, and Sam even used his newsboy earnings to get his father a shiny new bugle from a Chicago mail-order house. The narrator carefully describes the heroic figure cut by Windy on the great day and, despite the reader's skepticism, the faith of the boy in his father. Windy, of course, makes a fool of himself, and the boy swears he'll never be laughed at as the town has howled at his father.

These two initial chapters serve to set parameters for the rest of the novel—the rejection of the father by the son; the many attempts of the son to assert himself in the world and thus obliterate the fact that he is, as the novel's title will not let the reader forget, Windy's son; and finally the projection of Sam as the ideal father. The novel succeeds as long as Anderson writes about what he knows—the struggle of an ambitious young man to be respected by the townsfolk while his father acts like a buffoon.

Eventually Sam leaves the little town to go to Chicago and make his way in the world. This is credible, and as readers we follow his progress. Anderson finds himself telling a tale about a world he knows little of. When Sam marries the boss's daughter

and becomes one of the moguls of the arms business—a sort of "American Krupp," as Anderson puts it—the characterizations become stereotypical and the narrative becomes a trite analogue to *A Pilgrim's Progress*. Perhaps Anderson was conscious that he was projecting for Sam a scenario which he might himself have followed had he not become a writer. Because he considers his own avoidance of a business career an escape from temptation, Anderson imposes an outworn pattern on the subsequent life of his character. Thus, Sam's will-to-power puts him in control of people and vast sums of money. He lives a life full of luxury and becomes more sybaritic as he becomes more dissatisfied with his life. Realizing the futility of finding truth under these conditions, he sells out all his holdings and disappears.

Two years pass in which Sam travels about as a vagabond, but still he finds no truth. Going back to the life of the wealthy industrialist, he continues to search fruitlessly until he finds three children whose home is worse than his was. Adopting them, he returns to his wife, and though he has some misgivings, dedicates himself to living for others. Though the novel is competently written and though there are flashes of authorial insight, the artificial framework of the unimaginative morality tale imposed on the narrative substitutes for the comprehensive insight we require of the author. Because Anderson was dealing with a subject he had not yet come to grips with himself and thus wrote a novel which, except for the first third of the book, is one long cliché, we must consider *Windy McPherson's Son* an artistic failure.

That is not to say the novel has no value. Certainly, the irony of the title tells us something of Anderson's artistic vision: no matter how Sam works to distinguish himself from his father—first as an industrious newsboy, then as a mover and shaker in the financial and industrial world, and finally as a good husband and father—we as readers cannot forget he's still Windy McPherson's son.

Secondly, this novel very effectively presents the political analogue to the artistic imagination—an analogue to which Anderson would later return in *Tar*. Even if the artistic imagination is largely unsuccessful in *Windy McPherson's Son*, its politi-

cal analogue, the Civil War, dominates the thoughts and activity of all those who participated. Indeed, it was the central political fact of nineteenth century American life. To Sherwood Anderson, who was born in 1876, it probably meant little or nothing. But he appreciated how it had affected his seniors. In *Tar* he very succinctly explains why the Civil War was so important to men like Dick Moorhead and Windy McPherson:

He was the town's hero. You don't get many such chances in life if you are not born a money-maker and can't pay to get yourself into a prominent position. . . . How was he to know that after the war he was to marry and have many children, that he would never be a hero again, that all the rest of his life he would have to build on these days, creating in fancy a thousand adventures that never happened.

To Sherwood Anderson's generation, Sam McPherson's attitude might have been typical:

Sometimes he caught himself wondering if there had ever been such a war and thought that it must have been a lie like everything else in the life of Windy McPherson. For years he had wondered why some sensible solid person . . . did not rise, and in a matter-of-fact way tell the world that no such thing as the Civil War had ever been fought, that it was merely a figment in the minds of pompous old men demanding unearned glory from their fellows.

Though more sensitive portraits of Irwin Anderson are found in *A Story Teller's Story* and *Memoirs*, there is in these observations in *Tar* and *Windy McPherson's Son* the understanding of how the imagination reshapes reality in order to bring it into line with the vision of the artist. The insight is static in *Windy McPherson's Son*. Even in *Tar* the differing importance placed on the Civil War is not exploited as fully as it might have been, but there is more consciousness of intergenerational conflict. In both novels the Civil War enables its veterans to structure reality as they wish to see it, just as the writer does. In a very real way these veterans were "borne back ceaselessly" into their past to refashion reality.

Just as the Civil War veterans imposed their vision of reality onto subsequent events, Anderson's imagination imposes a pattern

on the events retold in *Winesburg, Ohio*. Unlike the false and entirely predictable pattern of *Windy McPherson's Son*, this pattern is at once less trite and more acceptable. Instead of calling on the hackneyed morality tale, he refashions these experiences so that they express a vague longing for significance.

As readers we may easily be led to believe that the central intelligence in *Winesburg, Ohio* is merely an observer. But the narrator of this book is more complex as it assumes, in effect, two persona—that of George Willard and that of the omniscient narrator. George is the uncomprehending observer who most keenly feels the vague longing for significance. We are led by the author to believe that George is more than just another character, that he is at least the narrator at a younger period. But while George can only observe the phenomena of life and conclude that half the town is crazy, the second persona looks into the motives and secret thoughts of the characters. To varying degrees most of them mirror George's longing to get away and be somebody. Those who are completely contented with life in Winesburg seem half-dead or, like Tom Foster, someone who "stood in the shadow of the wall of life."

The whole book impells reader, characters, and central intelligence to conclusion, the departure of George Willard to satisfy the collective need of the whole town to make a mark on the world. It is significant that Kate Swift has told George not to fool with words but to get at what people are thinking.

Enoch Robinson's experience serves as a guidepost to warn George of the wrong road. Enoch failed as an artist in New York because his imagination reshaped the persons and events of Winesburg dredged from his memory in such a way that nobody could understand his work. The pattern he imposed on reality was so idiosyncratic that communication proved impossible. While the pattern imposed in *Winesburg, Ohio* is necessarily less original than that of Enoch Robinson, it has reached a responsive chord in millions of readers.

Anderson's journey into the past in *Winesburg, Ohio* consists of recalling more of the people around him as he had grown up and projecting scenarios for them. At the same time, he projects

another Clyde, Ohio, for physical geography holds an important place in the novel. The projected scenarios and geography serve to reinforce George Willard's longing, while the dual persona of the central intelligence allows Anderson to skirt the topic of his own family life without ever coming to grips with it. Elizabeth Willard is sensitively portrayed, especially in her afternoon talks with Doctor Reefy, and we get two brief glimpses of Tom Willard—so brief that we know George and Tom have never known each other. George, for his part, finds his parents incomprehensible and thus need not explain them.

In *Tar* Anderson once more is carried deeper into the past. By this time, however, his attitudes had mellowed and he could treat childhood memories with the same comic detachment which characterizes many of the sketches in *Winesburg, Ohio*. Sam McPherson could declare to his wife: "Fathers do not mean much to me. I choked my own father and threw him into the street when I was only a boy. . . . I did it because he lied and believed in lies." In *Tar* the reader can appreciate the comic reality of Dick Moorhead. Although Tar himself feels embarrassment about his father's drinking and boastfulness, there is an aesthetic distance not present in *Windy McPherson's Son*. Sam's sense of humiliation is shared by the reader. In *Tar*, however, there is communicated to the reader a sense that the experiences related have made the narrator. Thus, they are not so frightful. Unlike *Windy McPherson's Son* which dwells on fatherhood and *Winesburg, Ohio* which mostly avoids dealing with George Willard's family life, *Tar* is a full account of growing up in a small Ohio town in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In effect, Anderson has passed his memory through the shaping imagination. In so doing, he has created a boy different from himself and a family different from his own. But, unlike the ending of *Windy McPherson's Son*, there is no intention to show Tar's family life as ideal. Anderson has sifted the resentment out of his own recollections and thus taken the terror out of the narrative.

Michigan State University

## THE NATURAL AND THE SHOOTING OF EDDIE WAITKUS

JAMES BARBOUR AND ROBERT SATTELMMEYER

Critics of Bernard Malamud's baseball novel *The Natural* have noted that the book has a strong basis in actual events and its ill-fated hero Roy Hobbs is an amalgam of legendary stars of the diamond, Babe Ruth in the beginning and "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, the illiterate Chicago White Sox victim of the fixed World Series of 1919, at the end.<sup>1</sup> After this cursory observation critical attention has focused invariably on the allusion to and parallels with ancient epics and medieval romances that inform the novel.<sup>2</sup> It is baseball, however, that provides the contemporary frame of popular legend for *The Natural*, and its hero is not merely a composite of famous old players. Rather, Hobbs' career, the central episode in his life, the book's repetitive patterns, and even the key ethical dilemma in the novel grow directly from the bizarre shooting of a less well-known ballplayer, Eddie Waitkus of the Philadelphia Phillies, who made national headlines when he was inexplicably shot by a schizophrenic teenager in Chicago in 1949.

*The Natural* opens with a brief section, "Pre-Game," which takes young Hobbs on a railroad trip to Chicago and concludes with a scene based upon the Waitkus incident. Roy, accompanied by Sam Simpson, the old scout who discovered him, is on his way to tryout with the Chicago Cubs. Their train stops at a siding long enough for Roy to respond to the insults of Whammer Wambold, leading hitter of the American League, by striking him out with three pitches. But Roy's accomplishment has unfortunate consequences: it attracts the attention of Harriet Bird, a mysterious young woman with "heartbreaking legs" who had expressed an interest in Whammer, and the last pitch to the slugger crushes

the washboard that Sam, Roy's catcher, wears as a chest protector. The old scout is carried off the train, and Roy travels on alone to Chicago and to the seventeenth floor of the Stevens Hotel where his solitude is interrupted by an invitation from Harriet Bird to join her in her room. There Roy is shot by the looney Miss Bird in a scene clearly derived from the near fatal wounding of Eddie Waitkus.

The actual shooting made front page headlines in the summer of 1949, for Waitkus was a player of some prominence: he had been the Chicago Cub rookie of the year in 1946, and, traded to the Philadelphia Phillies at the beginning of the 1949 season, he was hitting over .300 and apparently was on his way to stardom when the tragedy intervened. The *New York Times* of Thursday, June 16, 1949, carried the story on page one under the caption "Baseball Star Shot by Girl Fan Rallies":

Eddie Waitkus, star first baseman for the Philadelphia National League baseball team, was shot and seriously wounded late last night in the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago's North Side by a girl whom he did not know.

His assailant, Miss Ruth Ann Steinhagen, a 19-year-old typist, who tricked him into visiting her room shortly before midnight, readily admitted the shooting and told police she "just had to shoot somebody."

Miss Steinhagen was eager to talk about the incident and the events leading up to it. (Her alacrity in confessing was prompted, in part, by her desire for "publicity and attention for once,"<sup>3</sup> which also compelled her to announce repeatedly to those at the scene that she had shot Eddie Waitkus.) The young woman had checked into the Edgewater Beach Hotel two days before the incident, carrying a disassembled .22 caliber rifle in her luggage. On the night of the shooting she had ordered several drinks from room service and had given the bellboy five dollars to deliver a note to Waitkus, asking that he see her as soon as possible, and signing it "Ruth Ann Burns." He called after 11 P.M. and she urged him to come up to her room. When Waitkus knocked on her door he was admitted to a scene she had concocted in her deranged imagination. She waited for him with a knife in her shirt pocket, but he brushed quickly past her with-

out noticing. Angered at his casualness, she went to the closet, pulled out the rifle and explained that he had been bothering her for two years and was now going to die. "What in the world goes on here?" he asked. Her response was a shot at close range that pierced his right lung, collapsed it, and lodged in the muscles near the spine. In an exaggerated gesture, the young woman knelt romantically beside him on the floor and held his right hand. Waitkus reportedly looked at her and asked, "You like this, don't you? but why, in the name of Heaven, did you do this to me?"<sup>4</sup>

The senseless attack was explained in part when the news magazines *Time* and *Newsweek* told the story of the "tall attractive"<sup>5</sup> brunette's obsessive attachment to the ballplayer she had never met. Ruth Steinhagen was an Eddie Waitkus fan and had followed his career since 1946, his first full year with the Chicago Cubs; her interest in the player had not abated with his trade to Philadelphia. In Waitkus, according to *Newsweek*, her "unformulated desires and agressions found their focus." She finally resolved to kill him so that no one else could have him, an act that also fulfilled her "desire for excitement, for the thrill of being in the limelight."<sup>6</sup> Waitkus thought she was another "Baseball Annie," a pejorative term players use for the sexual groupies that follow ballplayers;<sup>7</sup> his assumption also helps to explain the late-hour visit to her room. On June 28 the incident received a final brief notice in the *Times* with the report that Edward T. Breen, the Assistant States Attorney, had concluded from the reports of the court appointed psychologists that Ruth Steinhagen was "suffering from a split personality" and was "commitable to a mental hospital."<sup>8</sup> With that the sensational incident faded into obscurity: Miss Steinhagen was sent to the Kankakee State Hospital in Illinois, and Waitkus was eventually discharged and able to recover for the 1950 season.

Malamud relied heavily on contemporary events in baseball in the years between 1949 and 1951 to supply much of the material for *The Natural*, published in 1952.<sup>9</sup> But it was the Waitkus shooting and the ideas and philosophical questions posed by it that seem to have fixed themselves in Malamud's imagination: the idea of a ballplayer senselessly and inopportunistly struck



down as he was about to achieve stardom, the extent to which he himself was responsible for his own demise, and the meaning that such an insane accident might hold for someone so victimized. In Malamud's translation from fact to fiction, the encounter with Harriet Bird becomes the principle episode in young Hobbs' life, the lion in his path which he must pass if he is to continue, and to continue he must answer the question asked by his prototype, "why . . . did you do this to me?" Occurring as it does at the end of part one, the incident is literally Roy's bridge to the future: he must accept and understand this bizarre and confusing tragedy, or, failing that, remain frozen in time. But Roy is a simple man and no philosopher. The possibility that the shooting and the suffering that results might teach him something is beyond his comprehension. And because Roy is unable to understand the past, he is doomed to repeat it; consequently the latter part of *The Natural* follows the patterns developed in the "Pre-Game" section and culminates in another "shooting," metaphorically reminiscent of the earlier scene.

For the material involving the wounding of Roy Hobbs, Malamud remained rather close to the newspaper and magazine accounts of the incident and their descriptions of the young typist. Chicago is the setting for the shooting: Roy is to tryout with the Cubs, the team on which Waitkus played originally, and the incident takes place at a lake front hotel, though the Stevens rather than the Edgewater Beach. Like the real player, young Hobbs is contacted by his assailant and invited to her room, and he too mistakes the invitation for a proposition: "Then he was elated. So that's how they did it in the city."<sup>10</sup> Roy's response to the situation in Harriet Bird's room closely resembles that written in the *Times*: Waitkus is reported to have asked, "What in the world goes on here?"; Hobbs echoes this with, "What's wrong here?" (p. 40). Both men are shot from the front at close range, although the fiction is highly embellished: "The bullet cut a silver line across the water. He sought with his bare hands to catch it, but it eluded him and, to his horror, bounced into his gut" (pp. 40-41).

Much of the descriptive material surrounding the sinister Miss Bird are imaginative extension of rather terse details in-

volving Ruth Ann Steinhagen. The disassembled rifle she carried in her luggage became, no doubt, the ubiquitous hat box that accompanied Miss Bird and in which she carries a pistol. The attention that the young teenager hoped to gain in murdering a well-known ballplayer is mirrored in the newspaper headline that herald Miss Bird's boarding of the train:

WEST COAST OLYMPIC ATHLETE SHOT

Follows 24 Hours After Slaying of  
All-American Football Ace (p. 19)

Finally, Steinhagen's split personality is correspondent to Harriet's belief that she is at times something else. When their train rushes through a dark tunnel, Roy gives in to his desire and tweaks her nipple, which prompts Harriet to crook her arms like broken branches, whirl, and hang her head between her shoulders: "Look," she concludes, "I'm a twisted tree" (p. 35).<sup>11</sup> Later when she shoots Roy, her schizophrenic association with birds and trees is reiterated: "he groped for the bullet, sickened as it moved, and fell over as the forest flew upward, and she, making muted noises of triumph and despair, danced on her toes around the stricken hero" (p. 41).

Roy returns in "Batter Up!," the second section of the book, as an aging rookie on the Knights; this time he is a prodigious hitter. He threatens to replace the league's leading hitter, Bump Baily, in the line-up. Bump, forced to exert himself to keep his position, crashes into an outfield fence and dies. Thus part one begins to repeat itself with grotesque variations: the dead Bump serves as a surrogate Whammer Wambold; dead birds, reminders of the deadly Miss Bird, appear as warnings; still Roy continues on, heedlessly pursuing antithetical goals—to hit more home runs than anyone in history (symbolic of his desire to redeem lost time) and to bed Bump's girl friend, Memo Paris (indicative of his unwitting compulsion to repeat the past, for Harriet was attracted to Whammer before he was defeated by Roy).

Roy's quest leads him to another hotel room with Memo, another *femme fatale*, who throws a party for the team after they clinch a tie for the pennant. At the party Roy, a la Babe Ruth, gorges himself and proceeds to the coffee shop to consume

hamburgers that "looked like six dead birds" (p. 189), and then to Memo's room where his rendezvous seventeen years before is repeated:

Undressing caused him great distress. Inside him they were tearing up a street. The sweat dripped from his face. . . . Yet there was music, the sweetest piping he had ever heard. Dropping his pants he approached for the piping fulfillment.

She drew her legs back. Her expression puzzled him. It was not [sic]—the lights were wavering, blinking on and off. A thundering locomotive roared through the mountain. As it burst out of the rock with a whistle howl he felt on the verge of an extraordinary insight, but a bolt of shuddering lightning came at him from some unknown place. He threw up his arms for protection and it socked him, yowling, in the shattered gut. (pp. 190-91)

Metaphorically Hobbs is again shot in the stomach. He does not gain his "extraordinary insight"; instead he remains imprisoned in time, repeating the images and actions of the first section of the book: the train, the inability to control his sexual desire that leads him to the hotel room, the vain gesture of self-defense (in "Pre-Game" Roy attempts to catch the bullet), and the shearing pain in the stomach. Roy ultimately fails in his quest to be the best there ever was. His failure is caused by his lack of self knowledge, his inability to cope with personal tragedy, and his overweening drive to satiate his own desires. But even more, Hobbs' story is the failure of the hero in modern society, for Hobbs, trapped in his own personal gratifications, remains ignorant of communal aspirations which the true hero exemplifies in his transcendent quest; Roy's goals—fame, copulation, and gluttony—are reflective of a society hopelessly debased in its perceptions and aspirations. Whether Malamud saw all this in the Waitkus episode seems unlikely. On the other hand, it seems probable that he recognized in the event an episode singular in its occurrence but symbolically suggestive in its implications for a self-absorbed society to which professional athletics has contributed its share of unenlightened heroes.

Malamud's use of the Waitkus-Steinhagen material is complete with Roy's collapse in Memo's bedroom—but there remains

a curious epilogue to this relationship between fact and fiction. In the years after the shooting, prior to the publication of *The Natural*, Waitkus made a comeback and was moderately successful, but the stardom for which he seemed destined never materialized.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the novel, after publication, seemed to be prophetic of his career as though life indeed imitated art: after 1952 he began to fade, and in 1955 he was released from the major leagues to be consumed by the same obscurity that awaits Roy Hobbs at the conclusion of the novel. In his final years Eddie Waitkus worked as a floor manager for a department store in Waltham, Massachusetts, and died in 1972. He will be remembered, ironically, not for his heroic deeds on the ball field, but for one tragic night in the summer of 1949 and the fictional presentation of the incident in *The Natural*.<sup>13</sup>

University of New Mexico  
University of Missouri

#### NOTES

1. Most critics demonstrate little knowledge of the baseball sources in the book, and, consequently, the subject has not been dealt with at length. For brief discussions see Glen Meeter, *Roth and Malamud* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 23-33; Norman Podhoretz, "Achilles in Left Field," *Commentary*, 15 (1955), 321-26; and a more complete listing of sources (although inaccurate at times) in Earl K. Wasserman, "*The Natural*: Malamud's World Ceres," *Centennial Review*, 9 (1965), 438-60.
2. See Podhoretz above and Edwin M. Eigner, "Malamud's Use of The Quest Romance," *Genre*, 1 (1968), 55-74; Louis K. Grief, "Quest and Defeat in *The Natural*," *Thoth*, 8 (1967), 23-34; Sidney Richman, *Bernard Malamud* (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 28-49; and Fredrick W. Turner, "Myth Inside and Out: Malamud's *The Natural*," *Novel*, 1 (1968), 133-39.
3. William H. Hains, M.D., and Robert A. Essner, M.D., "Case History of Ruth Steinhagen," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 106 (April 1950), p. 74.
4. *New York Times*, 16 June 1949, p. 23, col. 2.
5. *Newsweek*, "Neurotic with a Rifle," 27 June 1949, p. 27. The description is an example of journalistic imagination, for Miss Steinhagen bore some resemblance to Ichabod Crane: court examiners reported that she was 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighed 133 pounds, and was taken to the doctor when she was sixteen because she had no breast development.
6. p. 27.
7. *Time*, "Silly Honey," 27 June 1949, p. 20.
8. p. 18, col. 7.

9. Some of the contemporary baseball sources have not been identified. For example, Pop Fisher, manager of the Knights, seems to have been based on Casey Stengle, who had managed unsuccessfully in the National League for years before joining the Yankees in 1949, and the Knights' use of a hypnotist can be traced to the much publicized hiring of Dr. David Tracy by the St. Louis Browns prior to the 1950 season.
10. *The Natural* (New York: Noonday Press, 1952), p. 40. Further quotations will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically within the text.
11. Harriet Bird's resemblance to a "twisted tree" could have been inspired by a photograph of the young woman that accompanied the *Newsweek* article.
12. Fame evaded Waitkus almost malevolently. The man who replaced him in the Philadelphia line-up, Dick Sisler, hit a dramatic tenth inning home run to win the pennant for the Phillies in 1950, and on the last day of the 1951 season, the baseball world watched and listened as Waitkus came to the plate with the bases loaded in the twelfth inning; a hit would win the ball game and give the New York Giants the pennant. He hit a line drive over second base, but Jackie Robinson made a "once-in-a-lifetime" play, diving, stretching lengthwise, and catching the ball a few inches off the ground. Robinson's fielding gem has been remembered; no one recalls who hit the ball.
13. To finish the story, Miss Steinhagen was released from Kankakee State Hospital in 1952 and her whereabouts are not known.