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for the Study of Midwestern Literature

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MidAmerica, a peer-reviewed journal of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, is published annually. We welcome scholarly contributions from our members on any aspect of Midwestern literature and culture. Except for winners of our annual poetry and prose contests, we do not publish poems, short stories, or creative nonfiction. If you would like to submit a scholarly essay of not more than 15 pages or 3,750 words to be considered for publication in *MidAmerica*, please send a hard copy of your essay to Marcia Noe, 535 Elinor Street, Chattanooga, TN 37405. If your essay is selected for publication, you will then send your manuscript by electronic attachment to marcia-noe@utc.edu after making any required and/or desired changes. Please follow the most recent edition of the MLA *Handbook*. In documenting sources, use parenthetical citations within your essay and a list of works cited. If you include discursive notes, they should be endnotes that use Arabic, not Roman, numerals. Use no headers, footers, or page numbers. Do not put your name on your essary. Include your contact information in your cover letter to Marcia. Be sure to give your institutional affiliation.

In honor of
David Radavich

PREFACE

On May 10, 2012, members of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its forty-second annual meeting. Highlights included panels on Midwestern literary naturalism, the poetry of Ted Kooser, and the literature of contemporary Detroit. Christian P. Knoeller received the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize, David B. Schock won the Paul Somers Prize for Creative Prose, and Scott Michael Atkinson was the winner of the David Diamond Student Writing Prize. David Radavich received the MidAmerica Award, and Mark Twain Award winner Sandra Seaton staged a reading of her play, *Estate Sale*. A memorial session was held for SSML founder David D. Anderson, who died on December 3, 2011.

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

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The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
congratulates

Robert Dunne

Winner of the 2014 MidAmerica Award for
distinguished contributions to the
study of Midwestern literature

and

Naomi Long Madgett

Winner of the 2014 Mark Twain Award for
distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature

These awards will be presented at noon on May 9th 2014 at the Society's 44th annual meeting, Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, May 8-10, 2014.

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

Call for papers for a panel on Fashion in Midwestern Literature and Culture for the 2014 SSML symposium in May of 2014 and for possible publication in a fashion issue of Midwestern Miscellany: papers on fiction, film, drama, poetry, texts of any kind, and/or authors that deal with fashion in Midwestern literature and culture. Contact Marcia-Noe@utc.edu with questions or ideas; send brief proposals for the 2014 Fashion in Midwestern Literature and Culture panel to Marcia Noe at the above email address or to 535 Elinor Street Chattanooga TN 37405 by January 15, 2014. Feel free to contact Marcia by phone at (423) 266-9316 if you want to discuss an idea for a paper.

GEORGIA PLATES

MARY MINOCK

Nobody thought much about it
when he first pulled up
parked his jalopy in the shade
on the park side
right in front of the lagoon.

One more good-old-boy
good old car with Georgia plates—
just what you'd expect in the spring of 1956
with all the plants hiring.

Nobody that I knew started keeping track
until the car kept coming back
to the same spot right across the street,
where from our upstairs flat,
and with its squared-off windows,
we could get a real good view.
That's when we noticed the young man
sitting in the driver's seat—

noticed he just sat there,
and noticed that at certain times he got out of the car,
a tall red-faced neatly dressed young Georgia man,
and walked up the street toward Vernor Highway
maybe heading to the bars,
but from the look of him, his mildness,
more likely to one of those joints up there
that featured Southern down-home cooking.

And pretty soon we started watching him—
his comings and goings—

how he didn't move the car now,
got out and left in the early morning,
crossed over to the YMCA up the block,
came back with a shave and damp slicked-back hair,
how he sat in the car, left for lunch, came back,
and then left for a long time just before
the changing of the afternoon shift.
After midnight we'd see him back at the car;
he'd crawl into the back seat
and stick his feet out the window facing traffic.

By June we were used to him—
and we felt a little pleased
he'd chosen the spot
right across the street from our house,
clearly the loveliest part of the park.

I'm not sure if it was then we started calling him
Georgia Plates. By this time, some of the men on the block
started chatting with him in the park—*a nice young man*
they said, *up from Georgia*, they said,
but we already knew that,
having seen the Georgia plates.
We figured he'd leave when it got September.

Some Saturday mornings he'd sleep in,
and I worried about those stockinged feet,
with the leaves swirling around the car.
That October it rained a lot,
all those wet red leaves on the windshield,
all our regular habits,
all that changing sky,
all those mice finding shelter,
all those furnaces smelling funny the first time.

When the snow started flying,
he rolled up the back windows.
From our point of view we could only imagine—
he must have pulled those long legs up into a ball.

One early Saturday morning in December,
after one of those early dripping snows,
I stood at the porch door looking out,
happened to see him pry himself from the back seat,
stand and stretch and stroll into the park.
I knew he was peeing when he turned a little toward a tree,
knew that if I went down to investigate
there'd be one of those yellow holes that dogs make
in the snow. I didn't know what to think about it,
sorting through a lot of things
I just didn't know about—the way men peed
anywhere with ease, and the drunk men
who pissed aggressively in the alley.

The sky is always clear with a million guiding stars
when they let you out of Midnight Mass on Christmas.
On that silent night they shone on him,
sleeping in the car. He was there when we got home.

It wasn't until the middle of March
that one day the car was gone.
Brown frozen leaves ringed a rectangle
of the summer's dry pavement,
and that was all.
For days we waited for him,
wanted him back.
Someone down the block told us they'd
seen his car at a light on Vernor,
but that was days ago.

It was Mama who put the end to his story—
I'll bet with all that money he saved
he's got enough to go back home
and buy a farm.

Madonna University

THE FREEDOM TO TRY: VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE IN POSTMODERN PEDAGOGY

MICHELLE M. CAMPBELL

At the age of fourteen, Voltairine de Cleyre's father, a tinker of small means, sent his oldest daughter to a convent in Sarnia, Ontario. After just a few weeks at the convent, de Cleyre had enough of the place, and escaped before breakfast. According to her biographer, Paul Avrich, "she crossed the river to Port Huron . . . [And] she began the long trek to St. Johns on foot. After covering seventeen miles, however, she realized that she would never make it all the way home, so she turned around and walked back to Port Huron and, going to the house of acquaintances, asked for something to eat" (31). The friends contacted her father, who promptly returned her to the convent, where she graduated with honors three years later with a newfound nun-like aestheticism and a certainty in the nonexistence of God. The core of this anecdote, the repetition of imprisonment and freedom, would continue to play out in de Cleyre's life until her death in 1912 (Avrich 240).

Voltairine de Cleyre has been virtually ignored by both the radical and academic communities in the last one hundred years. Candace Falk identifies de Cleyre as "a nearly forgotten luminary" (xi). One can surmise the multiple obstacles in the way of de Cleyre's continuing legacy: she was a vocal anarchist, a freethinker, a proponent of free love and birth control, a victim of chronic illness, a devoté to a bleak aestheticism, and a woman. She straddled the lines between poet, activist, lecturer, theorist, and teacher. Unlike Emma Goldman, who has had a PBS documentary made about her life, and is credited with introducing feminism to anarchism, Voltairine de Cleyre seems to be fading quickly from the limelight (Bertalan 209). She is saved by a few paltry mentions in history and sometimes a theory text, but few study de Cleyre as a pioneer in anarchism or feminism. Not only should de Cleyre be

taught in humanities courses because of her Midwestern roots, but so, too, should the teaching of her life and work be a part of any postmodern pedagogy within the humanities. The study and teaching of de Cleyre is the study and teaching of the much-ignored American radical past. In order to argue that 1) de Cleyre needs to be studied and taught as part of a postmodern pedagogy and 2) de Cleyre needs to be studied and taught in humanities courses because of her ties with the Midwest, it is imperative to situate de Cleyre and her works in the radical philosophy of anarchism.

What is anarchism? The answer depends on who is asked, when they are asked, and where they are asked. There are tens, if not hundreds of branches of anarchism, but most share the common belief that all forms of domination and repression need to be abolished. For example, there are communist anarchists, socialist anarchists, anarcho-capitalists, as well as individualist and mutualist anarchists. Meanwhile, de Cleyre proposes that, even considering these vast differences, all anarchists should aim to unite and simply "cry with one voice for the freedom *to try*" (79, italics hers). Sometimes referred to as the angsty teenage "Don't tell me what to do" philosophy, anarchism has been wrongly associated for years with chaos and violence. David E. Apter writes, "The virtue of anarchism as a doctrine is that it employs a socialist critique of capitalism and a liberal critique of socialism" (3). This means that the anarchist philosophy, in today's terms, could be envisioned as the freakish philosophical child of a Marxist Communist and a Ron Paul Libertarian.

One of the key components of anarchism is the belief in equality. Bakunin states in no uncertain terms that he believes that men and women are equal. He writes, "Woman, *differing from man but not inferior to him, intelligent, industrious and free like him, is declared his equal both in rights and in all political and social functions and duties"* (Bakunin 83, italics his). Although equality is theoretically a hallmark of anarchism, in praxis, that was not always the case. Thus, this is why we see the entrance of anarcha-feminism.

It is not that the women in the anarchist movement wanted to be special; it was simply that they thought that, in a movement that proclaimed equality of the sexes, they should not be barefoot in the kitchen any longer. Of course, this belief caused some uproar among the radical anarchist men who, after a long day of rabble

rousing and overthrowing the bigger man, wanted to come home to a clean house, with dinner on the table, and fresh linens on the bed. According to Sharon Presley in an introduction to a chapter on de Cleyre's writings entitled "No Authority but Oneself," de Cleyre's "importance as a feminist rests primarily on her willingness to confront issues such as female sexuality and the emotional and psychological, as well as economic, dependence on men within the family structure" (191). Presley continues: "Voltairine and the anarchist feminists did not just question the unfair nature of marriage laws of that time, they repudiated institutional marriage and the conventional family structure, seeing in these institutions the same authoritarian oppression as they saw in the institution of the State" (192). Three of de Cleyre's numerous works discuss these issues particularly important to anarcha-feminism: "The Political Equality of Women," "The Woman Question," and "Those Who Marry Do Ill."

First appearing in 1894, "The Political Equality of Women" makes the argument that there is no such thing as "rights" because without the power to enforce certain actions, there can be no respect. She argues that women must become economically independent in order to have power and thus have the same "rights" as men. She states that when women stop being and wanting to be the "protected animal," then they will truly become individuals and have equal claim to liberty and equality. De Cleyre writes, "She is no more the protected animal; she becomes an individual. She suffers, and dreams of 'rights.' She claims some other cause of consideration than that of wife, mother, sister, daughter; she stands alone, she becomes strong, and in recognition of her strength presses her claim of equality" (242-243). Unlike other first-wave feminists, de Cleyre gets at the heart of the issue: equality can only come from within the women's movement, one individual woman at a time. Women should not sit around and wait for equality to be bestowed upon them; rather, they must stand up and claim it. Furthering de Cleyre's feminist position, she gives an "insider's" critique of the anarchist movement and offers a solution for all anarchist women.

De Cleyre's attention often turned to women's plight in their more "intimate" relations. While other anarchists, especially male anarchists, were focused almost solely on dismantling the State and Church, de Cleyre brought attention to a common oppressor

among women: marriage. In two of her more accessible essays, "The Woman Question" and "Those Who Marry Do Ill," she critiques the institution of marriage and calls for a radical solution, even by today's standards. In "The Woman Question," de Cleyre calls marriage an institution that "makes for slavery" and in "Those Who Marry Do Ill" she explains "Because I believe that marriage stales love, brings respect into contempt, outrages all the privacies and limits the growth of both parties, I believe that 'they who marry do ill'" (223, 206). She sees marriage as a way for the State and the Church to serve an economically utilitarian paradigm: because marriage binds a woman to a man and keeps her in a home, it promotes free slave labor within the home and the propagation of children, the future work force of the state. In fact, she even warns women of living with men outside the confines of traditional (institutional) marriage. She proposes that a woman should never "live together with the man [she] love[s], in the sense of renting a house or rooms" because she will simply become "his housekeeper" (de Cleyre 223). De Cleyre's solution to the problem of marriage is clear but is still considered radical by many even today.

Instead of marriage, de Cleyre suggests that women avoid monogamy, live economically and emotionally independent lives from men, and become knowledgeable about what we would call today sex education. Moreover, she urges women to have children only if they actually want a child (never because it is simply expected of them or they want someone to love them) and to have a child only if the woman herself is able to care for the child or children independently of a man. In doing these things independently of men, she argues that women will be able to fulfill their potential as individuals. De Cleyre's view of women certainly does possess a libertarian streak. She takes the concept of independence and freedom from oppression (or freedom to try, as she puts it) and transplants it to the personal level. In doing so, she hints that revolution cannot happen at a national level if individuals are not first willing to change the way they live every day, which includes their relationships within institutional structures like marriage.

Not only do de Cleyre's writings relate revolutionary ideas, so, too, do the rhetorical turns and approaches she uses to communicate those ideas. Delamotte argues that de Cleyre's writing exem-

plifies a truly revolution rhetoric. Delamotte states that "In her focus on creating 'a new order of thoughts,'" de Cleyre's writing:

> works to get the institutions of inequality out of the mind: first, by dismantling the hegemonic discourses that support them and, second, by constructing an oppositional set of metaphors capable of reconfiguring (to invoke Althusser's description of ideology) her audience's, "'lived' relation" to "their conditions of existence"; their "imaginary relation . . . to the real relations in which they live." (165-166, ellipses in original)

De Cleyre does this by using repetition in order to disorient the reader (or listener) and to inscribe new meanings in a revolutionary manner, not only in rhetoric, but also in the conceptualization of radical ideas.

A postmodern pedagogy requires the inclusion of writers such as de Cleyre. According to Atkinson, some of the projects of postmodernism are to reject "fixed notions of reality, knowledge, or method," to refuse "to accept boundaries or hierarchies in ways of thinking"; and to disrupt "binaries that define things as either/or" (74). Moreover, Atkinson argues that the educator should be challenged not only to "deconstruct the certainties around what they might see as standing in need of change, but also to deconstruct their own certainties as to why they hold this view" (75). The life and works of de Cleyre are rarely, if ever, taught. She is ignored by the feminists as a radical anarchist and the anarchists as a radical feminist. I argue that the assumptions of the grand narratives of both feminist history and political history in the United States and, especially, in the Midwest can begin to be deconstructed by the inclusion of de Cleyre in humanities curricula. The subject of de Cleyre can be approached from multiple vantage points, such as English studies, history, political science, women's studies, and sociology.

De Cleyre's life rejects the fixed notions of reality and knowledge. She lived a free-loving feminist lifestyle before women had the right to vote. However, she is unlike what many thought of as a bohemian feminist. Goldman referred to de Cleyre as uptight, and de Cleyre said of Goldman that she was too loud and rambunctious. De Cleyre was an enigma in her lifetime, with a fusion of Catholic-learned asceticism and radical life choices. De

Cleyre's life, to this day, radically changes the conception of first-wave feminists.

Moreover, de Cleyre's life refuses to align with the boundaries or hierarchies in the current and past ways of thinking. Who was it that championed birth control in the United States? Who was it that helped make communication about birth control legal? Most would say Margaret Sanger. In fact, anarchists such as Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Voltairine de Cleyre championed the cause, were jailed many times, and laid the groundwork for the less radical Sanger to be the poster child for birth control accessibility.[1]

Just the presence of this little-known fact refuses the hierarchy of history. The hierarchy that exists tells the story of a past paved over, but presents itself as the unofficial radical history of the United States. It was the anarchists who were disallowed the right to assemble or communicate in New York in 1901, it was the anarchists who started the union movement in the United States in the early twentieth century, and it was the anarchists who were brutally murdered and purposely kept out of the public eye, except for routine demonization. Starting the conversation with de Cleyre opens up new vistas of deconstructing what we think we know about our past, and refuses the boundaries and hierarchies in current and past ways of thinking.

Lastly, de Cleyre's life disrupts the binaries that define things as either/or. She was an anarchist, a feminist, a woman, a mother, and a free thinker. She refused the bondage of motherhood and, instead, left her child with his father's parents because she knew that she would not be able to care for him. She argued against marriage and cohabitation. She advocated that women be treated not equally, but as people. She refused to be placed in a binary of sex or gender, but she also championed causes greater than herself. She worked with the poor and often helped those less fortunate than herself while at the same time living mostly in squalor. She often dealt with debilitating, chronic illness, which mostly flared up due to lack of proper nutrition. She was neither a man nor a woman: she was a person. She was neither anarchist nor feminist: she was an anarcha-feminist. By disrupting these binaries, she forged new paths, garnered much attention, and had many struggles to find her own way in life. Teaching de Cleyre disrupts binaries in current imaginaries about exactly who women were in the

late nineteenth century because de Cleyre truly fits none of the molds that have been presented time and again in humanities classrooms. Not only does the study of de Cleyre satisfy some of the projects of a postmodern pedagogy, but it satisfies, too, a postmodern pedagogy geared toward teaching the Midwest.

Studying de Cleyre and her writings is studying the repressed and unofficial history of the Midwest. If, as Atkinson states, another postmodern project is to deliberately "unsettle assumptions and presuppositions," studying the history and the identity of the Midwest through the lens of de Cleyre lends to a re-envisioning and problematization of the official narratives of both. One of the major Midwestern events that lend themselves to these re-envisions and problematizations is that of the Haymarket Affair (or often referred to as the Haymarket Riot) in May of 1886. The Haymarket Affair was a pressure point in the Midwest's identity and history between the rights of man and the rights of capitalists. Presley writes that "Eight innocent anarchist men, (four were later hanged and one committed suicide), were convicted on flimsy and trumped up evidence for planting a bomb that killed seven policemen in the Chicago Haymarket Square on May 3, 1886" (47). The event caused quite a stir of controversy and was a defining moment for the Midwest.

Carter explains that the event and subsequent trial and executions were influenced heavily by public opinion: "When the word was flashed to the country, its newspapers called for blood. The public demanded vengeance. Chicago authorities answered the cry by rounding up eight anarchists" (271). He continues: "But at the time of the trials and the execution, the duty of almost every American seemed clear. Our way of life was endangered by foreign radicals; these men might have not been directly guilty, but their political philosophy called for the use of force in abolishing our institutions; therefore, as James Russell Lowell declared . . . 'the rascals are well hanged'" (Carter 271). As Carter explains, there were a few petitions for clemency in newspapers, but most individuals did not want to risk their professional future by speaking in favor of pardoning the convicted anarchists. Emma Goldman, de Cleyre's contemporary, even comments that, when the men were hanged, "the State of Illinois stupidly boasted that it had also killed the ideal for which the men died" (34). The official history condemned the anarchists, and, through their execu-

tion, the Midwest was symbolically purged of radicalism, even though the anarchist men not executed were eventually pardoned in 1893 by the governor.

Through the writings by and about de Cleyre, a new, contradictory history of the Haymarket Affair emerges. Like the people of the Midwest, the Haymarket Affair was a defining moment in de Cleyre's history and identity. Emma Goldman, in a biographical essay about de Cleyre, explains:

> Voltairine, like the majority of the people of America, poisoned by the perversion of facts in the press of the time, at first joined in the cry, 'They ought to be hanged!' But hers was a searching mind, not of the kind that could long be content with mere surface appearances. She soon came to regret her haste. In her first address, on the occasion of the anniversary of the 11th of November 1887, Voltairine, always scrupulously honest with herself, publicly declared how deeply she regretted having joined in the cry . . . . (34-35)

Emma Goldman refers to the Haymarket Affair as the "raison d'etre" of de Cleyre's life, and de Cleyre devoted the rest of her life to eradicating its cause—the injustices of the governmental system (35). It was the Haymarket Affair that raised a socio-political consciousness in the already free-thinking de Cleyre.

De Cleyre's poem "Night at the Grave in Waldheim" glorifies the Haymarket Martyrs and gives insight into the unofficial view of the anarchist men who were unjustly accused, imprisoned, and murdered. The poem decries the Martyrs' unfair treatment by the United States justice system. She refers to the men as innocents when she writes "Over each pulseless and painless breast/ The hands lie folded and softly pressed/ As a dead dove presses a broken nest" (de Cleyre 3-5). Furthermore, she exemplifies their purity and innocence with the image "And yet, ah! Yet there's a rift of white!/ 'Tis breaking over the martyrs' shrine!" (de Cleyre 19-20). In contrast to the anarchist men's "broken hearts," de Cleyre presents the imagery of "The trampling foot and the ceaseless hum/ Of the million marchers,—trembling, dumb" (16-17). De Cleyre unsettles assumptions and presuppositions about the official history of the Haymarket Affair by referring to the hanged men as innocent martyrs. She presents her reader with an image opposed to the popular conception: it is the anarchist men who are

the innocents, thus unsettling assumptions and presuppositions about the history of the Midwest.

Furthermore, the fact that the Haymarket Affair radicalized de Cleyre suggests another unofficial identity of the Midwest. According to Goldman, the Midwest, at least in terms of the Haymarket Affair, wrongly assumed that killing the anarchist men equaled killing the anarchist philosophy in the Midwest. In the court of Midwestern public opinion, the Midwest saw the anarchists as Others that needed to be rejected from society in order to preserve a standardized cultural identity. Although no one can specifically pinpoint what this identity is or was, it is safe to assume that it did not allow for radicalizing beliefs related to anarchism. Much in the same way that September 11, 2001, served to otherize those with Middle Eastern or Islamic ties, the Haymarket Affair and subsequent public hanging served to catalyze and unite Midwestern identity in the late nineteenth century. It was against this Midwestern political landscape that de Cleyre separated herself in the belief of truth and of pure justice for humanity. The unofficial identity, which, like de Cleyre, receives little attention today, is a radicalization of socio-political and philosophical beliefs rooted in American traditions of justice and liberty. Instead of faith in the justice of the government, this unofficial identity embodied by de Cleyre and other Midwestern radicals, placed faith in the people.

This problematizing of the official history and identity of the Midwest as a cohesive socio-political unit is undermined by examining the life and works of de Cleyre. This is of utmost importance in postmodern pedagogy because it fulfills projects set forth by postmodern theorists as well as offers the potential to be a site for social or political change. Postmodernism can offer us a pedagogy that encourages the study of derivations of official histories and identities because postmodernism "celebrates multiplicity and diversity: this is an 'inclusive' rather than an 'exclusive' identity, one that draws its strength from disparate sources rather than from what is sometimes experienced in the discourses of empowerment as stifling and constraining unity" (Atkinson 75). With these theoretical underpinnings in mind, Voltairine de Cleyre is not only an interesting study of unofficial history and identity in the Midwest, but also of a writer who clearly fulfills many projects of postmodern theorists.

Now that I have argued that Voltairine de Cleyre should be a part of a postmodern pedagogy, one may wonder what a course or unit utilizing de Cleyre would look like. Because anarchism is rarely taught in the United States, in higher education or elsewhere, it would be important to begin with some foundational political and philosophical texts. Depending on the level and the discipline of the course, a reader on anarchism is recommended. Interestingly, the works of both Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre are anthologized in such a way that facilitates a quick grasp not only of anarchism, but feminism and anarcha-feminism. There are three main anthologies of essays about and by Voltairine de Cleyre. Some also contain her poetry and fiction, as well as essays about her from contemporaries such as Goldman. These books are: *Exquisite Rebel: The Essays of Voltairine de Cleyre—Anarchist, Feminist, Genius* (2005) edited by Sharon Presley and Crispin Sartwell, *Gates of Freedom: Voltairine de Cleyre & the Revolution of the Mind* (2007) by Eugenia C. Delamotte, and *The Voltairine de Cleyre Reader* (2004) edited by A.J. Brigati. Using critical articles (few of which currently exist, but hopefully scholars will produce more in the future), first- and second-hand historical accounts of events about which de Cleyre also writes (such as the Haymarket Affair), and an open dialogue between students and teachers, a course or unit on de Cleyre could open new insight into many disciplines within the humanities.

In addition, there has been recent revitalization in anarchism scholarship, and a new field tentatively named postanarchism (a term that encompasses poststructuralist and postmodern anarchism) has hit the scene. Within the past few years, there has been great scholarly interest in using a heavily theoretical approach (with such theorists as Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari, and others) to explore a new, revitalized sense of anarchism that speaks to the concerns of a contemporary socio-political environment.

If one is truly committed to at least some of the projects of postmodernism in the classroom, it is imperative to consider de Cleyre as one of the ways to achieve such pedagogy. The lack of knowledge and scholarly endeavors about de Cleyre and her work is, at best, disheartening. Forgetting de Cleyre is forgetting the past. Her works inspired hundreds, if not thousands, during her life, and they were circulated in print at a time when it was at least frowned upon and, in some states, illegal, to even discuss anar-

chism. She was a pioneer and intellectual at a time when the Midwest murdered those like her because of their fear of radicalism and deviation from faith in the governmental justice system. Ignoring Voltairine de Cleyre is ignoring the right of all students to have the freedom to learn about the past in ways that defy the grand narratives of Truth. Ignoring de Cleyre is ignoring the past as much as it is ignoring the potential of our students and depriving them of "the freedom *to try*."

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NOTE

[1] As with most history, the perspectives vary depending on the source, but a well-organized depiction of the interaction of birth control and the anarchist movement is detailed in Peter Glassgold's *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman*'s Mother Earth. His anthology includes letters and writings from de Cleyre, Goldman, and Sanger concerning the birth control movement at the turn of the century.

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MIDWESTERN MYSTICISM: THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN MARILYNNE ROBINSON'S *GILEAD*

ALEX ENGEBRETSON

Marilynne Robinson's second novel *Gilead* (2004) was warmly received by critics who praised the book's fiercely calm tone, the pathos of the relationship between a dying father and young son, and its evocation of ordinary life on the Iowa prairie. But perhaps no other aspect has been more talked about by both literary journalists and scholars than *Gilead's* religiosity. Robinson's mind is "as religious as it is literary—perhaps more religious than literary," writes James Wood ("Acts of Devotion"). Within the academy, *Christianity and Literature* devoted their winter 2010 issue to *Gilead* and *Home,* which consisted of scholarly explications of their Christian content. The response is understandable, since it is rare to find a contemporary novel, especially a National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that is so explicitly religious. The publisher encouraged it, too, placing a cross on the novel's book jacket.

However, the designation "religious novel" does not sit well with Robinson. When asked by the *Paris Review* whether she considers herself a "religious writer," she replied, "I don't like categories like religious and not religious. As soon as religion draws a line around itself it becomes falsified. It seems to me that anything that is written compassionately and perceptively probably satisfies every definition of religious whether a writer intends it to be religious or not" ("The Art of Fiction"). Such a statement is difficult to understand after reading *Gilead*. With its clergymen characters, Biblical allusions and typology, sacramental symbolism, and theological language the book seems intended to be a "religious"—or, more accurately, a "Christian novel." How is it possible to reconcile Robinson's comment and her novel's content?

The attempt to answer such a question is part of why *Gilead* should have value for scholars of postwar American fiction. It allows us to probe certain kinds of questions which are uncommon in the field, questions about the relation of religion to literature, for example, or questions about the role of religion in public life. Just such questions are at the heart of this paper. This essay sets out to take Robinson's comment to the *Paris Review* seriously and reconsider *Gilead* not as a religious or Christian text, but as a text which highlights the tension between the secular and the religious. A number of key passages demonstrate that *Gilead* offers a complex probing of this tension, as it manifests itself within a specific time and place, namely the Midwest during the 1950s. Although the novel takes place during the 1950s, I argue that the best way to interpret this secular-religious tension is within its *contemporary* historical context, specifically as a response to the anxieties about religion swirling throughout American culture after 9/11.

Before moving into some textual examples, I should say something about this extremely slippery opposition between the secular and religious. While these categories— "secular" and "religious"—signify opposing ideologies, they also represent opposing spiritual options or identities. This paper is concerned less with ideological tensions—i.e. the conflict between the Congregationalist and Presbyterian view of predestination—than with the tensions between religious and secular identities. How are these identities negotiated in social space? How do communities come together or break apart along secular or religious lines? These are questions clearly raised by *Gilead* that have gone underexplored by previous critics.

The philosopher Charles Taylor's book *A Secular Age* (2007) offers a historical understanding of the secular-religious tension. Taylor defines a "secular age" as a historical moment in the West when Christianity became just one spiritual option among many others. This means it is impossible to practice religion today in the West without the simultaneous awareness that other people believe differently. To be clear, this is a far different idea from the standard "secularization thesis," where the processes of modernity inevitably produce the waning of religion. Taylor's idea posits the coexistence of secular *and* religious possibilities. And it is this historical condition that creates and sustains the secular-religious tension that we find in *Gilead*. Taylor is just one of the many

recent theorists and philosophers, including Judith Butler, Cornel West, and Jürgen Habermas, who have begun to explore how religious and secular identities are culturally constructed. This theme in recent intellectual life is often called "postsecularism." At the core of this project is an attempt to destabilize the Enlightenment's secular-religious divide. It is within this intellectual climate that *Gilead's* value and relevance are even more apparent.

RELIGION, SECULARISM, COMMUNITY

Although *Gilead's* representation of the secular-religious tension is an obvious thematic current, it is also present at a more subterranean level, woven into the very fabric of its textuality. If read in a certain light, even moments of quiet perception lightly touch upon this theme:

> I saw a bubble float past my window, fat and wobbly and ripening toward that dragonfly blue they turn just before they burst. So I looked down at the yard and there you were, you and your mother, blowing bubbles at the cat, such a barrage of them that the poor beast was beside herself at the glut of opportunity. She was actually leaping in the air, our insouciant Soapy! Some of the bubbles drifted up through the branches, even above the trees. You two were too intent on the cat to see the celestial consequences of your worldly endeavors. They were very lovely. (9)

At first there appears little in this passage that seems explicitly "religious" or "Christian." It is a moment of reported perception, specifically a perception of everyday beauty—floating bubbles, a cat, an image of mother and child—which might easily be said to owe more to the Romanticism of Thoreau or Emerson than to the Christianity of John Calvin (Calvinism being Robinson's preferred branch of Protestantism; she is a Congregationalist).

But one sentence here does not fit that description. The narrator, John Ames, says, "You two were too intent on the cat to see the celestial consequences of your worldly endeavors." This sentence has the effect of transforming the moment of perception into a theological metaphor. The mother/child/cat exist on the immanent plane of the world, sending bubbles—metaphors of human action, perhaps—floating up to the transcendent plane of heaven where they resonate with "celestial consequences." Thus, this pas-

sage combines two distinct forms of discourse. On the one hand, it is a description of a perception, couched in the rhetoric of everyday beauty. On the other hand, it frames this perception within a Christian metaphor, which suggests a distinction between an immanent, temporal realm and a transcendent, eternal realm. Because of this difference between description and metaphor, the passage is difficult to label as either wholly secular or wholly religious. It rather embodies and explores the tension between them.

While many other examples might be chosen to demonstrate the secular-religious tension as a constant textual undercurrent, there is little need to be so subtle, since Robinson makes it present through the more overt means of theme, character, and plot. Indeed, the tension is established early on, when Ames, Gilead's town preacher, encounters two men at the garage:

> I really can't tell what's beautiful anymore. I passed two young fellows on the street the other day. I know who they are, they work at the garage. They're not churchgoing, either one of them, just decent rascally young fellows who have to be joking all the time, and there they were, propped against the garage wall in the sunshine, lighting up their cigarettes. They're always so black with grease and so strong with gasoline I don't know why they don't catch fire themselves. They were passing remarks back and forth the way they do and laughing that wicked way they have. And it seemed beautiful to me . . . When they saw me coming, of course the joking stopped, but I could see they were still laughing to themselves, thinking what the old preacher almost heard them say. I felt like telling them, I appreciate a joke as much as anybody . . . They want you to be a little bit apart. (5)

On its surface, this is one of the novel's many moments of beautiful perception, only this time mixed with a disappointed realization of the social estrangements of a preacher's occupation. However, certain details cue us into deeper tensions. The men are "not churchgoing," a phrase which labels them as secular, as "other" from Ames's perspective. He perceives these men "on the street," in public space, which suggests the diversity of Gilead, Iowa, where secular and religious identities coexist.

The town of Gilead is based on the small town of Tabor in Iowa's southwest corner. Here, Robinson emphasizes Gilead's heterogeneity. A secular or non-churchgoing life is entirely possible in Gilead in 1956, meaning that the ideas and culture of

European modernity have been in Iowa for some time. For Robinson, it is a mistake to consider the Midwest provincial, as disconnected from urban or even European circuits of culture. This passage defines Gilead as a diverse space where secular and religious identities are present and negotiated.

This difference is reinforced by the men's color: "black with grease." *Gilead* encourages us to assume that these are white men covered by black grease, since we are later informed that the town's black community fled to Chicago after an arsonist's attempt on their church. So, this blackness can allude to the lingering question of race, which hangs heavily over the town because of its involvement in the abolitionist movement. Or, to take a more theological line, it can suggest the traditional Christian association of blackness with sin. This latter possibility is underscored when Ames remarks, "I don't know why they don't catch fire themselves." Fire throughout the novel is symbolically associated not with hell but with the Pentecostal tongues of fire. Understood as such, this remark might be rephrased as, "I don't know why it appears to me they aren't saved." This is a question of considerable importance later on, when Jack Boughton reveals his obsession with the idea of predestination. Ames clearly expresses a longing to join the men in laughter, since he "appreciate[s] a joke as much as anybody," but his role as preacher and their lack of churchgoing, their blackness, their otherness prevents such a community from forming. Instead, silence is enforced and difference sustained. The scene raises a crucial question, not only for the fictional town of Gilead, Iowa, but for contemporary American politics: How can communities be formed which transcend the secular-religious divide? Robinson suggests the answer is aesthetic. The desire to form a community is sparked by the perception of the beauty of other people, whether they are religious or not. In other words, the perception of beauty ought to be privileged over the knowledge of identity.

This initial moment with the men at the garage foreshadows another important encounter with secular difference, the plot concerning John Ames's older brother Edward. Edward is the book's figure of the modern intellectual. After a precocious childhood, he leaves Gilead to study abroad in Germany, returning years later a committed atheist. His spiritual transformation is a disaster for the Ames family, and Edward remains estranged from his mother,

father, and brother for the rest of his life. The Edward plot can be read as testament to the dangers of secular and religious difference, its explosive consequences for social institutions like families. But it is also a plot which raises the question of place, since the difference between secular and religious identities is mapped onto a geographical difference between Europe and the Midwest. Robinson is again making the claim that the Midwest does not exist in isolation. Through the Edward plot, Robinson shows how places as seemingly isolated as Gilead, Iowa, are actually in a constant dialectical relationship with other places, cultures, histories, and ideas, including Europe.

When Edward hands his brother a copy of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, John says, "[Edward] thought he would do me a favor, taking a bit of the Middle West out of me. That was the favor Europe had done for him. But here I am, having lived to the end of the life he warned me against, and pretty well content with it, too, all in all. Still, I know I am touchy on the subject of parochialism" (24). For Edward, and for many Western intellectuals, the Midwest and Europe are opposed. The Midwest is viewed as provincial, backward, and anti-intellectual, a place to leave, while Europe is seen as the place of modernity and intellectual sophistication, a spiritual home. Edward's journey abroad mirrors so many journeys by American writers—Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Eliot, Crane, and many others—who moved from the Midwest and toward places that are perceived as more modern and sophisticated centers of culture. *Gilead* questions this perception by emphasizing the existence of a vibrant Midwestern intellectual culture. The best evidence of this culture is John Ames himself, not only a preacher, but a figure of the Midwestern intellectual, a man deeply engaged with the ideas of his day, especially those imported from Germany by Edward. Relevant to this point is the fact that John Ames never leaves Iowa, which is Robinson's way of saying that a perfectly respectable intellectual life can be lived in the Midwest, in places just like Gilead, Iowa. It is the kind of life Robinson has led while teaching at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Although the Ames brothers grow apart, there is a moment after Edward returns from Germany when difference breaks down and transcendence seems possible: the moment when the two brothers play catch. Throughout *Gilead,* baseball serves as an image of community, a secular space with the power to unify indi-

viduals across different identity markers. In another episode, John Ames attends a baseball game with his grandfather to watch Bud Fowler, the earliest known African American professional baseball player. While this episode focuses on the importance of baseball for race relations, the moment of Ames and Edward playing catch briefly unifies two characters with opposing views on religion.

As they play, Robinson begins to complicate the neat opposition between them. She has Edward quote the 133rd Psalm as he pours water over his head in a kind of secular baptism. This act throws the comfortable opposition between secular-religious into question, and we are forced to ask several questions. What do these identity categories really mean? How helpful are they for judging others' subjective experience? Can the difference between secular or religious identities ever really be known? Robinson introduces a hint of mystery, forcing Ames and the reader to question what we really know about Edward's inner life. Ames reflects, "I thought after that day we would sometimes be able to talk. That did not prove to be the case. All the same, after that day I did feel pretty much at ease about the state of his soul. Though of course I am not competent to judge" (64). The silence between the brothers and Ames's refraining from judgment suggests the inadequacy of the categories "atheist" and "Christian." Robinson uses baseball's power to form temporary communities to interrogate this opposition, ultimately questioning the stability and intelligibility of any such claim of identity.

Identity claims can apply to people as well as to texts, and Robinson addresses this latter concern through the repeated allusions to Ludwig Feuerbach. In this case, Robinson takes a famous piece of secular discourse, Feuerbach's atheistic book, *The Essence of Christianity,* and shows how it yields both secular and religious meanings. For Edward, Feuerbach's book results in the end of his faith, while for Ames, Feuerbach results in a strengthened faith. He tells his son, "Feuerbach is a famous atheist, but he is about as good on the joyful aspects of religion as anybody, and he loves the world. Of course he thinks religions could just stand out of the way and let joy exist pure and undisguised. That is his one error, and it is significant. But he is marvelous on the subject of joy, and also on its religious expressions" (24). The irony that *The Essence of Christianity* can actually strengthen Christian faith is augmented

when Ames says he will pass along the book to his son: "I'm going to set aside that Feuerbach with the books I will ask your mother to be sure to save for you. I hope you will read it sometime. There is nothing alarming in it, to my mind" (27). However, in the end he changes his mind and decides to give it to his "spiritual son," the skeptic Jack Boughton. At their bus station parting, instead of giving Jack a Bible or a book by Karl Barth, Ames brings "along *The Essence of Christianity*, which I had set on the table by the door, hoping I might have a chance to give it to him" (239). By emphasizing the irony of intention—that the book responsible for making an atheist of Karl Marx and much of the Western intelligentsia can also serve as an apology for the Christian faith—Robinson shows her skepticism toward the essentializing tendency to label a text either religious or secular. Is *The Essence of Christianity* a secular or religious text? According to *Gilead,* the answer depends entirely on its reception, which depends upon the subjectivity of the reader. The same is true of *Gilead* itself; it, too, is available to secular and religious meanings.

The secular-religious tension reaches its height with the return of Jack Boughton. Jack is the town's ne'er-do-well, a petty criminal, alcoholic, and a child-abandoner. He is *Gilead's* portrait of the Prodigal Son. With Jack, Robinson deepens and intensifies the tension that is introduced with Edward. Ames is confronted with another nonchurchgoing atheist, but this time he cannot simply walk by in silence or play catch and leave. He has to confront Jack, whose full name is John Ames Boughton. He has to reconcile with his "spiritual son." After weeks of Ames's moral tumult about Jack—moving swiftly between fear, anxiety, and pity—it is revealed that Jack is in Gilead to see if it would be a hospitable place for his family to live. He lives with an African American woman, Della, and they have a son together, and Jack would like to move his family from St. Louis and start over again in Gilead.

Jack's plot introduces one of the deepest historical ironies of *Gilead:* a town founded as an abolitionist settlement is in 1957 too racist to accommodate a mixed-race couple. This is not simply a comment about racism in the Midwest. Robinson praises the accomplishments of the abolitionists. Their religiously inspired moral vision proved to be one of the greatest radical reforms in US history. This is why Ulysses Grant called Iowa "the shining star of radicalism," a quote that appears several times in *Gilead*. What

Robinson is critical of is historical forgetfulness, and this seems especially apparent today in the impoverished national imagination of the Midwest. *Gilead* sets out to prove that the Midwest is not a historical void. It contains rich traditions of radical reform, which ought to be of enormous value for any reform-minded liberal, or for liberal Christians like Robinson who are committed to an ethic of openhanded generosity. The irony that Jack and his family cannot move to "the shining star of radicalism" out of fear of racism is a dramatization of the consequences of historical forgetfulness. As Ames sorrowfully says, "These little towns were once the bold ramparts meant to shelter just such peace," the peace of racial harmony (242). Jack's sorrowful flight from Gilead is a reason to keep historical memory alive, which is clearly what Robinson sought to do for the Midwest in *Gilead*.

Jack is eventually driven back to St. Louis after the racial realities of Gilead are apparent to him. The bus station parting between Ames and Jack is one of the most poignant and almost most ambiguous moments in *Gilead*. Ames decides he would like to bless Jack, and he puts his hand on his forehead and recites a benediction from Numbers. Then he adds, "'Lord, bless John Ames Boughton, this beloved son and brother and husband and father'" (241). Jack replies, "'Thank you, Reverend,'" but his "tone made me think that to him it might have seemed I had named everything I thought he no longer was, when that was absolutely the furthest thing from my meaning, the exact opposite of my meaning" (241-242). Did the blessing offend Jack? What was its significance for him? What does it mean to "bless" an atheist? Does it mean anything different if it takes place at a bus depot rather than a church? Prior to this moment Ames says, "I wish I could put my hand on his brow and calm away all the guilt and regret that is exaggerated or misplaced, or beyond rectification in the terms of this world. Then I could see what I'm actually dealing with" (201).

Ames admits to wanting to save Jack from the guilt of his past, as if the palm of his hand contained the power of redemption. Reflecting on this desire he adds, "Theologically, that is a completely unacceptable notion. It just happened to cross my mind. I apologize for it" (201). For Ames, only Christ has the power to redeem, and the human usurpation of that power is a form of sinful pride. But does he, nevertheless, bring this desire to redeem to

the blessing of Jack? We cannot know. It is another of the book's impenetrable mysteries. What we do know is, like the men at the garage, like Edward, a community is broken. Jack boards the bus and leaves, and whether he has changed his belief in God we do not know. The secular-religious tension is sustained, silence ensues, and the community remains inhospitable to difference.

GILEAD AFTER 9/11

What is the proper context for interpreting these themes of religion, secularism, and place? Perhaps the most obvious context is Robinson's biography as revealed by interviews and essays. Robinson's religious beliefs, her move from New England to Iowa, and her numerous essays on modern thought are essential to a full understanding of the sources and concerns this novel. Such a context would rightly steer interpretation away from what is the wrong way to understand *Gilead,* namely as a species of Christian apologetics. This interpretation will not work for several reasons, the strongest one being the moral complexity of *Gilead's* world. There are violent, racist Christians and sympathetic, humane atheists. Furthermore, the book repeatedly expresses skepticism about the very attempt to "convert" anyone to Christianity, locating authority not in dogma but in religious experience. Reading *Gilead* like the *Screwtape Letters* will not work. The reading that I propose considers *Gilead* within the wider frame of US cultural and political history after the events of September 11th, 2001. Once we situate *Gilead* within this frame, its representation of the secular-religious tension can be read as a response to some of the most pressing anxieties in contemporary American culture and politics.

When *Gilead* was published in 2004, it entered a cultural space deeply conflicted about the public role of religion. In America this debate can be traced back to the Constitution, and in the post-war period is perhaps best tied to the year 1979 which marks both the Iranian revolution and the foundation of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. The attacks on September 11th added to an intensification of the already existing anxieties about religion and its role in politics, for one of the more important narratives to come out of 9/11 was that religion, in the form of radical Islam, was entirely responsible for the violence.

The anxieties about religion prompted by 9/11 stirred a lively debate within US intellectual culture. One of the more important strains was a rekindling of Darwinian rationalism represented by so-called New Atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris. The New Atheists offered a rational defense of atheism along with a moral critique of religion, which concluded, to quote Hitchens's subtitle, that "religion poisons everything." Based solely on the amount of books these authors moved, the public appetite for rationalist discourse ran strong after 9/11, despite the fact that their thinking was based on assumptions taken from nineteenth-century Positivism. The New Atheists provoked a swift intellectual response from thinkers questioning the metaphysical confidence and the liberal politics underlying their rationalist claims, including Terry Eagleton's *Reason, Faith, and Revolution* (2010) and Robinson's own *Absence of Mind* (2010).

Once we situate *Gilead* within this cultural context, its tension between the secular and religious can be read as a response to the anxiety which surrounded religion at that time, a kind of negotiation between religious fundamentalists on one side and rationalist atheists on the other. With the voice of John Ames, Robinson attempts to inject a different religious tone into culture, one that is rarely heard in the public sphere: a voice of calm generosity that is identifiably a liberal Protestant religious tone. Ames, who is skeptical of Evangelical dogmatic orthodoxy and understands the complexity of the abolitionist legacy, might be seen as a symbol of a privileged form of religious identity, the only one truly compatible with the liberal ideals of individualism, freedom of conscience, and social and political life with people of other faiths or no faith at all. In *Gilead,* Robinson claims that the most compatible form of religious identity with liberal democracy is one that exchanges orthodoxy for mystery and closed dogma for open speculation, ultimately affirming the tension between the secular and religious.

Although there is no hard sociological evidence for who the readers of *Gilead* are, it does seem that Robinson was successful in bringing together readers from across the secular and religious divide. Churches across the country featured *Gilead* in their book clubs, while more secular readers gravitated to it for its critical acclaim and major literary awards. The identification with John Ames that the book encourages makes both the hard Evangelical Right uncomfor-

table—because Ames is too intellectual and not dogmatic enough—and the more secular literary audience uncomfortable as well—he's an intellectually and morally respectable clergyman and not an object of satire. *Gilead* brings together an unlikely readership from across the so-called Red State-Blue State divide, offering a humanist vision of loss, death, and forgiveness in prose of quiet, understated beauty. It is a novel that speaks to our moment with great urgency, as Americans attempt to build generous communities within the constraints and tensions of a secular age.

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FISHING IN TIME'S STREAM: A REVIEW ESSAY

MARCIA NOE

Kloefkorn, William. *Breathing in the Fullness of Time*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011 and *Swallowing the Soap: New and Selected Poems*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010.

Knoepfle, John. *I Look around for My Life*. Boulder: Fort Collins: Burning Daylight, 2008 and *Shadows and Starlight*. Fort Collins: Indian Paintbrush Poets, 2012.

Kooser, Ted. *Lights on a Ground of Darkness: An Evocation of a Place and Time*. Lincoln: Bison Books, 2009 and *Delights & Shadows*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon P, 2004.

Three Midwestern poets have recently published memoirs in which each reflects on the interrelationship of life, art, identity, and their natural surroundings, as well as on the confluence of time and place and the imbrication of past and present. None of these authors has been exclusively a poet for his entire life; all have worked at a variety of jobs: teacher, painter, radio personality, factory worker, insurance executive, bookstore clerk, news director, landscaper, gandy dancer, waiter, soldier, sailor, farmer, photographer, statistician, film editor, and surveyor. This practical experience has grounded their poetry in the quotidian of Midwestern life, giving it a stripped down, direct, and colloquial, if not conversational, quality. Putting each writer's narrative in conversation with his poetry enhances the reader's appreciation of the ways in which their autobiographical prose is grounded in a sense of time and place, past and present, and the ways in which these flow into, intermingle, and inform each other.

"Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in."

Breathing in the Fullness of Time, the fourth volume in Kloefkorn's autobiographical project, extends from his childhood to

his later years as State Poet of Nebraska, moving back and forth in time in a sustained meditation on this subject. Kloefkorn fishes widely in time's stream, casting from past to present and back again, juxtaposing baseball and Prufrock; cinema and football; his fifth-grade encounter with his future wife, Eloise Ann, and a fondly remembered camping trip with his brother John; his delight in his boyhood tree house and his teaching of James Dickey's "In the Treehouse of Night" to college students. The book's continual juxtaposition of events separated by time calls to mind the lines from "Schooling" that assert that "the bells of the future can be rung only / by those with sufficient wherewithal to / pull the ropes of the past."

Central to the narrative is the Edenic camping trip during which John releases his watch into the steam in which they are drifting in an attempt to remain in the present idyllic moment. However, when their boat drifts from the lazy channel they had been enjoying into the fast-moving current of the Loup River, they become all too aware of their inability to stop time. This incident is evoked several times throughout the narrative and serves as its governing metaphor: Time, characterized as a thief in the Leigh Hunt poem that Kloefkorn's teacher introduces to her fifth-grade class, is actually a shape-shifting trickster who can move as slowly as molasses in January, to quote Kloefkorn's mother, while he awaits the birth of his first child, or as quickly as his football-playing son becomes a husband and father. Reflecting on his reaction to the chewing-out his coach gave him when he quit the college football team, Kloefkorn muses,

> I stood absorbing his language . . . . How long I stood there can be measured with—what? Not a watch, certainly, or a clock or a sundial. With a defective chronometer, perhaps, or with an hourglass, maybe, if it has something stuck in its throat that prevents its sand from ever falling down.
>
> Eternity, they say, has no end, but this one—ultimately—did, and it happened when Coach Welch turned again from looking at his larger audience to look at me. Get the hell out of here, he said, and I did. (20)

The strong production values of this book are matched by the quality of Kloefkorn's prose that resonates with many of the poems in *Swallowing the Soap*. A football teammate is described as "a dynamo with blue eyes and dimples" (16); a coach as having "a weathered face, redder than . . . a baboon's ass" (9); the supervisor at

his college dishwashing job as "tall and thin, with black eyes the size of marbles and a nose long enough to stick into everyone's business" (6), lines that recall the poem "Thanksgiving": "The flesh on Beulah's upper arm / hangs so low it / brushes the broccoli. / Ice tea gurgles like a busy drain / in the small acrid throat / of cousin Eileen." "[T]he sun was bright and the sky was work shirt blue," (40) is one laconic description of a Kansas morning that brings to mind lines from "Waiting for the End" that evoke that same sense of a fresh new day dawning as well as Kloefkorn's preoccupation with the unstable nature of time: "The truth is that the world ends / every night. The truth is that with each daybreak / the world begins again, / taking you, sometimes more, sometimes less—with it."

"I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom
and detect how shallow it is."

In his earlier, longer memoir, *Local Wonders* (2002), Ted Kooser brings personal history to bear on the delights and trials the four seasons offer a poet-farmer. In *Lights on a Ground of Darkness*, he focuses on one day during the summer of 1949 that he and his sister spent with his mother's family, reflecting on the life they made for themselves in Guttenberg, Iowa, and the ways that his family history in this place has helped to shape his identity.

The Mississippi River looms large in Kooser's memories of that Iowa summer he spent with his grandparents—fishing with his uncle, swinging on the porch in the evenings, feeling the breeze wafting off the river that brings with it the smell of fish and the grunting of bullfrogs. Kooser dips his pole into Thoreau's shallow stream of time and catches memories of his childhood, his ancestors' pioneering farms, the history of the place that saw Marquette and Joliet, Zebulon Pike and Albert Lea.

Describing a small headstone from his great-uncle Millard Moser's grave that he keeps on his desk, Kooser reflects that a small drop of white paint on the stone is ". . . the size of a doorbell, and sometimes I put my finger on it as if I thought it might open a door into the past" (18). Kooser deftly opens several such doors in his narrative; moreover, poems from his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Delights & Shadows* echo through the text, further mingling past and present. The reference to his great-uncle's gravestone brings to mind the mowers from "Old Cemetery" that are "too hurried / to pull the

bindweed that weaves up / into the filigreed iron crosses / or to trim the tall red prairie grass / too close to the markers to mow / without risking the blade." His description of his Uncle Elvey's return from fishing, "dragging a gunnysack full of fish that leaves a wet slick along the shoulder like one made by a snail"(6) evokes lines from "Bank Fishing for Bluegills" that suggest Uncle Elvey on a typical fishing day, ". . . a fat man / who has fished all day and is dreaming of when he was a little boy / and weighed no more than a plastic bucket . . . . all lightness now, / and tethered only gently to this world." "Mother," written a month after her death, brings Vera Moser Kooser into the here and now and evokes joy rather than grief with the image of ". . . the iris I moved from your house / now hold in the dusty dry fists of their roots / green knives and forks as if waiting for dinner / as if spring were a feast."

The iris motif that runs through *Lights on a Ground of Darkness* links all of these respective pasts, a contrast to the fast-disappearing human connections to Kooser's family history. "An iris offers its beauty and fragrance as if nothing has changed, as if no one were gone" (60), Kooser concludes, showing us that poet's gift for seamlessly blending Nature, place, and time and rendering his memoir, in the words of Edwin Muir, a defense against "a confusion of lights on a ground of darkness" (58).

"Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains."

John Knoepfle's *I Look around for My Life* comprises a series of lively and engaging vignettes that begins with the poet's childhood in Cincinnati and moves through his service in the Navy during World War II, his education under the GI Bill, and his teaching jobs in Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri; along the way he comments on how all of these experiences have inflected his poetry, providing a number of examples of such poems. Knoepfle's autobiography evokes those golden days in the '40s, '50s, and '60s when nuns terrorized parochial school children in classrooms while the Fireside Poets smiled down upon the mayhem. However, Knoepfle's candor, directness, and incisive humor leave no false impression that all was rosy in those decades. When a parish busybody badgers him about whether he has a vocation, Knoepfle replies, "No . . . but how about yourself? I'm sure there are convents that will accept elderly women if they can bring a dowery" (63). His tales of his World War II ser-

vice in the Navy, his work in the Civil Rights and antiwar movements, and his early teaching experiences reveal him to be no less forthright. Upon being reprimanded by his dean for not following the rules, Knoepfle retorts that "[i]f you're a man, you change the rules" (122). When a young Civil Rights worker inquires if he is one hundred per cent committed to that cause, Knoepfle asks the man if he would die for Knoepfle's children. When he says no, Knoepfle tells him to take any percentage that he can get! (130).

"I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom
is pebbly with stars."

In the '50s, while working in educational television, Knoepfle fished often in time's stream, interviewing and taping over fifty river men, some still at work on steam-driven sternwheelers, some of whom could remember the river rafting of the previous century. This project emphasized the continuity of past and present that we see in "lines constructed out of nothing": "sometimes the vast day / slips unnoticed into tomorrow / you wonder where were you last night / and this morning what took place / what was it the silence put away / it is as if the hours were lost." Knoepfle writes that his oral history project "gave me a sense of place in the valley communities that I would have never had otherwise" (72); moreover, his exposure to the river men's language imbued his poems with the qualities of orality and immediacy. "Slept better last night / despite the back ache the blood / gone shopping in my feet" begins "saturday." "It is so hard to abandon an insult / clean the blood off the blade / put the knife back in the scabbard" concludes "snapping the knife shut."

Knoepfle further experiences the past giving meaning to place as he hikes with his future wife Peggy to the burial mounds and redoubts built centuries ago by the native people who inhabited Ohio and, later, discovers that the students he teaches in East St. Louis write in a style very similar to that of the Tudor preachers he studies, right down to the way that they spell and capitalize words. When he secures a permanent teaching position at Sangamon State University, Knoepfle moves his family into a house built a century earlier, once again bringing the past into the present so that he might, as he wrote in "thinking back these eighty eight years," "find in some garden / a moment lost that comes again."

When he meditates on time in *Walden,* Thoreau often represents it as a river or a stream, encouraging us to plumb its depths, to push through the "freshet of shams and appearances" that can distract and trap us, until we come to what really matters. Like Thoreau, the poet/memoirists discussed in this essay have offered us much the same vision. As Kloefkorn writes in "Schooling," sounding very much like Thoreau, "[T]he bells of the future can be rung only / by those with sufficient wherewithal to / pull the ropes of the past. Mean- / while, go forth to begin the quest for where- / withal, believing as you go that one / day you will find it."

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ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WRIGHT MORRIS

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Ecocriticism is a relatively new phenomenon on the horizon of literary studies, and the movement has given birth to several new approaches for examining the relationship between literature and natural environments such as the Great Plains, the region upon which Wright Morris most often leveled his fictive gaze. Although Morris is hardly an "environmental" writer in the explicit, socio-political tradition of naturalists such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, Rachel Carson, or his close friend, Loren Eiseley, frequently the more than thirty novels, photo texts, anthologies, collected short stories, critical volumes, and memoirs he produced during the span of his distinguished literary career are at least implicitly concerned with environmentally oriented themes. Among them are the dualistic interface between the human and nonhuman world, a phenomenon Wayne Booth first identified in a different context in Morris's works and an area of particular interest for earth-centered approaches to literary criticism ("The Two Worlds in the Fiction of Wright Morris").[1] In exploring that interface, Morris's subtle works incorporate two of the four criteria pioneering environmental critic Lawrence Buell identifies as necessary qualifications for ecologically oriented work: (1) presenting the nonhuman environment not just as a framing device, but as a presence suggesting that human history is often implicated in nonhuman history; and (2) evoking the sense of the natural environment as a process rather than as a given (*The Environmental Imagination* 7-8).

Although the scope of this essay will not allow a complete exploration of these elements throughout all of Morris's works, my intention here is to focus on three of his early books about Nebraska, *The Home Place* (1948), *The World in the Attic* (1949), and *The Works of Love* (1952), in order to explore the nonhuman environment as a shaping influence in what he would transform into the larger vision of the Great Plains eventually constructed in later novels such as *The*

Field of Vision (1956); *Ceremony in Lone Tree* (1960); *A Life* (1973); and his final novel, *Plains Song* (1980). Specifically, I will examine the function of four common tropes Greg Garrard claims are commonly found in environmental texts to suggest the presence and the process of the nonhuman, natural world. Those tropes include the pastoral, wilderness, dwelling, and apocalypse *(Ecocriticism).*

In general, my examination of these tropes reveals that like Wordsworth, Thoreau, Melville, and a number of nineteenth-century writers long before him, Morris is more interested in the relationship of nonhuman nature to the human mind than he is in nonhuman nature itself. As such, his environmental stance is largely anthropocentric, or human-centered, and he devotes the bulk of his literary efforts not so much to naturalistic or historical descriptions of the Great Plains and Nebraska, but to reflections upon his own and other people's imaginative responses to that environment.

In revealing the relationship between writer and environment, Morris's Nebraska texts evoke, albeit somewhat ironically, all three types of pastoral identified by critic Terry Gifford *(Pastoral* 2). Thus on one level, *The Home Place, The World in the Attic,* and *The Works of Love* echo the classical form of pastoral handed down from the ancient Greeks in which the central movement involves a retreat from the city to the country, into a middle landscape whose borders separate it from both the city and the wilderness—a place where, as Leo Marx notes in *The Machine in the Garden*, the solid satisfactions of "peace, leisure, and self-sufficiency" can be cultivated (23). On another level, however, these books reflect a second kind of pastoral, one that makes implicit and explicit contrasts between urban and rural environments, similar to the ways in which Romantic writers like Wordsworth used country, land, and people to glorify the commonplace, decry the corruption of the city, and tout the life-enhancing interrelationship of the human mind and nature. Most often, however, Morris evokes a form of pastoral that derives mainly from American influences such as Thoreau, under which he can play urban against rural, not only to examine the unrealized dream of an idyllic agrarian society once envisaged by many of the American founding fathers, but also to re-examine and invert sets of urban and rural contrasts that are commonplace in traditional pastoral texts. Such contrasts include spatial distinctions that include the "frenetic, corrupt, impersonal" town and the "peaceful, abundant" country, and tempo-

ral ones that match the "idyllic" past against the "fallen" present (Garrard 35).

Generally, the spatial and temporal distinctions Morris makes in his early novels about the Great Plains are signaled by figurative associations he connects with the directions west and east. To make these associations, Morris replaces the mythic cliché of the old American West as a fertile garden of opportunity with one in which the West is associated, not with success, happiness, and freedom, but instead with a dead past marked by life-depleting forces such as failure, loneliness, and entrapment. Conversely, Morris uses the East—often figured in popular American myth as overpopulated, exhausted, and morally impure—to signal an avenue of escape out of one time and into another.

This divided view is given its first serious articulation in *The World in the Attic*, where Morris provides this description of the fictional town of Junction, Kansas:

> Junction was a house divided, the old town facing the west and Horace Greeley, but the once up-and-coming part of the town facing the east. For the east was the way out of town, the way to leave. To the east the town had lengthened like a shadow, the blurred edge crossing the fields, but to the west it ended abruptly on the sky. There was nothing to face. The windows of the Western Hotel were covered with blinds. The town not merely ended but the sky swept in, like a tide, to invade it, the flood of light and space lapping at the fringes, washing it away . . . . The passing of all man made things, the fatal careening of the globe? For whatever remained at this edge of town did so at risk, and a bad one, as only the husk of several time-tired buildings remained. They faced to the west—a row of old men with their hands tied behind them, with blindfolded eyes—facing the firing squad, the careening globe, and the impending flood. (178-79)

The ominous, apocalyptic forces identified here—impending floods, careening globes, and firing squads—signal Morris's awareness that the time of which he writes is a perilous one, during which the flow of life in postfrontier America has accomplished a complete reversal, drifting away from the dead mythic past of westward migration and manifest destiny, and turning instead to the east, the present, and the uncertain future.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that when the western wilderness is figured in Morris's novels, as it is in the opening section of *The Works of Love,* it is described not as a source of rhapsodic poetic

inspiration, as many nineteenth-century Romantics would have it, nor as a vast ecological organism threatened by destruction, as some contemporary environmentalists would argue. Rather, to be in the wilderness is more like being in a state of mind than a place, and the blank western boundary figured by dead towns like Indian Bow and Lone Tree is associated, as it was for Native American tribes like the Lakota, with forces of creation and destruction: on the one hand with imaginative power and vision; and on the other with enervating emptiness, isolation, and loneliness. In *The Works of Love*, Morris refers to this region as "God's country" (4), and his accounts of this landscape perhaps have more in common with William Bradford and T.S. Eliot than with John Muir and Aldo Leopold. As Morris would later remark in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, "The emptiness of the plain generates illusions that require little moisture, and grow better, like tall stories, where the mind is dry. The tall corn may flower or burn in the wind, but the plain is a metaphysical landscape" (5).

At times this metaphysical plains wilderness seems as empty and foreboding as any wasteland faced by the ancient Israelites and the Puritans; yet it also fuels the stuff of dreams, as the lyrical opening o*f The Works of Love* so beautifully expresses:

> In the dry places, men begin to dream. Where the rivers run sand, there is something in man that begins to flow. West of the 98th Meridian—where it sometimes rains and it sometimes doesn't—towns, like weeds, spring up when it rains, dry up when it stops. But in a dry climate the husk of the plant remains. The stranger might find, as if preserved in amber, something of the green life that once lived there, and the ghosts of men who have gone on to a better place. The withered towns are empty, but not uninhabited. Faces sometimes peer out from the broken windows, or whisper from the sagging balconies, as if this place—now that it is dead—had come to life. As if empty it is forever occupied. (3)

This region thus becomes a land of several meanings that shift according to time, place, and perspective, like a mirage, or the creeping dunes in the Nebraska Sandhills. As Diane Quantic observes, "everything in this landscape is on the move: the very soil itself blows away, just as men and women blow in and out" (16). Yet even though the ghosts of the dead frontier past persist, other uncanny presences also remain, and some of them are life-enhancing forces

capable of sustaining and opening the human imagination, while others are life-depleting ones that close it off.

Connected to these polarizing natural forces are the structures and artifacts that signal human habitation upon the open, grassy expanses. *The Home Place* and *The Inhabitants* contain Morris's photographs of some of these structures, and these books record the ways in which humans interact constructively and destructively with the nonhuman world. The worn, faded buildings stand like tombstones marking the entrance and subsequent retreat of humanity from the open landscape and suggest the divided internal state caused by lost hopes and failed dreams. Everywhere the power of nature is indelibly etched onto the patina of the abandoned farm houses, buildings, churches, granaries, and storefronts, suggesting the ultimate triumph of nonhuman, primal forces of geological time, including earth, wind, fire, and—where it can be found—even water. But among the artifacts that remain, the hand of the human indweller is found as well, and Morris occasionally peeks inside the external shapes and forms to glimpse the life within. In *The Home Place*, the quiet corners and sheltered nooks of Uncle Harry and Aunt Clara's farm are reverently reflected in the shots of parlors, bedrooms, outdoor privies, wood burning ranges, and straight-backed chairs.

On the whole, the sensations that Morris conveys about the plains landscape through photographs and words are ambivalent ones that serve to re-examine and question pastoral and wilderness conventions. In addition, he uses his ambivalent response to the landscape to recast traditional definitions of the "dwelling" trope inherited variously from classical texts ranging from Virgil's *Georgics* all the way to the conservative agrarian rhetoric of Thomas Jefferson. For both Virgil and Jefferson, however, the goal of rural land use was to promote good husbandry, establish citizen farmers as the bedrock of the republic, and, in Jefferson's case, to "extol the virtues of industry, thrift, and measured self-interest" (Garrard 110). For Morris, on the other hand, existence on the Great Plains is marked more profoundly by the element of transiency than by indicators of long-term duties and responsibilities of humans in an agrarian landscape of memory, ancestry, ritual, life, and death, such as one might find in the works of other American writers like Faulkner or Morris's fellow Nebraskans, Mari Sandoz and Willa Cather.

Although many of the impressions Morris conveys about Nebraska and its environs deal with transiency, in *The Home Place*

the tone is respectful and meditative, as indicated in this passage describing Ed's place, a vacant farmhouse that is located near Uncle Harry's farm, which Clyde and Peggy Muncy think about renting during a visit to Nebraska:

> There's something in the rooms, in the air, that raising the windows won't let out . . . . There's a pattern on the walls, where the calendar's hung, and the tipped square of a missing picture is a lidded eye on something private, something better not seen. There's a path worn into the carpet, between the bed and the door . . . . The pattern doesn't come with the house, nor the blueprints with the rug. The figure in the carpet is what you have when people have lived there, died there, and when evicted, refused to leave the house. (132)

The mystical figure in the carpet is the lasting imprint left of the fleeting interaction between humans and the structures they inhabit, and the invisible force suggested here is ascribed to a sort of "holiness" closely aligned with Midwestern Protestant values of the kind to which Uncle Harry and Aunt Clara adhere. These "holy" values are identified as "abstinence, frugality, and independence—the home grown, made-on-the-farm trinity" (*The Home Place* 143).

Conversely, *The World in the Attic* posits a disturbing counter to the reverent meditations that frequent *The Home Place*. Once again, the Great Plains setting is the same, although this time the focus has shifted from a simple farm near Norfolk, Nebraska, to a small town named Junction, Kansas, where two eccentric widows, Aunt Angie and Miss Caddie, live in a sprawling seventeen-room mansion. The ladies cannot get along, refuse to communicate with one another, and, after the death of Caddie's husband, Clinton, barricade themselves in different parts of the house, where they remain until Caddie's death. Symbolically, this mansion operates as a counter to the modest, functional farm home of Aunt Clara and Uncle Harry and is also a manifestation of the psychic division figured in Morris's photographs and fiction. In diametric opposition to the ordered sanctity of the home place stands the profane, dysfunctional superfluity of the Hibbard mansion. And caught in the middle—literally and figuratively at the "Junction" of East and West—are the Muncys, outsiders who return to the Great Plains seeking refuge from a housing shortage in the crowded, overpopulated post-World War II environs of New York.

What the Muncys discover is not what they expect, however, for the airy, pastoral dream of home town safety and nostalgia that Clyde har-

bors in his heart from his Nebraska childhood is exchanged for the present nightmarish vulgarity of nauseating reality. As he learns, in little towns like Junction, as in large cities like New York, life is a mixed bag. Morris writes, "Everything is here in the hot afternoon, there in the room and the open windows, everything is there, in abundance to make life possible. But very little to make it tolerable. Any one of these things, at a time, is nostalgia—but taken together, in a single lump, it is hometown nausea" (*The World in the Attic* 26). Home place virtues like abstinence require self-control and restraint but can also dehumanize and disconnect. Frugality may be good for managing farms and farmland, but it can also encourage selfishness. Independence may lead to self-reliance but can also create crippling isolation.

In addition to establishing metaphorical associations for the influence of natural processes of the nonhuman environment upon the human imagination, as well as employing dialectical tropes for literary constructs such as pastoral, wilderness, and dwelling, Morris's early fiction about the plains also contains a pronounced apocalyptical strain, as noted earlier in Morris's description of Junction. In fact, that strain is so profound that it led critic Leslie Fiedler to remark that in Morris's initial works through *The Field of Vision*, he tried "to convince his readers that Nebraska is the absurd hell we all inhabit" (494). For Morris, as for other writers who employ it, apocalypse is a genre "born out of crisis, designed to stiffen the resolve of an embattled community by dangling in front of it the sudden and permanent release from its captivity" (Thompson 13-14). As an ecocritical trope, however, it is always "proleptic," inextricably linked to an imagined future filled with ominous signs of destruction and concerned with the dialectic of good and evil (Garrard 86).

According to Buell, apocalypse is "the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (285). Morris's use of the trope, however, is nothing like what one might find in the overt political appeals against insensitive bureaucrats and industrial polluters set forth in works like Carson's *Silent Spring*, or perhaps Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Instead, Morris prefers a more muted, aesthetic approach. Like F. Scott Fitzgerald before him, he is more preoccupied with the American dream and haunted by the stark realization that the past is dead, the present may not have a future, and that "The Good" might not prevail (*The Territory Ahead* 163). As previously discussed, one

of the points that Morris makes in *The Works of Love* and *The World in the Attic*, is that values associated with Manifest Destiny and material progress are reversed in the modern world and that the trajectory of American history has turned upon itself. As a result, the hope-filled future that was once aligned with the taming of the western wilderness has now been transplanted by a post settlement migration to the East, a phenomenon that ushers in a new set of environmental threats, challenges, and questions.

For those who remain behind, like Scanlon does in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, extinction is inevitable. The century turns but he does not, and he remains trapped forever—like the flies on the flypaper in the Lone Tree Hotel—facing the blankness of the western horizon, peering through the flawed lens of his imagination, and peopling the empty landscape with the ghosts of his almost forgotten past. But for those forced to press onward, who seek to evolve and mature, like Will Jennings Brady, the wilderness past represents a debilitating force that must be overcome. Yet as Brady takes his lonely journey eastward and attempts to make his escape, he exchanges that wilderness for something even more ominous—a present-day wasteland. During his journey from rural Nebraska to Omaha, Los Angeles, and finally Chicago, Brady leads a fumbling campaign against isolation in which he repeatedly fails as a chicken rancher, egg dealer, lover of women, and father.

But what is it that causes him to fail? At one point, Morris describes Brady as engulfed in an imagined form of pollution, a figurative vapor or poison that "made people yellow in color, gave them flabby bodies, and made their minds inert. As if they were poisoned, all of them, by the air they breathed" (*Works of Love* 136). Although this ethereal vapor is difficult to pinpoint, it is not literally smog or some other toxic chemical spawned of industrial excess. Instead it is a nameless fear that plagues postfrontier America, an alienating evil that haunts those who live Thoreau's so-called lives of quiet desperation. This is the fear that causes men like Brady to dread the future, to seek the comfort of children in lonely playgrounds, and to come home from work at night, alone, to undress in the dark. The D.H. Lawrence epigraph to the novel reads "We cannot bear connection. That is our malady." Caught between the "godforsaken and empty" wilderness of his dead past and a new urban wasteland characterized by empty materialism, unfulfilled longing, and crippling loneliness, by the end Brady shrinks to a seeming shadow of a man who inhab-

its a dark tower of his own construction (*Works of Love* 212). As an old man, Brady works alone at night, and in exchange for the open landscapes of his youth, he now has the hellish inscape of an elevated room overlooking the sprawling Chicago freight yards, upon which he fixes his silent gaze downward toward the sluggish inland waterways that feed into Lake Michigan. At times he feels as if he were the "last man in the world," that "when the drawbridge went up he was on an island, cut off from the shore" (*Works of Love* 239).

For men like Brady, who are severed from the past and disconnected from the present, the future is bleak. Like Scanlon, he too is doomed to extinction by a process of natural selection that is accelerated by his stubborn refusal to reject the delusions of material success that feed his limited imagination. In the end, Brady commits suicide in the gray waters of a Chicago sewage canal, facing the freight yards and the city traffic, where he stumbles after being blinded by the luminous glow of an ominous "orgiastic future" every bit as evasive as anything Fitzgerald could have imagined (*The Great Gatsby* 189). In *The Works of Love*, however, that future is not the one signaled by the green light at the end of Daisy's dock nor by the green lights of the eastbound trains of Brady's Nebraska past, but by the spurious, artificial burn of a cheap "NU-VITA" sun lamp he buys to make himself look younger (256).[2]

Indeed, the sights, smells, and sensations evoked at the conclusion of *The Works of Love* point toward a day of reckoning:

> The water in the canal looked like pig iron poured out to cool . . . . Beyond this, as if a fire was raging, there was a bright glow over the street, and from these flames there arose, along with the din, a penetrating smell . . . . All of the juices of the city were there on the fire, and brought to a boil. All the damp air of the chill rooms that were empty, the warm soiled air of the rooms that were lived in, blown to him, so it seemed, by the bellows of hell. An acrid stench, an odor so bad that it corroded metal, and shortened the life of every thing that breathed it in. But the old man on the landing inhaled it deeply, like the breath of life. He leaned there on the railing, his eyes closed, but on his face the look of a man with a vision—a holy man . . . as he was feeding the birds. (*Works of Love* 267-68)

Critics have long been perplexed about how to read Brady's actions here. Are they the consequence of his excessive passivity or a projection of some kind of mystical fulfillment? Some, including Roy Bird and G.B. Crump, find Brady's actions enigmatic and attribute it

to Morris's inability to render artistically the puzzling aspects of Brady's personality (Bird 77; Crump 63). Others, including Booth and Wydeven, argue on the other hand that Morris's ambiguity is deliberate and that Morris's counterpoint narrative technique allows him to empathize both with Brady's passivity and his desires for transcendence (Booth, *Conversations* 56; Wydeven 85).[3] Yet whether one interprets Brady's death as an act of redemption or damnation, perhaps the more important point from an environmental perspective is that the overarching evil symbolized here is clearly a psychological toxin, human isolation, which in this case is created and moved along by unnatural, noxious byproducts of the material world. In later novels, Morris would continue to explore the threat of a destructive future prefigured by ominous landscapes such as those set forth in *The World in the Attic* and *The Works of Love*. But in *Ceremony in Lone Tree*, he shifts the locus of evil from the city back to the country, where he treats new apocalyptic threats such as the 1958 murderous rampage of Charles Starkweather that left eleven dead in Nebraska, as well as the foreboding Cold War presence of the atomic bomb and the corresponding threat of human annihilation.

Ultimately, the role the Great Plains environment plays in Wright Morris's fiction is to provide, as he says in *Earthly Delights, Unearthly Adornments,* a "landscape of emptiness" to which he can unite his "inscape of emotion" (176). What interests him, as David Madden concludes, is "the impression left on the imagination—the internal rather than the external drama" (29). Accordingly, his views of the natural world are decidedly more human-centered and impressionistic than ecocentric and scientific. Unlike Cather, who came to Nebraska just in time to see the last vestiges of the frontier disappear, or Mari Sandoz, who was born, raised, and spent most of her life there, Morris left at age nine and never lived in one location long enough to get the sense of an established dwelling or home (*Earthly Delights* 67). As a result, any abiding romantic, pastoral sentiment that may have been nurtured there was tempered by a transient childhood and the fact that his mother died just days after he was born, a tragic event that forced his father to raise him alone, first in Central City, then Omaha, and finally Chicago (*Will's Boy*). Perhaps because of this, place and dwelling are for Morris a shifting metaphorical construct, and his landscapes—be they western wilderness or urban wasteland—are based more on projections of his ambivalent imagination than literal historical or scientific facts. As G.B. Crump

observes, many of Morris's conceptions about humans and their relation to the universe were suggested to him by close friend Loren Eiseley, another Nebraskan who saw the imagination as the most profound expression of nature's powers of expansion and who saw humans as the only creatures capable of dreaming their way "out of the eternal present of the animal world into a knowledge of past and future" (*The Novels of Wright Morris* 15; *The Immense Journey* 120).[4] As Eiseley put it, all men see differently, but the writer can only report from his "own wilderness. The important thing is that each man possess such a wilderness and that he consider what marvels are to be observed there" (*The Immense Journey* 13). Morris would surely agree.

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NOTES

1. Booth argues that Morris's fiction includes a highly sophisticated dialectic of the "phony" and the "real," or the time-bound everyday world of "reality" and the "timeless" world of Platonic reality. According to Booth, "the real world, gruesome as it is, is not as real as it looks. To endure it, indeed to live in it at all, a man must . . . find a more genuine reality by 'getting out of this world'" (377).
2. In "The Origin of a Species," Morris hints at how environmental factors shaped his dualistic imaginative projections of Scanlon and Brady, "where the rivers run sand, we can look for the origin of a species. One like Tom Scanlon; one like Will Brady; and one like Author Morris" (60). Morris adds that Scanlon and Brady arose from the same creative impulse, "but then Brady . . . heads east, down the long road that leads to Chicago. Indian Bow and the view to the west are left to such a character as Scanlon. It is on this ever-receding horizon that his eyes are fixed. If Brady seems to point toward an intolerable future, Scanlon's gaze is fixed on the mythic past" (59).
3. See Wydeven for a more detailed discussion of perceived ambiguity in *Works of Love* (*Wright Morris Revisited* 84-92).
4. According to Gale Christianson, Morris met Eiseley in 1945 when they shared a duplex in Haverford, Pennsylvania. At the time, Eiseley was teaching at Penn and Morris was just beginning his career as a photographer and writer. The two of them often read sections of their works aloud to one another and spent many evenings together on the front porch, visiting with their wives, Mary Ellen Morris and Mabel Eiseley. Eiseley's frequent bouts of melancholy led Morris to nickname him, "Schmerzie," short for Weltschmerz or "world pain" (*Fox at the Wood's Edge* 229).

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HEMINGWAY'S EARLY STORIES AND SKETCHES

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When Ernest Hemingway returned home from the Italian front after World War I, having been badly wounded and still suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, he resumed his writing career. Though he had worked for the *Kansas City Star* before leaving for Europe and though he would return to journalism from time to time, he had larger ambitions. From 1919 to 1921, he wrote a number of stories and sketches that show him trying out techniques and using motifs that he would later use in his important fiction. In "Crossroads," for example, his sketch of the characters and of some of the action reminds us of "Up in Michigan," and "Billy Gilbert" provides us with an early version of what came to be called the Hemingway Hero. Other stories like "The Current" reveal familiar Hemingway elements like the protagonist's fascination with a woman's hair and his desire to turn off his anxieties. In "Jock leaned out from the chaise lounge . . . ," much of the story is told through dialogue—a frequent Hemingway strategy—and in "Red Smith lay on a cot . . . ," we get perhaps Hemingway's first use of his own wounding in what happens to the titular character.

Not much, however, has been written about these early works, many of them unpublished, though Paul Smith, whose book on the short stories has become the first work scholars turn to for an analysis of the short fiction, has surveyed this material ("Apprentice Fiction"). Mimi Goldstein's illuminating essay on "The Mercenaries" is also important in showing how that story foreshadows later Hemingway elements, and George Monteiro's article tracing the connections between Hemingway and Housman is certainly of interest. But nothing else exists. Perhaps, of course, this early work does not demand extensive critical analysis. Still, as noted above, this material shows the young Hemingway struggling to become the writer we know today as he experiments with motifs and

techniques that will appear in more sophisticated form in his later, more famous work.

Possibly the most interesting of these stories is "Cross-Roads: An Anthology," written in 1919 (Smith 585) but not published until 1985 in Griffin's *Along with Youth*. Inspired by E. W. Howe's *The Anthology of Another Town,* a series of sketches of small-town people that appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* and was later published in book form (Reynolds, *Young* 96), Hemingway's story consists of five vignettes based on local Horton Bay residents (93-94). Two of the vignettes are of special importance for what they portend for Hemingway's later work. No one, for example, can read "Pauline Snow," the first in the series, without thinking of "Up in Michigan," an early story first published in 1923 that contains a scene of what today we call date rape. The sketch opens promisingly, pointing to Pauline's beauty and comparing her to a flower emerging from a pile of dung (File 347 1). Even though her parents die and she goes to live with the Blodgetts, a local family, everything seems fine until the town ne'er-do-well, Art Simons, who apparently likes to tell vulgar or risqué jokes and who is not welcome in most places, begins to visit because Blodgett finds Art's jokes hilarious. Although Pauline is initially frightened of Art because of his fingers, which are solid and stubby, and because of the way in which he touches her (File 347 1), Blodgett essentially bullies her into taking walks with Art after supper.

On one evening when the sunset illuminates the hills around Charlevoix, Pauline asks Art if he does not think the scene is wonderful. His answer suggests why he is there; he tells her that they didn't come to discuss the beauty of the sky (2). Although the date rape scene that occurs in "Up in Michigan" is missing, there is evidently enough sexuality suggested in their relationship that the neighbors begin to complain, and Pauline is sent off to the correction school in another town. Art, too, is absent for some time but then returns and marries a girl from another one of the local families (2). The pathos here is touching: we are sad for what happens to Pauline.

Paul Smith draws the connections between this vignette and Hemingway's now famous story:

> Pauline has Liz Coates's innocence; her parents are dead, Liz's are never mentioned; Art Simons has some of Jim Gilmore's physical characteristics, especially his hands; the sexual act implied in the sketch is realized in the story; and Pauline's ostracism was a possi-

> ble consequence [of the relationship—she might be pregnant—that appears] in a rejected conclusion of the early version of "Up in Michigan." (586-87)

The final sketch in "Cross-Roads," entitled "Billy Gilbert," also foreshadows an essential Hemingway element: in this case Billy seems to be an early Hemingway hero. An Ojibway, married to the most attractive Native American in the northern part of Michigan and the father of two plump children (File 347 5), Billy (and his wife) had attended Mount Pleasant school—perhaps Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School—and now farmed the land near Susan Lake. The narrator tells us that Billy did a good job as a farmer. But, for some reason, in 1915 he enlists in the Black Watch and goes off to fight in World War I. When he returns some years later, having been wounded and highly decorated, he finds himself the butt of jokes about his kilt: he hadn't anticipated such unpleasantness when he came home (5). Worse still, he finds his house locked up and his farm unattended. When he asks a neighbor about his wife, he learns that she has sold the farm, run off with someone else, and lives farther south in the state. Yet Billy remains stoical in the face of such defeats, marching off purposefully (6). Although his face is impassive, he looks off into the distance and whistles "It's a long way to Tipperary" as he walks. This final image we have of him reminds us of that long line of Hemingway heroes, beginning with Nick Adams and running through Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry, Robert Jordan, and all the rest who meet their fate with stoical resolve, "destroyed but not defeated" (OMS 103).

Like "Cross-Roads," "The Current: A Story," written in 1921 (Smith 579), was also first published in Griffin's biography. Essentially a love story, it tells of the handsome Stuyvesant Byng's pursuit and ultimate winning of Dorothy Hadley, a woman whom he has known since their youth. But as Dorothy points out to him when she initially rejects his marriage proposal, he is forever changing and therefore not a good prospect for a husband (File 352 4). Stuy responds that his love for her has been the central fixture in his life (5). As occurs on a river, although the wind whips up the waves on the surface, making it appear that the water is going in the opposite direction, the current runs along on its original path below. Other girls, he tells her, have been the white caps; his love for her has been the steady current. Moved by his appeal—and his attractiveness—Dorothy gives

him a chance: if he will pick something difficult to achieve and reach his goal, he can come back and ask her again. Although he hates everything about boxing, especially the pain he will have to endure (7), he takes the sport up again and ultimately wins the middle-weight championship, defeating the apish McGibbons in front of Dorothy and her father and a howling crowd. At the end, although Stuy has been bloodied and marred, Dorothy proclaims her love for him, telling him that he is not fickle after all (15). Love conquers all.

Even with its romantic ending and its occasional heavy-handedness and even though Paul Smith finds it "sentimental and dubious" (579), the story actually captures the reader along the way, especially in the fight scene at the end, which is engaging, even compelling. Of greater significance, however, the piece also contains some characteristic Hemingway elements. We have here an early example of the rejection of thinking that the Hemingway hero so often employs to avoid pain: "Turn off the thinking now," Robert Jordan reminds himself at one point; "You're a bridge blower now" (*FWBT* 17). As Stuy prepares to visit Dorothy to propose, even though he has a hunch that she will reject him, he uses smoking to avoid thinking (File 352 2). In the story, too, we find the Hemingway protagonist's fascination with women's hair, which Carl Eby has so insightfully taught us how to read. In describing Dorothy, the narrator observes that her most striking aspect is her hair, whose color he compares to a polished copper kettle (2). As Stuy sits on the arm of Dorothy's chair, he looks admiringly at her wonderful hair (3).

Such a passage reminds us of two scenes in *A Farewell to Arms*. The first is that long lyrical moment when Frederic takes Catherine's hair down, removing the hairpins one by one so that ultimately her hair encloses the lovers; " it was," he tells us, "the feeling of inside a tent or behind a falls" (114). The second comes near the end when Frederic watches Catherine having her hair done and becomes aroused: "It was exciting to watch and Catherine smiled and talked to me and my voice was a little thick from being excited" (292). We think, too, of Jake Barnes's response to Brett's entrance at the *bal musette*—"Brett was damned good looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's" (*SAR* 29-30)—or of Robert Jordan's desire to rub his hand over Maria's close-cropped hair (*FWBT* 67). In "The Current" we also have the Hemingway technique of using a titular metaphor to point readers toward meaning. Here he is not nearly so sophisticated in han-

dling this technique as he is, for example, in "Hills Like White Elephants," but we get to see the young writer experimenting with new ways to enrich his work.

Other early stories reflect techniques that Hemingway will employ later on. In, for example, "He had known that he wouldn't get up anymore . . ." (File 445), one of several untitled and unpublished works, we see him working in familiar ways. The story, probably written in the summer of 1921 (Smith 583, note 21), tells of a World War I British officer, Orpen, killing German troops trying to cross a bridge but ultimately being severely wounded himself by the other side's artillery. As he lies on the operating table, having shrapnel removed from his chest, he has an hallucination that he has died a hero and been taken to the Hall of Heroes in Valhalla, where great warriors from the past continually fight each other for fun because no one is killed. Lord Nelson is there and George Washington and Frederick the Great and a long line of others including Scipio, Hannibal, Drake, Napoleon, Grant, and Custer. Orpen himself runs Washington through the groin, an act that brings praise from Washington, and then the Father of Our Country runs his sword through Orpen's chest (File 445 12). It turns out, however, that these great heroes are really bored with fighting—and feign their joy in it—taking to the field only when a new warrior arrives. The rest of the time they pursue their own pleasures; Orpen hopes to continue writing a symphony he had started before the war.

The story seems principally to be an undercutting of the heroic world view. After his skirmish with Washington, Orpen thinks to himself how much he detests the fighting and how sorry he is that he has become a hero (12). His thoughts remind us of Frederic Henry's gradual disillusionment with the war in *A Farewell to Arms* and of the abstract words passage in which such words as "glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates" (184-85). As Orpen's thoughts to himself suggest as well, there is too much telling and not enough showing here, especially in the Valhalla part of the story, just as there is in various draft endings of *Farewell*.[1] Though some of them contain a few good lines not present in the final version—"It [the world] never stops. It only stops for you" (Hemingway Library Ed. 313)—many are essentially nineteenth-century endings in which the writer tells us what has happened to all the characters. Still another technique that

Hemingway uses in this story that he will return to later occurs in the second half when Orpen is in Valhalla. This is a fairly long and dull section in which Hemingway shows off his knowledge of historic military figures in much the same way he uses name-dropping about World War II generals in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. In neither case is he very successful.

In the untitled and unpublished story discussed earlier, "Jock leaned out from the chaise lounge . . ." (File 531), Hemingway develops the piece largely through dialogue as he will do later so effectively in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and so brilliantly in "Hills Like White Elephants." Taking place in a hospital, this two-page story consists of a discussion between the nineteen-year-old Jock, who is recovering from a wound and who begins the interchange by throwing a copy of Booth Tarkington's novel *Seventeen* across the verandah in disgust at its romantic view of life, and an unnamed narrator, who notes the difference between Tarkington's seventeen-year-old character and Jock, two of their sixteen-year-old soldier friends, and himself. Because of all he has seen in the war, the narrator claims that he—and, by implication, they—have aged significantly (1). When the narrator asks Jock how old the Italians think he is and Jock tells him twenty-three, the narrator is reminded of their friend Brackell, who goes from post to post telling his new unit that he will be twenty-one the next day. The officers always hold a birthday party for him at which he gets some rather nice gifts—an automatic pistol at one post (1) and a cape at another (2). Eventually, he is discovered and is now hiding out in the hospital, trying to be transferred to another unit (2). Hardly the romantic hero, he is described as unattractive, even ugly (2). Though the romanticism that Hemingway satirizes in this story is perhaps not quite the same as that which he pillories in Robert Cohn's fascination with Hudson's *The Purple Land*, the basic naiveté he punctures is the same, foreshadowing what he will do in the later work and elsewhere.

Because of how Hemingway ended his life, "Nick lay in bed in the hospital . . ." (File 604) is of special relevance. Perhaps the first but certainly one of the earliest to suggest the main character's suicidal impulses, this untitled, four-page holograph, written after the end of hostilities in November 1918 (Smith 580), portrays Nick Grainger from Petoskey, Michigan, recovering from his wounds in Italy and talking to a nurse from Fort Wayne, Indiana, who is attending him, while outside a crowd is noisily celebrating the Armistice.

Evidently, she has just treated his wounds with mercury bichloride, a highly poisonous substance that was once a cure for syphilis but is now used only as a disinfectant (*Dorland's*). Because of their slightly flirtatious chatter about what form the festivities will take in the US that night, she forgets and leaves the medicine behind. Once she is gone, Nick hides the bottle under the sheets (2). When the nurse returns shortly and asks if another nurse has taken the bottle, Nick lies, telling her that that must be what has happened. After she leaves again, Nick opens two leather boxes on his nightstand, one holding a silver medal and the other a bronze cross.[2] Along with them is a citation detailing the heroism that won him the *Medalgia D'Argento al Valore Militare*: though he was wounded twice by machine gun fire, he continued to lead his troops until a trench mortar hit his legs (3). Smiling to himself, he thinks sardonically that the round silver medal is for his legs and that the bronze cross is for his left arm. Echoing Alan Seeger's famous poem, he believes that he had a rendezvous with death but that God did not keep his part of the bargain (4). Given his wounds and the mood he is in, why else but the desire to end it all would he hide the bichloride? As Paul Smith notes, "A romantic and unfulfilled death-wish pervades these early manuscripts" (581), and readers of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* are reminded of Robert Jordan's debate with himself about the ethics of suicide.

Two other stories—"The Mercenaries" and "The Visiting Team"—introduce the first use of elements that Hemingway will return to later. In "The Mercenaries," written in 1919 (Smith 578) and ultimately published in 1985 in Griffin, Hemingway gives the narrator a familiar name—Rinaldi Rinaldo (but probably Rinaldo Rinaldi)[3]—that will appear in one form or another in *In Our Time* and, of course, in *A Farewell to Arms*. Mimi Goldstein has discussed the issues surrounding this name, including the differences in spelling that occur in the manuscript (File 573) and in Griffin. But here Rinaldi is the narrator of the story about two soldiers of fortune—one a cultured Frenchman, Lieutenant Denis Ricaud, and the other a gruff former sergeant in the American army, Perry Graves, both of whom have just signed on with Peru as mercenaries to fight against Chile. The story Graves tells and Rinaldi reports to us involves a duel with pistols between the famous Italian ace Il Lupo and Graves, who has just spent the night with the aviator's wife. The American becomes the hero of his own tale, forcing Il Lupo to back down. Although Hemingway thought at the time that the story was

"really good" (*Letters* 213) and although Griffin calls "The Mercenaries" the best of the early stories, he also notes that [i]t was rejected by *Redbook* and *The Saturday Evening Post* and was never submitted for publication again" (104).

In "The Visiting Team," written in the winter of 1919-1920 (Smith 581), Hemingway draws on his own wounding for the first time and foreshadows the scene in *A Farewell to Arms* in which Frederic is hit. As Red Smith and a number of his fellow ambulance drivers joke and grouse at their post in the Dolomites near Schio, they learn that new recruits, mostly college boys from Harvard, are coming that evening to join their section. Intending to frighten them, Red and the others plan a fraternity-like prank in which the Austrians (the Visiting Team) will supposedly launch a gas attack. The trick works—all the replacements jump into the river up to their noses because they have read that gas cannot get through water—but as the veteran drivers go to bed, leaving the recruits to wander back eventually, there is a real artillery barrage. Red and the others dress and run to their ambulances. With Red in the lead and his friend Sam, another driver, in another car, they are driving quickly down the Posina road when they are hit.

The description of Red's wounding is much briefer than but quite similar to that of Frederic's. Here, after a bright flash and a deafening noise, Red initially floats off in a red haze but eventually returns, feeling hot and tacky and without energy (File 670b 11). After the explosion, Sam seems, from the driver's seat, to be looking at him in the back of an ambulance, and Sam's voice seems to come from far away. Red tries to move his arms but cannot, and his right leg seems constricted (12). When they get back to their post, we learn that Red is dying from his wounds. As he lies on the operating table in pain from what the doctor is doing to him and slipping in and out of consciousness (13), he jokes with his fellow driver Tommy but is soon dead (14). In *Farewell,* the scene is more extensive (54-61), but some of the same elements are present. There is, for example, "a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind" (54). Like Red, Frederic feels himself floating—"I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind." He, too, tries to move but cannot (54), and he, too, feels "warm and wet," or at least his legs do (55). As the doctor attends to him, the surgeon does things "that hurt sharply" (59). Frederic does not die,

of course—ultimately, he feels himself "slide back" into his body (54)—and there is no joking on the operating table (59-60). But he has a searing skull fracture (60) as well as serious wounds, and the trip in the ambulance to the field hospital is both painful and nightmarish with the man on the stretcher above Frederic dripping blood all over him as the soldier hemorrhages (61). Clearly, the scene in the story foreshadows the one in the famous novel.

Perhaps that is the point of these early stories and sketches: Hemingway gets a chance to try out techniques that he will later master and use powerfully in both his short fiction and in his novels. At this point in his career, he is not yet ready to become a major writer. Too much more work and too much more living need yet to be done. But the rudiments are there, and the desire too. This material from 1919 to 1921 is by any account journeyman work, and perhaps like the fiction in that lost suitcase,[4] it might be better on some level if it had disappeared. Nonetheless, there are glimmerings here of the great artist that Hemingway will become, and we are fortunate to have those efforts for that reason. It may be that in our day of word processing our chance to watch a writer grow will be missing; we will not be able to pore over the various drafts of the fiction of many contemporary authors to see how they came to be the seers of our time. Fortunately, the early work of Ernest Hemingway is available for us to puzzle over as we watch the young writer turn into the Nobel Laureate.

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NOTES

[1]For examples of and perceptive comments about the various drafts, see Oldsey, "Sense" and *Craft,* especially 101-10; Reynolds, *First War* 46-51; The Hemingway Library Edition of *A Farewell to Arms* 303-22; and Baker 75.

[2]These are the same medals that Hemingway received: the *Medalgia d'Argento al Valore Militare* and the *Croce al Merito di Guerra*. See *Letters* 125 n.2, 150, 164 n.2, 198.

[3]The context in which Rinaldi's name is given suggets that the narrator's name is Rinaldo Rinaldi, not Rinaldi Rinaldo. Perry Graves introduces himself as "Graves, Perry Graves," to which the narrator replies, "Rinaldi Rinaldo" (File 573 4). Although there is no comma separating the two parts of Rinaldi's name, it would seem natural for the narrator to follow Graves's pattern. In addition, Graves frequently refers, in a joking and ham-fisted way, to the narrator as "Risolvo" (4). It seems likely that he would make a play on the narrator's first rather than last name in such jocularity. Consultation

with a colleague in the Languages and Cultures Department whose first language is Italian and a quick Google search of Rinaldi's name also support the argument that "Rinaldo" is a first name and "Rinaldi," a second. My colleague notes that "Rinaldo" is usually a given name, wheras "Rinaldi" is typically a surname. The Google search turned up the interesting fact that Rinaldo Rinaldi (1793-1873) was a nineteenth-century Italian sculptor. Hemingway might have become familiar with his work during Ernest's time in Italy in the First World War.

[4]Preparing in December 1922 to meet her husband in Switzerland, where he was covering the Lausanne Peace Conference for the Toronto *Star,* Hadley, Hemingway's first wife, packed a suitcase in Paris with all of his manuscripts, including carbon copies. Unfortunately, the suitcase was stolen either in the Gare de Lyon or on the train before it left. Purportedly, Hemingway was devastated, and the loss became part of Hemingway lore. See Reynolds, *Paris Years,* 3-5, 86, 89-91, 94-95; Mellow, 209, 228, and *A Moveable Feast*, 73-74.

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KINGSBLOOD ROYAL'S GRAND REPUBLIC: SUNDOWN TOWN?

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They're selling postcards of the hanging
They're painting the passports brown
The beauty parlor is filled with sailors
The circus is in town.

—Bob Dylan, "Desolation Row"

There are many valid, historical, literary, and social reasons to continue examining Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal* today both in and out of classroom settings, some of which will be made clear in the course of this essay. But first, back to the epigraph. When Bob Dylan wrote "Desolation Row" for his 1965 album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, he began with a thinly veiled reference to a historical atrocity that had occurred in 1920 in Duluth, Minnesota: the lynching of three male African American circus workers accused of rape—a lynching memorialized in postcards sold during the event.[1] At the time Dylan wrote the song, the incident was certainly remembered by some people in Duluth, but it was not until 1979, when Michael Fedo wrote his history of the lynching, that anyone attempted to bring the story to a wider audience. Even by that time, the book was met with what Fedo called "overwhelming indifference" and sold only 3,000 copies (Julin and Hemphill). As Fedo points out, the subject "evokes intense feelings among many Duluthians," but even so, that intense emotion more often resulted in suppressing the story or ignoring it than in discussing it, at least until the late 1990s when talk began of a memorial (later built in 2003) and 2000 when Fedo's book was rereleased under a new title and became more widely acknowledged (Fedo xii-xiii, Julin and Hemphill). Fedo himself pointed out that the reference librarians at both the Duluth Public Library and the

Minnesota Historical Society "claimed never to have heard of the lynchings" and that "the lynchings in the mind of most Minnesotans had never happened" when he began his research on it in the 1970s ("Michael Fedo"). When he further researched the topic at the St. Louis County Historical Society, he discovered that while they had kept extensive newspaper clippings and other files on the lynchings for a time after the event, "at some point in the late 1930s, the then director of the society ordered those files removed. Too many students were writing classroom reports on the topic that she thought was unseemly, arguing that college and high school pupils should choose more edifying subjects for research" ("Michael Fedo"). He even points out that the clerk of courts for the county lied to students and journalists for years afterward, saying that the transcripts of the trial of the lynchers had been burned and were unavailable, when in fact this had never happened, although it was not until the late 1980s that Fedo himself discovered this ("Michael Fedo").

The suppression of the story for so many years is a common example of what often happened and still happens in northern towns and cities with regard to race-related problems that could cast a negative light on the locale. In *Sundown Towns*, sociologist James Loewen deals with the topic of the hundreds of towns across the northern part of the United States that had policies of banning African Americans from their premises after dark. Loewen writes, "Even though sundown towns were everywhere, almost no literature exists on the topic. No book has ever been written about the making of all-white towns in America. Indeed, this story is so unknown as to deserve the term *hidden*. Most Americans have no idea such towns or counties exist, or they think such things happened mainly in the Deep South" (5). Loewen further points out that the authors of commemorative town histories "omit the fact intentionally, knowing that it would reflect badly on their communities if publicized abroad," yet when he conversed with many of the authors of these histories, Loewen claims that they were "often more forthcoming" and that they "knew about the policy but didn't care to disclose it in print" (5). Loewen makes clear, as does Michael Fedo, that there has been a great deal of suppression of past history in the North, particularly when it comes to the ugliest side of race relations.

The above information situates Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal* (1947) within its historical context. Briefly summarized, the novel concerns the story of Neil Kingsblood, a World War II veteran

who discovers he is 1/32 African American, reveals this to the white suburbanites by whom he had previously been admired and employed, and is subsequently driven out of job and home by an angry mob after his revelation. Reviewers had a variety of opinions about the book on its release. Critic Sara J. McCullough (citing Lewis's biographer Mark Schorer) suggests that "the most repeated attacks on *Kingsblood Royal* are (1) that no normal white American, finding a trace of black ancestry, would reveal his discovery; (2) that even if said normal American revealed his black 'taint,' few Northerners (even in the late 1940s) would have reacted with prejudice" (11). Biographer Richard Lingeman adds, "Lewis was widely criticized for making the whites in the novel stereotypes and caricatures—unredeemed racists, foulmouthed, callously cruel, or viciously respectable" and that while complaining "that Lewis's whites were uniformly evil was a valid aesthetic comment," it "was also a form of denial of racial prejudice. It says: Since all whites aren't that evil, Lewis's indictment may be dismissed as overwrought" (505). The accounts of Schorer, McCullough, and Lingeman about the book's reception are often accurate; for example, a review in *The Christian Science Monitor* concluded that "his literary ineptness defeats his laudable purpose" (L.A.S. 14). An anonymous reviewer in *Booklist* remarked, "A novel only in construction, the book is a social thesis with the characters as types contrived to promote Mr. Lewis's theme" (290).

Many other reviews did notice the book's attention to real racial problems in the North, including those in *The Atlantic, The Chicago Sun Book Week, Commonweal, Ebony, Library Journal, New Republic, The New Yorker, The New York Herald Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle,* the *Saturday Review of Literature, Survey Graphic* (two reviews), and *Time,* but many of these either spend too much time criticizing aesthetics or gloss lightly over the racial issues; they offer platitudes about race and lament that some unidentified bad things do happen in the North but don't discuss details of the problem, details that more accurately show what happened across most of America and were apparently forgotten over time. After publication and sales of around 1.5 million copies (over half of which were distributed to Literary Guild members), the book soon went out of print and was mostly ignored in scholarship for many years (Lingeman 506). By 1996, critic Robert L. McLaughlin suggested that "The biggest challenge in teaching *Kingsblood Royal* . . . is get-

ting a hold of enough copies of the book" (3). It seemed that the book had faded, like memories of Northern race-based exclusion, from the minds of the general public. A few scholarly articles written between 1947 and the present have summarized or re-evaluated the book, but while these often focused on racial issues, none pointed out what I believe to be the most valuable aspects of the book for readers today: (1) that the book, through the portrayal of Grand Republic and Neil Kingsblood accurately delineates racial policies and occurrences of the time period which are largely forgotten today, whether intentionally or not, and (2) that the book was very likely an attempt by Lewis to draw attention to those policies and events as he understood them in Duluth, Minnesota. For these reasons alone, the novel and Grand Republic deserve more attention today.

In 1992, Sally Parry published the only article to speak exclusively about Lewis's fictional cities—Gopher Prairie, Zenith, and Grand Republic. She describes Sylvan Park, the area of Grand Republic in which Kingsblood and his family have their home, as "a beautiful planned community in Grand Republic for up-and-coming young, white, middle-class couples. However, when some leading citizens discover that Neil is not the sort of person they thought he was, the town literally becomes a battlefield upon which is fought a battle of racial hatred" (24). As did some other critics, Parry cites Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, in which he points out that the common belief in the 1940s was that anyone having any trace of black blood was classified instantly as black (25).

Parry's citation adds partial justification for the argument that there is realism in the townspeople's reaction to Neil in the book, but the realism of the description of Grand Republic and what happened to Neil Kingsblood can be taken further. In *Sundown Towns*, James Loewen claims that although many people may have forgotten it, "Across America, most suburbs, and in some metropolitan areas almost all of them, excluded African Americans (and often Jews). This pattern of suburban exclusion became so thorough, even in the traditional South, and especially in the older metropolitan areas of the Northeast and Midwest, that Americans today express no surprise when inner cities are mostly black while suburbs are overwhelmingly white" (116). This segregation was accomplished through a variety of methods, legal and illegal, including anything from open violent intimidation to more subtle restrictive covenants that prevented individuals from legally selling their homes to African Americans until

the 1948 Shelley v. Kraemer decision by the Supreme Court made racial covenants illegal. It's anyone's guess as to how many sales were later executed illegally with similar covenants.

In *Kingsblood Royal*, Sylvan Park is without question a sundown suburb. The most blatant indication of this comes early in the novel:

> Mr. William Stopple (and remember that not long ago he was mayor of Grand Republic) privately advises you that Sylvan Park is just as free of Jews, Italians, Negroes, and the exasperatingly poor as it is of noise, mosquitoes, and rectangularity of streets. Publicly, he announces:
>
> WHERE are boyhood's dreams and maiden's fancy, where are old-time romance and the lily-white maid beside the mirroring pool under the shadow of the castle tower flying its gallant gonfalon? YOU can recapture that dream today. Sylvan Park is where gracious living, artistic landscaping, the American Way of Life, and up-to-the-minute conveniences are exemplified in Dream o' Mine Come True, at surprisingly reasonable prices and liberal terms, phone or write, two offices, open 'til 'ten P.M. Wedns. (10)

Grand Republic as a whole also shows the characteristics of a sundown town. Loewen points out that these towns often did not exclude black citizens entirely; in many, there might be a token family, or an exception made for live-in servants (often expressed in local laws) or for refugees of disasters for a brief period of time; however, for the most part, African Americans were extremely limited in where they could travel and reside. With the exception of live-in servants, almost no black people in *Kingsblood Royal* spend any of their evenings outside of the Five Points area of Grand Republic, the center of which Neil refers to as "the nigger quarter, on Mayo Street" (12).

Even when laws were passed preventing this sort of exclusion, communities found ways around them, and Lewis also shows this in the book; when Neil Kingsblood researches his own racial past, he discovers "that in many Northern states, including his own, there is a 'civil rights law' which forbids the exclusion of Negroes and members of the other non-country-club races from hotels, restaurants, theaters, and that this law worked fully as well as had national prohibition" (70). Lewis also writes that in Minnesota, regardless of the law, white hotel guests who "had been contaminated and almost destroyed by the presence of a Negro sleeping two hundred feet away" often complained to "the hotel manager, who assumed that he had to earn

a living and therefore devised a technique of treating the Negroes with nerve-freezing civility and with evasiveness about 'accommodations'" (71). There are many other moments of exclusion listed in the town, and they relate to all institutions: labor, religion, education, government.

Even returning black veterans of World War II in Grand Republic are to be excluded from the white soldiers' welcome home. One of the higher ranking citizens suggests that "We'll cook up a separate homecoming for the zigaboos, on Mayo Street; parade and fireworks and banners . . . We'll tell 'em that we didn't want to have 'em get lost in the white shuffle, so we're honoring 'em special. Those niggers are so dumb they'll believe it" (82). This discrimination extends to employment for returning veterans as well. When Neil suggests to John William Prutt, his banker boss who is not yet aware of Neil's ancestry, that he hire some black men, Prutt responds, "I'm pleased that you take a liberal attitude toward the Negro. I long for the day when they'll get a decent education and be able to take their stand right alongside white laborers—in their own Southland. But they don't belong up here, and the kindest thing to do is to let 'em starve till it penetrates their thick heads that they ought to hustle back South" (87). They are even excluded from religious ceremonies. When Neil asks Dr. Buncer why there are no black members in the church, Buncer replies, "I've told our ushers to explain that while any darky is perfectly welcome to fellowship with us, still we feel that he would be much happier with his own people, down in the Five Points. I imagine the ushers make that point quite clear—as, indeed, they should" (133).

By the end of the novel, the implicit racism of the town becomes far more explicit. A new organization called Sant Tabac, composed of Grand Republic's leading white citizens, gathers with the express purpose of ridding the town of its black citizens. When they are compared to the Ku Klux Klan, they remark, "No, there is to be no violence whatever. In fact, we want to protect the colored people—from their own leaders, who'd like to get them into riots, to please the Kremlin. We won't stand for any lynchings, or even any beatings—not unless the mokes act nasty and rile the cops. Our policy is entirely benevolent and constructive: to get all the niggers that have grabbed off white men's jobs in the North fired, and no new ones hired" (315). Sant Tabac's benevolence is reinforced by the application of restrictive covenants throughout Grand Republic which, as Lewis writes,

"have been the most delightful of devices for tactfully saying to all clean and ambitious Negroes that the better whites preferred them to be dirty, unambitious, and distant" (330). When the Kingsbloods, who by the end have accepted their black heritage, refuse to leave, they find a sign reading "Nigger get out" on their garage and receive "a full dress Ku Klux Klan warning: You better get out of this neighborhood quick don't think we are fooling this is sent to you in the name of the cross of Christ, decent womanhood and American civilization" (338). In the end, Neil and his wife Vestal, after being attacked in their home by a mob of the town's prominent citizens are escorted away by police for "starting all this riot, shooting prominent citizens" (348). The end result of Sant Tabac seems to be achieved when a police officer escorting the Kingsbloods away from their home tells them to keep moving and Vestal (Neil's wife) replies, in the final line of the book, "We're moving" (348). While many reviewers may have found these events improbable, Loewen has shown that they were quite common in the North, and Lewis himself was clearly aware of this, as he shows throughout the novel.

If it can be accepted that Grand Republic is an example of places Loewen refers to as sundown towns, it is also possible to argue that the city is a thinly disguised version of Duluth, Minnesota. Lewis hints at the connection to Duluth in *Cass Timberlane*, his first novel to use Grand Republic as its fictional setting. He writes that it is a city that "in different dialects has been called Grand Rapids and Bangor and Phoenix and Wichita and Hartford and Baton Rouge and Spokane and Rochester and Trenton and Scranton and San Jose and Rutland and Duluth and Dayton and Pittsfield" and goes on to mention twenty-one other locations that it resembles, including the United States as a whole and Ultima Thule [2](67). While this narrows Grand Republic down in some ways, and while the specific mention of Duluth could be seen as important in that it is the only Minnesota city named, in the later part of the book, the Timberlanes actually visit Duluth itself, so more support is needed.

Some support comes from biographers. Mark Schorer relates a moment when Lewis, driving with a friend through Arthyde, Minnesota, cried out, "There's Grand Republic! Look, isn't it beautiful? See that house there—over the hillside! That's where Cass Timberlane lives!" (716). While Arthyde would be too small as a literal setting for Grand Republic, it is only sixty miles away from Duluth, where Lewis wrote most of C*ass Timberlane* and where he

did extensive research for *Kingsblood Royal*, including interviews with prominent local African Americans that strongly resemble Neil Kingsblood's own attempts to (as Schorer writes of Lewis himself) "learn from the source what it is like to be a Negro in a segregated society" (730). Schorer also suggests that the relationship between Cass and Jinny Timberlane is reflective of Lewis's own relationship with Marcella Powers in Duluth and that Lewis wrote "most of his novel in Duluth, in a room on one wall of which he had tacked an enormously detailed map of his imaginary city not so very different from Duluth" (738).

Richard Lingeman is more forthright in his biography. Lingeman states that while looking for a model for Grand Republic during the composition of *Cass Timberlane*, Lewis rejected Minneapolis because he wanted a smaller town with "a significant class structure but no great industrial aristocracy. By January 1944, he had settled on Duluth (population 110,000) as his model" (479). Lingeman also points out that while writing *Cass Timberlane* in Duluth, "Lewis was not so much seeking specific characters to copy as a sense of how people lived in this town, how they talked; he approached the job like an anthropologist studying the mores, customs and mating rituals of a primitive village" (481). Lingeman even proposes that many of the characters in that book were modeled on individuals Lewis had met in Duluth (481-3).

More support comes from Lewis's diary. On 16 June 1944, Lewis wrote to Marcella Powers about the setting for *Cass Timberlane*: "I think you know that the central character of The Novel is a District Judge in a city somewhat like Duluth crossed with Winona with overtones of Minneapolis" (196). In an entry dated 24 June 1944, Lewis writes about the people of Duluth and concludes with the idea that "they are peculiar to America, and in Babbit I just <u>began</u> to paint them" (207). This comment strongly suggests that Duluth and its people were going to be the focus for his next two novels. The diary also contains multiple entries which note the climate, flora, fauna, and architecture of the city as well as more character studies of individuals who seem to have strong connections to characters in both *Cass Timberlane* and *Kingsblood Royal* (179-231).

Scholars and critics have also supported the connection to Duluth. In 1975, Robert Coard, noting that Grand Republic resembled Duluth, wrote, "Here was a different locale for a novelist of race relations: an industrialized city of 90,000 in a state that had a liberal

reputation. If several of the writers already noticed were much better literary craftsmen and had brooded much longer over their material, none was a sounder sociologist than Lewis" (12). In his introduction to Lewis's diary, editor George Killough writes, "But in order to write *Cass Timberlane* and *Kingsblood Royal*, both set in a city north of Minneapolis with a population of 85,000 and an economic base of iron ore, lumber, and wheat, Lewis had to know Duluth" (5). Many others cite Schorer's biography as evidence for the Duluth connection; overall, it's more than reasonable to conclude that Grand Republic is modeled after the Minnesota city.

Once the connection to Duluth is established, it becomes possible to re-evaluate the importance and realism of Lewis's novel. Not only are the setting and the situation far more realistic than some reviewers claimed when the novel was released, but Lewis is also referring to very specific forms of discrimination that almost certainly occurred in Duluth itself and that he must have known of when writing the novel. Lingeman points out that Lewis met with NAACP members while researching his book and that he may have even modeled Neil Kingsblood on NAACP secretary Walter White, who gave Lewis access to historical files, and whom Lewis described as a "voluntary Negro" (495-6, 501). White, like Kingsblood, could easily have chosen to pass as a white man, but he did not, and when he lived in Atlanta, he went through experiences similar to those of Neil (Lingeman 501). This is enough evidence to refute the early reviewers' and critics' claims that no sane man of the time would have admitted black heritage if he had the ability to pass for white. What is more interesting to focus on is the idea that the town would not have responded as dramatically as they did in the first place—that the mob section was somehow satirical, melodramatic, or exaggerated.

As mentioned previously, the Duluth lynchings, while forgotten for most of the second half of the twentieth century, would still have been in the common memory of citizens of Duluth at the time Lewis wrote, and, even if he had been personally unaware of them, he must have seen the information on them after White gave him access to NAACP files. What Lewis portrays in his novel is an accurate description of how far race relations had devolved in Duluth during the time that he was writing, due in part to the aftereffects of the lynchings, but also to Duluth's efforts to get rid of African Americans or strongly curtail the African American community, using methods that Loewen has outlined in his book. Some researchers writing about

Minnesota attempt to put a positive spin on the situation. Earl Spangler noted in 1961 that while blacks in Minneapolis in 1940 lived in highly segregated conditions "complete with ancient, decaying houses, vermin, and despairing people," the situation in Duluth revealed better conditions and less segregation, although, as Spangler also points out, this may have been due to "the smallness of the Negro population, 314 in 1940" (132). In 1981, David Vassar Taylor traced the history of Duluth's black population from the 1890s to 1970, claiming that from the 1890s to the 1930s (a time period Loewen repeatedly refers to as the nadir of race relations[3]), "It is not known to what extent racial discrimination molded the condition of the community's black residents" (85). He does note that the 1920 lynchings "resulted in a decrease of the Black population of the port city" but claims that overall, black population patterns in Duluth were "virtual duplicates of those described for the Twin Cities" (85-6).

The lynchings certainly had an immediate and lasting effect on the black citizens of Duluth, and much of what Lewis describes in his novel can be seen in an excerpt from an interview with an African American soldier, Eddie Nichols, who was in town with family when the lynchings occurred:

> Newspaper come out that night. Six burly negroes rape white woman . . . That meant there was gonna be a lynching. There were six prisoners in jail, but by daybreak, they'd only lynched three, and they were all exhausted. But there were women and children in the mob. The next night after the mob, the white people said they were gonna run all the niggers out of town. I remember I had just come back from the war then, you see, and we decided that we'd just barricade ourselves in our house, and I was the only one who had a gun. I had a .45 Colt automatic I brought back from the war. The sheriff, and there were quite a few concerned white people, about our welfare, who wanted to make a relationship with us, but we decided to go it on our own. There was a telegram come to our house. Someone had heard something about it and was concerned about the relatives . . . When the door rang, I put on my raincoat, and it had these pockets that go through, the army raincoat, and I put the .45 Colt automatic down in there and popped the trigger back and went to the door, and there was a white lad out there, and I said "What you want," and he said he had a telegram from Western Union. But if he'd a stamped his foot, I would have murdered him. You know, we were that tense. (Julin and Hemphill)

Compare the tenseness Nichols describes to the dream that Neil Kingsblood has in the novel: "He was running in terror through a midnight wood, staggering through bogs, colliding with tree-trunks, branches slashing at his forward-thrust face. He was panting so that his lungs were seared, and a cavern of thirst was in his mouth. He did not know who they were pounding after him, but they loathed him, they would knee him in the groin, smash his jaw, tear out his eyes" (125-6). It's clear that, like Nichols, Neil Kingsblood is in jeopardy due to the hostile intentions of his neighbors.

Although Nichols's experience occurred right after the lynchings, they were still of great concern in the black community decades later. Julin and Hemphill write,

> For decades, black families in Duluth handed the story down. When someone new moved to town, old-timers would pull them aside and tell them about the lynching. Samie McCurley's family moved to Duluth in 1950. When he was in high school, one of his friends showed him the postcard of the lynching. "Me being a kid coming from Arkansas, those things like that did happen down south. I never, ever believed anything like that would happen up north here, so it was just real shocking."And when Samie McCurley had children of his own, he told them the story. "I told them it's something I never want them to forget. I have the picture and I gave it to them personally. I wanted them to be aware of what transpired in this town that they were born and were raised in." (Julin and Hemphill)

These anecdotes indicate that the memory of the event remained in many minds regardless of efforts prior to the 1970s to downplay the incident. As for Taylor's claim that Duluth and the St. Paul /Minneapolis area had similar population statistics, there are reasons to doubt this assertion. Duluth, despite the positive outlook of Spangler and Taylor, showed many statistical anomalies that would be conducive to the activities that led to sundown towns across the United States. Perhaps Spangler and Taylor's views on the situation in Duluth were instances of what Loewen refers to as the American "assumption of progress [that] has blinded us to the possibility that sometimes things grew worse" (25).

Looking at population statistics can help reconsider the positive spin on Duluth. According to the US Census Bureau, in 1900, Duluth's African American population numbered 357 out of 52,969. By 1920, there were 495 African Americans citizens among Duluth's 98,917 citizens. In that time span, Minneapolis's numbers were 1,548

out of 202,718 in 1900 and had expanded to 3,927 out of 380,582 by 1920. These numbers alone suggest a problem with Taylor's comparison of the cities. In 1900, Duluth's black population was 0.6% of its total while Minneapolis's was 0.7%. By 1920, Duluth's had declined to 0.5% while Minneapolis's had risen to over 1%. After the lynchings, the discrepancy becomes more noticeable. In 1930, Duluth's blacks numbered 416 out of 101,463 (a loss of 79 and a reduction to 0.4% of the population) while Minneapolis's grew to 4,176 out of 464,356 (Minneapolis continued to add citizens, although not as quickly in the African American community, while Duluth's black population actually decreased as its overall population increased). In 1940, shortly before the time Lewis wrote his two novels, the statistics continued in this direction. Duluth now had 101,065 citizens of whom 314 were African American—a drop of 112, with African Americans now comprising barely over 0.3% of the citizenry. Minneapolis did not see this drop; of their 492,370 citizens, 4,636 were black, a gain in number and percentage from the previous decade.

This trend continued after Lewis had published *Kingsblood Royal*. In the 1950 Census, Duluth's population had risen to 104,511 of whom 334 were black (no rise in percentage, which stayed at barely over 0.3%)[4] while the Minneapolis/St. Paul area (conflated by the 1950 Census) now had 6,807 African Americans in a total population of 521,718 (the highest number of the century at that point and the highest percentage at over 1.3%). All of this statistical information shows that Taylor's assertions don't make sense when you look at the numbers. Duluth grew almost 100% in population from 1900-1950, doubling the number of its citizens, yet the percentage and number of African Americans dropped from the beginning to the end of that period. Minneapolis more than doubled its overall population, and their percentage and number of African Americans increased accordingly, keeping the rising number in line with the growing population. All of these facts suggest that more than the memory of the lynchings might have been responsible for the declining numbers of African Americans in Duluth.

Starting with information from the Census Bureau, James Loewen defines a sundown town as "any jurisdiction that for decades kept out African Americans (or others)," and in the case of cities over 10,000, the city must have been "less than 0.1% black" for many decades (213-14). This assertion suggests that Duluth, with about

0.3% black for a long period of time, does not fit the criteria, yet Loewen also claims that the census can mislead because it counts "African Americans in white households: live-in maids and gardeners" as well as those in prison or other institutions (214). The 1940 Census Bureau employment statistics for Duluth/Superior (Duluth was not considered separately in these statistics) show that of 348 African Americans, only 286 were over 14, and only 110 were employed. It is fair to assume that many of these were live-in domestics, as Loewen has mentioned, since the total working population of Duluth for the time was over 64,000; further, although no African Americans were listed as institutionalized, 24 of the 110 blacks employed were women, which suggests that many of those working might have come from the same families or households. Even if all 110 were from separate households and none worked as live-in domestics, they would only comprise just over 0.2% of the employed in the city.

Specific household information isn't given in the census, but it would be interesting to know just how many African American households there were. There is no question that some existed, but, as Loewen also points out, there were always some exceptions to the rule in these towns. By 1950, household statistics were given, but they were divided into white vs. nonwhite. Given that about 57% of the nonwhite population that year was African American, and that of 31,312 active households, 135 were owned or rented by nonwhites, there could have been, at the maximum, barely over 0.2% of households that were operated by black citizens. Interestingly, the 1950 Census does divide the population into 38 separate tracts for Duluth. Of the 38, 15 had no African Americans, 12 more had below 0.1%, and almost the entire African American population was concentrated into 6 of the 38 tracts (tracts 9,12,16,17,25,38). At the very least, these facts show that most sections of Duluth stayed either completely segregated or had one or two black citizens even though thirty years had passed since the lynchings that some say reduced the population. In addition, the city did not follow the patterns of the only other major metropolitan area in the state.

All of this is not to argue, as Loewen does about many towns, that Duluth itself is still close to being a sundown town today. Statistics from 2010 show that Duluth has about 1,988 people identifying solely as African American citizens out of a total population of 86,265 (2.3%). This statistic does not even account for those identi-

fying in more than one racial category, so clearly the percentage has improved while the overall number of people in Duluth has remained fairly stable. Instead of making a move to condemn Duluth, it's more important to recognize a few things about the city's past and about the importance of Lewis's novel today. First, while Duluth may not be defined as a sundown town, the odd patterns of exclusion are worth examining for both that city and other residential areas that are more clearly sundown in the North. Loewen writes,

> Whenever the census shows that a town or county had been all-white or overwhelmingly white for decades, we do well to investigate further, since across the nation, most all-white towns were that way intentionally. Telling the truth about them is the right thing to do.

It is also true that the powers that be don't want us to learn about their policy of exclusion and have sometimes tried to suppress the knowledge. The truth about sundown towns implicates the powers that be. The role played by governments regarding race relations can hardly be characterized as benign or even race-neutral. From the towns that passed sundown ordinances, to the county sheriffs who escorted black would-be residents back across the county line, to the states that passed laws enabling municipalities to zone out "undesirables," to the federal government—whose lending and insurance policies from the 1930s to the 1960s *required* sundown neighborhoods and suburbs—our governments openly favored white supremacy and helped to create and maintain all-white communities. So did most of our banks, realtors and police chiefs. If public relations offices, Chambers of Commerce, and local historical societies don't want us to know something, perhaps that something is worth learning. After all, how can we deal with something if we cannot even face it? (15)

It always matters to try and understand why things happen; Lewis's novel could be used as a starting point for thinking about these towns all across America. Far from being the unrealistic caricaturist he was portrayed as by many, he accurately reflected individuals and social problems from the city of Duluth during his time—problems that were replicated across the Northern United States. While Bob Dylan and Michael Fedo certainly brought some attention to the events of 1920, Lewis preceded them by decades, focusing on the lynchings and also on other forms of discrimination, realistically and thoroughly, and raising questions that still remain unanswered in

our time. How many of these towns still exist? How many did in the past? And how can literature, particularly Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal*, be used to help students and scholars draw attention to problems that we may still be hiding from ourselves? These are important questions to consider, both for literary scholars and for those looking for a better understanding of the United States, both its past and its present. Dylan sang that "nobody has to think too much about Desolation Row." Lewis helps us to think about that and more.

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NOTES

[1] Good information on the historical background of this event can be found in Michael Fedo's book (listed in the Works Cited page, but currently published under a new title—*The Lynchings in Duluth*, and at the Minnesota Historical Society's Website(http://collections.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/).

[2] It would be interesting to discover, given the racial overtones of the next book on Grand Republic, whether or not Lewis had been aware of the Thule society, some members of which later became active in the Nazi party and who believed that Ultima Thule was the birthplace of the Aryan race (Sklar 43).

[3] Specifically, Loewen writes that "most Americans have no idea that race relations actually *deteriorated* in the 1890s and in the first third of the twentieth century. Sundown towns cannot be understood outside of the historical period that spawned them. This era, from 1890 to the 1930s, when African Americans were forced back into non-citizenship, is called the Nadir of race relations in the United States" (25). He goes on to point out that the term originated in Rayford Logan's *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir* (1954) and that it has become increasingly more accepted.

[4] Curiously, in *Kingsblood Royal*, which we know takes place after 1945 but before 1947, Lewis has a character named Wilbur Feathering mention that the percentage of African Americans was nearly 2.25% and that the number of blacks had increased from 800 in 1939 to over 2,000. This may be less a reflection of Lewis's own lack of statistical knowledge than it is of the character of Feathering himself, who clearly wants to incite panic in the white community about the growing number of black people in Grand Republic. Lewis writes that the 2.25% figure that the white supremacist quotes was, in Feathering's mind, closer to 98.25%—a just reason for fearing race riots. (183)

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"HE WHO WALKS BEHIND THE ROWS": AGRICULTURAL HORROR FILMS AND THE AMERICAN FARM CRISIS OF THE 1980s

PATRICIA OMAN

The 1980s was a difficult decade for many American farmers. The so-called farm crisis dominated headlines in Midwest news media, and two films released in 1984, *Country* and *The River,* brought the plight of the farmer to national theater screens. Despite attention garnered by these two topical films, however, the relationship between the farm crisis and horror films from the same period has been largely ignored. *Children of the Corn,* for instance, was also released in 1984 but received almost universal condemnation by critics who failed to recognize its connection to the farm crisis. In fact, in a one-star review Roger Ebert writes, "At the end, those of us who are left in the theater cling to one faint hope: That our patience will be rewarded by an explanation, no matter how bizarre, of the thing that moves behind the rows. No luck . . . . By the end of 'Children of the Corn,' the only thing moving behind the rows is the audience, fleeing to the exits." Although many critics also gave poor reviews to *Country* and *The River*, those films nevertheless generated topical interest in farm foreclosures and the plight of the family farmer. The same cannot be said for *Children of the Corn* or the 1988 independent film *Scarecrows,* which also addresses the discourses commonly repeated in news reports about the farm crisis.

In describing the popular appeal of horror films, Andrew Tudor argues that many horror films "appeal to their audience in part because they express in accessible and entertaining popular cultural terms the characteristic fears of their time" (51). Many horror films of the 1970s and 1980s have received critical attention in this vein—Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, for instance, has received quite a bit of scholarly attention for its engagement with the clash between traditional American values and the counterculture of the 1970s[1] and

its critique of late-period capitalism[2]—but the horror films from this period that deal with agricultural issues specifically have been pretty much ignored by cultural critics.[3] This essay attempts to fill that critical gap by arguing that horror films from the 1980s that are set in primarily agricultural settings, such as *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows,* are ideological critiques of the farm crisis.

AGRICULTURAL HORRORS

The farm crisis of the 1980s had its beginnings in the contested and ever changing farm-policy reforms of the 1970s. Volatile markets, natural disasters, but above all waffling about the extent of government involvement in agricultural markets caused farmers considerable distress and uncertainty. The core issue of the debate was whether to continue the government support policies established in the 1930s under the New Deal or to open up US agriculture to international markets. Constant battling between the two factions led to a series of reactionary changes in legislation throughout the 1970s and 1980s that gradually created the farm crisis of the 1980s.

The Agricultural Act of 1970, for instance, continued some of the policies of the previous Kennedy and Johnson administrations by continuing direct support payments to farmers but also introduced a set-aside program that gave farmers more control of what crops they planted if they agreed to retire some of their land temporarily ("Farm Policy" 129-30). A subsequent grain shortage sent the value of land through the roof and prices for major crops remained high. By 1973, with an expanded export policy, US stores of grain were unexpectedly depleted by large purchases from the Soviet Union, which allowed advocates of the free-market approach to successfully propose target-price policies over direct subsidies. Under the 1973 Agricultural and Consumer Protection Act, farmers received payments only if market prices dropped dramatically. During this period of decreased government involvement, farmers were encouraged to take out loans to expand and maximize production by buying more land and new, more efficient equipment. The Farmers Home Association (FmHA) also made it easier for farmers to acquire these loans through federal loan programs, and farmers responded by taking on more debt and stepping up production.

The catchphrase for this heady expansion period was "fencerow to fencerow," a phrase attributed to the Secretary of Agriculture from 1971 to 1976, Earl L. Butz, who promoted a free-market approach to US agriculture. In fact, in a 1974 symposium paper titled "An Emerging, Market-Oriented Agricultural Policy," Butz proposes "an economic decision-making process whereby people vote daily with their dollars. If you keep markets relatively free and competitive, and keep people informed, these markets transmit the signals from the public more quickly, cleanly, impartially, and more for the good of all than the slower, more institutionalized bureaucracy, which is the action arm of the political process" (137). In other words, Butz argues for reducing government involvement in agriculture, a policy that continued through the Carter administration and into that of Reagan. He articulates the essence of this policy later in the talk by arguing that "[w]e have moved to get the government out of farming" (139).

While Butz pushed for a free-market approach to agricultural policy, the early years of the 1980s demonstrated how unpredictable the market could be and the federal government instituted a number of reactionary and contradictory measures that led to the farm crisis. The federal government continued to divest itself of agricultural responsibility under Carter's administration in legislation such as the 1980 Federal Crop Insurance Act, which required farmers to buy into subsidized crop insurance programs rather than rely on free direct-relief payments if their crops were lost to natural disaster. However, in January 1980 Carter instituted a grain embargo against the Soviet Union in response to its invasion of Afghanistan, which suddenly limited the markets available to American farmers. In December Congress enacted the 1980 Emergency Assistance Act, which established a mandatory interest waiver for loans on crops for 1980 and 1981 to help out farmers affected by the embargo. In April of the next year, Reagan lifted the embargo on the Soviet Union and cancelled the interest waiver. During the embargo, however, other countries stepped up production to meet the international demand for grain and US grain was no longer in such high demand, even when the embargo was lifted. In efforts to lower taxes and balance a large budget deficit, Congress also raised interest rates on federal farm loans.

Farmers who took out adjustable-rate loans during the land rush of the 1970s were in a hopeless situation by the mid-1980s when the price of crops and the value of farmland fell because of large grain surpluses, production costs rose because of a generally troubled

economy, and interest rates on federal loans were raised by Congress. The statistics for this period are sobering. For instance, the USDA estimates that in February 1986 the average value of Corn Belt farmland was $794 per acre, which was almost half the average in February 1981: $1572 per acre (Gardner 85). Farmers who borrowed money based on the value of their farms in the late 1970s or early 1980s thus faced untenable debt/asset ratios by the mid-1980s.

Debates about the farm crisis in the mainstream media used conflicting evidence to describe the problem, citing both hard statistics and individual stories. While near-Depression Era foreclosure rates are far from ideal, the reality was not as drastic as that depicted in the mainstream media's coverage of the farm crisis or in films such as *Country* or *The River* that dramatize the experiences of individual farmers. Actual farm foreclosure statistics for the 1980s were not that dire when considered as a whole. In fact, Gardner points out that "Over the 1981-1988 period the rate of farm business failures . . . is about 2 percent of all farms annually" (86). The normal foreclosure rate is about 1 percent. However, the media's coverage of heart-wrenching stories of individual families pointed to a startling characteristic of the farm crisis: family farmers were disproportionately affected. As Gardner argues, the 200,000 to 300,000 farmers who "quit for financial reasons . . . were drawn largely from the ranks of the 700,000 commercial farmers of 1980 as opposed to the 1.5 million smaller-scale farms that depend almost completely on off-farm income sources to support themselves economically" (86).

In a 1985 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Gregg Easterbrook makes a further distinction within the category of "commercial farmer" to identify "the group commonly called family farmers" who "sell from $40,000 to $100,000 worth of crops a year" (18). He argues that this group, which made up about 16 percent of all farms, was "the most trouble—holding a disproportionate share of farm debt and typically having a lower disposable income than part-time farmers, because the farm is their sole source of income" (18). Thus, while the overall economic picture of American agriculture in the 1980s was not rosy, the farmers most affected by the farm crisis were those that have defined the American agrarian ideal since the colonial period—farmers whose sole, modest livelihood is farming. In other words, the farm crisis captured mainstream and popular media because it seemed to challenge a core American way of life.

The agricultural horror films of the 1980s are distinct from most contemporary coverage of the farm crisis because they do not dramatize the effect of the farm crisis on farm families. The film *Country,* for instance, includes all of the common farm crisis themes that appeared in mainstream media: identification of farming as a "way of life," forced farm auctions, claims of farmer "mismanagement," disintegration of rural communities, suicide, domestic violence, and alcoholism. It also dramatizes the plight of the family farmer by following the troubles of the Ivy family, who are portrayed as innocent victims when the FmHA suddenly calls in a thirty-year loan, giving the family only thirty days to pay it off. The family's financial problems lead the father, Gil, to drink heavily and be uncharacteristically violent toward his teenage son and wife. While *Country* focuses mainly on the somewhat realistic relationship between farmers and bankers, *The River* provides a more sensational account of the farm crisis. Tom and Mae Garvey face not only foreclosure but also another farmer, who is in love with Mae; the Tennessee Valley Authority, which wants to install dams and other protective measures to control the river; disastrous floods on their Tennessee Valley farm; and Tom Garvey's experiences as a union scab in the steel mills.

In contrast, *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows* do not overtly reference the plight of families or the threat of farm foreclosures. They do, however, reflect a nuanced understanding of the farm crisis and critique both government policies and the farmers themselves. While issues of the nuclear family are central to both films—children murder their parents in *Children of the Corn* and a family is responsible for the gruesome murders that take place in *Scarecrows*—the threat of government or bank foreclosure is never an explicit theme. Their engagement with the farm crisis of the 1980s is more symbolic and ultimately more disturbing, not just because they are horror films and are therefore somewhat gory, but because the films do not rely on melodrama. *The River* and *Country* were criticized for their melodramatic characterization of the farm crisis, but agricultural films such as *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows* sidestep the easily dismissed conventions of melodrama. Instead they could be characterized as ideological revenge fantasies.

IDEOLOGICAL CATHARSIS IN *CHILDREN OF THE CORN*

Although *Children of the Corn* does not dramatize the troubles of a single family, it does address the disintegration of the nuclear family and the rural community. When the film begins, the primary antagonist of the film, the vaguely identified He Who Walks Behind the Rows, has already destroyed all nuclear families in the small rural town of Gatlin, Nebraska, by convincing the town's children to kill their parents and form a new communal society based on worship of this cornfield deity. They abandon most of the "adult" concerns of the town, such as the businesses that line the town's Main Street and live according to the strict mandates of He Who Walks Behind the Rows, who communicates through the prophet Isaac. The young people begin to partner up and have children of their own, but the deity requires all children who reach the age of nineteen to sacrifice themselves, preventing the establishment of traditional nuclear families. The film's premise thus incorporates many themes of farm crisis discourse, including the disintegration of farm families, the disintegration of the rural community, domestic violence, and suicide. Gatlin is essentially the nightmarish flipside of the ideal rural American town—the horrific result of the farm crisis.

The antagonism of the land itself is another significant similarity between *Children of the Corn* and farm crisis discourse. The troubles of many farmers in the 1980s were compounded by natural disasters such as drought, flooding, and tornadoes. Natural disasters are acknowledged explicitly in *Country* by a tornado that almost kills the teenage son, in *The River* by the catastrophic flooding of the Tennessee Valley, and in *Children of the Corn* by the coming of He Who Walks Behind the Rows during a drought. The provenance of the deity is vague, as many critics point out in their reviews of the film, but it seems to be the active consciousness of the land itself since it is never shown in a corporeal form. The presence of He Who Walks Behind the Rows is signaled by changes in the landscape, such as the parting or movement of the corn, the swelling of the ground, and a large black fog that manifests in the film's dramatic crisis. The fact that the deity is vanquished only by burning the cornfields further suggests that He Who Walks Behind the Rows is, in fact, the spirit of the land itself.

In addition to getting rid of the farmers (and all other adults), He Who Walks Behind the Rows also suggests a revolt by the land itself

against federal agricultural policies by isolating the town and surrounding farmland from domestic or international markets. Although the children continue to plant and harvest corn, the crops are not sold to anyone nor are the children allowed to have any contact with people outside the town. Thus, whereas the government was trying to "get . . . out of farming" in the 1970s and early 1980s by deregulating and opening up US agriculture to world markets, as Butz argues, in *Children of the Corn,* He Who Walks Behind the Rows steps in to do the regulating. In fact, the government's discontinuation of farmland retirement programs in the 1970s created the source of the deity's power by giving it more natural resources to control. For instance, when Vicky and Burt accidently run over a boy who is trying to escape the town, He Who Walks Behind the Rows manipulates the narrow county highways that crisscross the cornfields to make sure that they do not let the outside world know what is happening. No matter what direction they turn, they always end up heading toward Gatlin. In another scene, the deity leads Burt to a specific part of the cornfields by opening up passages within the corn and closing others to keep him in place. If the entire farmland around Gatlin had not been planted "fencerow to fencerow," He Who Walks Behind the Rows would not have had such complete control.

The most common visual trope of cornfield horror—the medium or medium close-up shot of a character disappearing into a seemingly

Figure 1. A child tries to leave Gatlin (*Children of the Corn*, 1984). Film still published in accordance with the fair-use guidelines established by the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

endless sea of corn—reflects not only Butz's policy of "abundance" (139) but also this policy's tendency to distance people from the land. These shots mimic the experiences of long-time farmers who faced the prospect of losing their land by invoking the uncanny—combining the familiar and welcoming idea of agricultural abundance with unfamiliar feelings of dread and horror (See Figure 1).[4] Stories about the farm crisis in the mainstream media frequently pointed to the tragedy of farmers losing land that had been in their families for generations, suggesting that the crisis was leading to the end of a particular way of life. The image of people literally being swallowed by the corn suggests both the mortgage crisis—the fear of being swallowed by debt—and the strangeness of land that used to provide sustenance and economic support but now represents a source of ruin.

While the film's critique of deregulation suggests sympathy for farmers, however, they do not escape critique entirely. In fact, the film makes the same accusations of farmer mismanagement that appeared in many debates about the farm crisis. Butz's 1974 speech certainly demonstrates the type of rhetoric that influenced farmers' decisions to take out large loans and step up production. In fact, he describes pre-1970s agricultural policy as "one of scarcity, of curtailment, of cutback, of quotas and allotments" (138) and argues that the United States was "afraid to live with plenty" and "too timid to effectively utilize the tremendous agricultural resources of the United States" (138).

Despite this official encouragement to step up production, however, many blamed the farmers themselves for their financial problems. After all, no one forced them to take out large government-subsidized loans. If farms failed or farmers were forced to take cheap shortcuts in their care of the land, the argument went, the farms must have been mismanaged. The opening shots of *Children of the Corn*, which are a flashback to a time right before the arrival of He Who Walks Behind the Rows, depict not only dry corn but rusting irrigation and corn-processing equipment, a rusted-out and abandoned car, and a weathered and distressed shed. While these images of the rusting equipment might seem like results of the drought, they are also signs of larger agricultural decay. Farmers who cared about their equipment would presumably take care of it even during a drought. In the first minute and a half, therefore, the film suggests that there is a systemic agricultural problem in Gatlin, one that is not related just to the drought.

While it is never clear why He Who Walks Behind the Rows orders the children to kill their parents, the religious overtones of *Children of the Corn* suggest that the adults of Gatlin were killed because of some transgression—either they did not recognize the sovereignty of the land or they did not trust in the sovereignty of their own Christian deity. Given the children's worship of the cornfield deity by decorating the entire town with dried corn husks, the parents' transgression was apparently against both. Shot after shot of lush, healthy corn suggests that He Who Walks Behind the Rows has healed the land and reversed the damage done by the adults so that the land can be restored to the children, who are not so much the rightful heirs as the worshipful caretakers of the land. The supremacy of the cornfield deity and the inevitability of its rise to power are emphasized by the announcement board at the Grace Baptist Church of Gatlin, which lists the title of the pastor's last sermon as "Corn Drought and the Lord." Thus, the film suggests that the federal government's agricultural policies of the late 1970s and early 1980s left a regulatory and even spiritual void that could be filled by the usurping deity.

The victory of the cornfield deity over Christianity is related to the moral decline of the nuclear family in the film. The young unmarried couple who accidently stumbles upon Gatlin while driving from Boston to Seattle is thus tasked with not only destroying the cornfield deity but also re-establishing the nuclear family. When the children kill all the adults in town, Isaac prohibits them from visiting their old family homes, but siblings Sarah and Job keep alive the traditional family unit by playing and living in their old house. They were the only children who were not present when He Who Walks Behind the Rows first made himself known in the cornfields and are thus not subject to his rules. The first scene with Vicky and Burt at a motel quickly establishes that Vicky wants to get married whereas Burt does not, but at the end of the film, after they have destroyed He Who Walks Behind the Rows, they have unofficially adopted Sarah and Job and formed a nuclear family. The ending of the film is much more optimistic than that of the 1977 Stephen King short story that inspired the film, especially in regard to the nuclear family. In the short story, Burt and Vicky are unhappily married and are ultimately sacrificed by the town's children to He Who Walks Behind the Rows, thus underscoring the disintegration of the American family. The ending of *Children of the Corn* is thus similar to those of *The River* and *Country* because

the rural family is ultimately restored and validated, albeit in a slightly altered form.

The fact that Burt and Vicky are urban dwellers on a trip from one national coast to the other foregrounds the federal regulation that created the void that allowed He Who Walks Behind the Rows to usurp power in Gatlin. While topical films such as *The River* and *Country* depict the struggle between family farms and federal/state governments, they ultimately argue that the farm crisis is a regional issue. The genre conventions of Hollywood melodrama further require that the dramatization of the farm crisis in these films remain at the personal level. However, by focusing on Burt and Vicky's conflict with a deity with whom they have no personal connection, *Children of the Corn* defines the farm crisis as a national problem. The vaguely defined monster at the center of the film therefore represents the ideological tension of the farm crisis as an American issue not just a local special-interest story. His fiery demise and the subsequent restoration of order through the formation of a new nuclear family suggest a cathartic conclusion to the farm crisis. Thus, *Children of the Corn* may critique both federal agricultural policies and farmers for the crisis, but it ultimately tries to restore the American agrarian ideal.

MURDEROUS *SCARECROWS:* A REVENGE FANTASY

While *Children of the Corn* affirms federal and national priorities, *Scarecrows* resists them. The film follows a group of mercenary soldiers who make an unplanned landing just outside an abandoned farm when one of their members parachutes out of the escape plane with all of the money they have just stolen. On the ground the soldiers are picked off and gruesomely murdered by several scarecrows that guard the farm. Like *Children of the Corn*, *Scarecrows* does not provide any direct exposition to explain the existence of the monsters or why they are so bloodthirsty, but the film nevertheless seems to address the Reagan administration's simultaneous deregulation of agriculture and increased militarization. While *Children of the Corn* follows the classic horror narrative, which requires the monster to perish and order to be restored, the narrative structure of *Scarecrows* is more contemporary (i.e., ambiguous) and the monsters are never defeated. The bloody rampage of the scarecrow farmers eventually ends when all of the intruders are killed, but there is no cathartic sense of closure. In fact, this film is an obvious revenge fantasy from the

perspective of family farmers, and its critique of federal policy priorities in the 1980s is absolute.

Judith L. Woodward's 1985 *Christian Century* article is a good example of the explicit connections being made in the 1980s between the farm crisis and Reagan's increase of military spending:

> While the underlying issues are complex, a large part of the farm problem clearly has to do with current federal budget priorities and the mounting deficit that is helping to keep interest rates high and the dollar strong on world markets. President Reagan simultaneously vetoed legislation to aid farmers, saying that it was too costly, and asked Congress to approve the production of more MX missiles—which it did. Without greatly raising the federal deficit, these missiles can be funded only by implementing presidential proposals that would tear at the very fabric of life in the Midwestern farm belt . . . The first thing that the MX will destroy is our country's agricultural heartland. (372)

While the pathos of this argument is clear in phrases such as "tear at the very fabric of life" and "destroy . . . our country's agricultural heartland," Woodward is correct that reducing government involvement in agriculture was one way that the Reagan administration tried to lower the deficit in the 1980s. She is also correct that Reagan increased spending on military defense. Although the two actions were not necessarily correlative—contemporaneity does not equal causation—her argument does reflect the sentiments of many farmers at the time who believed that some larger entity was intentionally trying to destroy the family farm. For instance, Easterbrook quotes a farmer from Corydon, Iowa, who told him, "There was a secret meeting in 1947 at which a plan was laid out to destroy the family farm, and everything that has happened since comes directly from the plan" (25). The desire to find causation between separate acts of the federal government coupled with the belief in symbolic institutions such as the family farm or the heartland clearly leads both Woodward and this anonymous farmer to the conclusion that the government has some nefarious intention toward farmers. One might even interpret their comments within the context of 1980s Cold War paranoia because it is the American way of life that is under assault. Even though this conclusion is fueled more by emotion than logic, however, it was common in the 1980s.

The dramatization of individual farm families in films such as *The River* and *Country* encourages emotional investment in the farm crisis and, by extension, the American agrarian ideal, but *Scarecrows*

Figure 2. The Fowler family *(Scarecrows,* 1988). Film still published in accordance with the fair-use guidelines established by the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

eschews any emotional investment in the farm crisis. Illogical conspiracy theories about changing federal policies are cleverly represented in the unexplained interactions between the mercenary soldiers and the blood-thirsty scarecrows. While the soldiers are far from innocent—they have just stolen the cash payroll from Camp Pendleton—they do not really do much to anger the residents of the farm other than show up. The film does not explain how the scarecrows came to be, but a recurring close-up shot of a family photograph hanging on the wall in the abandoned farmhouse suggests that the scarecrows are the family in the picture (See Figure 2). The photograph depicts three men, two of whom are holding guns, in front of a cornfield. This, in addition to a "No Trespassing" sign and a sign that reads "Fowler" on the farm gate, alert us to the fact that the farm is (or was) privately owned and aggressively defended. The fact that the rusting farm equipment and the scarecrows are asleep when the soldiers first arrive suggests that the farm was abandoned for some reason. Audiences in the 1980s would have immediately recognized the symbolism of this abandoned, weed-infested family farm within the context of the farm crisis.[5] They also would have recognized the

relentless anger of the scarecrows toward the uninvited visitors as representative of farmers in general. Thus, the two opposing forces that are pitted against each other in *Scarecrows* represent the two parties of a family-farm conspiracy theory: the greedy and well-equipped soldiers who want to steal even more taxpayer money for themselves and the angry family farmers who are bitter about losing their farm. The film's lack of exposition or logic mirrors the beliefs of conspiracy-minded farmers.

Given the stupidity and greed of the soldiers, the film seems to favor the scarecrows or at least condone their behavior, suggesting that the film is a revenge fantasy for down-and-out farmers. While many of the scarecrows on the property are made of straw, human facial features are clearly visible beneath the burlap masks of the three active ones. The supernatural nature of these scarecrows is implied by the three grave markers that are posted by the three scarecrows Burt first encounters when he lands on the farm. The scarecrows are therefore not just farmers wearing scarecrow masks; they are *dead* farmers who take revenge on those who intrude on their farm. The disregard that Burt shows for private property by trespassing and then stealing a truck represents the lack of respect that farmers in the 1980s felt, especially those farmers who had to sell their property in forced auctions to pay off debts. Interestingly, the farm comes alive the moment Burt's blood is spilled on the ground. A windmill, an irrigation pump, and a generator that is clearly missing parts all come to life as soon as the scarecrows kill Burt, suggesting that their revenge restores the abandoned farm.

The violence of the scarecrows also closely mirrors reports of violence during the farm crisis. A *New York Times* article from October 1983, for instance, describes the heavy police presence during a farm auction in Kansas: "The courtyard of the Graham County courthouse was surrounded by more than two dozen state troopers and helmeted sheriff's deputies summoned from other counties . . . On the roof, more than a dozen other officers, some wearing flak jackets and manning videotaping equipment, monitored the scene below" (Malcolm E4). Although this particular incident did not end in violence, farmers would no doubt feel threatened by this type of official response. The murder of the soldiers in flak jackets in *Scarecrows* might thus satisfy deep-seated fantasies of overthrowing the authorities that supported banks' aggressive tactics. The Fowler family's refusal to leave the farm, even after death, is the ultimate

form of resistance. The film's ambiguous clues hint that the Fowlers were killed defending their farm against foreclosure or auction.

While the film never explains why the Fowlers have been transformed into scarecrows, there are many clues that indicate that they are out for revenge for the loss of their farm. Their murder weapons of choice, for instance, are all rusting farm implements, such as pitch forks and slaughter knives. They also punish anyone who takes something from the farm. Jack, for instance, finds corn growing wild near a stream and helps himself. When the scarecrows catch up with him later, they use an old rusty handsaw to cut off the hand that held the corn. Burt is similarly punished for stealing an old truck and running over a straw scarecrow when he is slit open and stuffed with the very money that he is trying to steal. Because the soldiers are represented as unquestionably greedy—they allow themselves to be lured away from the others by cash scattered in the weeds and even pull out and clean off the cash from Burt's corpse—the audience is invited to identify with the scarecrows and their bloody revenge even though their anger is unexplained. Despite the high level of gore and the lack of narrative explanation, the film suggests the same identification with the family farmer as in *The River* and *Country.* The major difference, of course, is that the family at the center of *Scarecrows* gets revenge on the anti-American forces that challenge their way of life.

SO, WHO DOES WALK BEHIND THE ROWS?

Despite the clear engagement with farm-crisis discourses in *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows,* the origin or identity of the monsters are never explained, which is unusual for horror films. Evil scarecrows by their very nature defy logic, but other horror films of this period explain the origins of their monsters at least to some extent: the zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) are created by radiation brought back to earth by a space mission; the Sawyer family in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) are victims of a changing economy that makes their family occupation obsolete; the family in *Poltergeist* (1982) is haunted because greedy land developers desecrated burial grounds; Cabrini Green is haunted in *Candyman* (1992) because a former slave was lynched on that site in the previous century. These explanations are not necessarily believable, but the films at least give the audiences something in the way of narrative causation. *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows* do not.

I suspect that this ambiguity is one of the reasons that these films have essentially been ignored by horror critics. Drawing on several decades of scholarship on the relationship of horror to its cultural moment, Brigid Cherry argues that contemporary horror films "all centre on a monster or form of monstrosity that is represented within the text in opposition to the dominant ideological stance. This can be linked . . . to social and cultural anxieties surrounding the outsider or those who are socially marginalized (the Other). The history of horror is thus the way other people and groups exhibiting markers of difference have been regarded and depicted by their society" (175-76).

In films such as *Night of the Living Dead, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Poltergeist,* and *Candyman,* the monsters are fairly easy to interpret. Given the time period and the leading actor of *Night of the Living Dead,* for instance, the zombies could represent racial otherness in the context of the Civil Rights movement; the Sawyer family in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* could represent rural occupations made obsolete in an increasingly global economy. The monsters in *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows* are more difficult to identify, however. We know that the monsters of *Scarecrows* are family farmers, but we are never told how or why they become scarecrows or what their history is. The monster of *Children of the Corn* is even more ambiguous—the "deity" is never seen or explained.

The representation of the monsters in *Scarecrows* suggests a clear association with family farmers, but it is difficult to think of American family farmers as Others of any kind since they have been the definition of *American* since the colonial period. Rather, the ambiguity of the monsters in these films represents an irresolvable ideological paradox brought about by the farm crisis. The real-life challenge to family farms during the 1980s conflicted with the American agrarian ideal. In other words, when reality undeniably challenged the myth of the small farm as the American way of life, there was no clear Other to identify as the villain. The conflict boiled down to two sides—the government and family farmers—but neither of those sides is typically identified as *un*-American. Neither the soldiers nor the farmers in *Scarecrows* are blameless. In just about any Hollywood action film from the 1980s, these soldiers would have been the patriotic heroes who protect the United States from the foreign villain *du jour*, but it is not very patriotic to attack American farmers. Nor do murderous farmers really match the agrarian ideal. He Who Walks Behind the Rows is just as ambiguous. As a big, angry

cornfield monster that kills off the farmers and rejects the authority of the US government but also restores health and spirituality to the agrarian heartland, he is a big bundle of contradictions. Why do Burt and Vicky have to exterminate him just to restore the American nuclear family? The monsters in these films are thus literal and rhetorical straw men. They are a distraction from and representation of the conflict between the real-life struggles of American family farmers and the mythic definition of American family farms—the contradiction at the heart of American agrarian ideology.

While the figure of the scarecrow is almost universal, cornfield horror did not become a staple of American horror films until the 1980s, when an entire subgenre of horror films was inspired by the agricultural debates of the time. The continuing existence of this subgenre can be seen today in big-budget films such as *Jeepers Creepers* (2001) and *Signs* (2002), the TV cult classic *Night of the Scarecrow* (1995), and a whole slew of straight-to-DVD films with titles such as *Scarecrow* (2002), *Scarecrow Slayer* (2003), and *Scarecrow Gone Wild* (2004), not to mention numerous sequels and remakes of *Children of the Corn*. But, while these movies all share the same visual conventions of cornfield horror established in the 1980s, they do not address the same ideological contradictions as *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows*. As Robin Wood's explanation of the monster of horror films as the "dual concept of the repressed/the Other" ("The American Nightmare" 28) suggests, the need for addressing those specific ideological contradictions has passed. While the monsters of *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows* may not represent sexual repression, as the original use of the term suggests, they do certainly represent the continual repression of an ideological crisis. Despite the rise of farm foreclosures, rural suicide, and domestic violence in the early part of the 1980s, the national media was slow to respond to the farm crisis. A search of *The New York Times* digital archives, for instance, reveals six articles that reference the phrase "farm crisis" in 1982, four in 1983, two in 1984, thirty in 1985, seventy in 1986, thirty-two in 1987, and twenty-one in 1988. When *Country, The River,* and *Children of the Corn* were released in 1984, therefore, mainstream coverage of the farm crisis was minimal, if *The New York Times* can be assumed as a barometer for the mainstream media. Dramatic films such as *Country* and *The River* were intended to bring national awareness to the farm crisis, and were perhaps successful at this, but horror films such as *Children of the Corn* and *Scarecrows*

confronted the crisis on the ideological level. Both films reflect the danger of repressing the ideological contradictions of the American farm crisis of the 1980s and the desperate need to purge them.

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NOTES

[1] See, for example, Wood and Phillips.

[2] See Jackson.

[3] For instance, in Maddrey, *Children of the Corn* is not even mentioned in passing.

[4] The uncanny, of course, is a common trope of horror films. Many horror-movie monsters (e.g., vampires, zombies, supernaturally gifted serial killers) create unease in audiences because they are essentially the walking dead—the corporeal incarnation of the contradiction between life and death. The uncanny cornfield shot becomes such a common trope in agricultural films that it also appears in many nonhorror films, such as *Field of Dreams*.

[5] The movie was filmed in Florida but is supposed to take place on the West Coast. Even though debates about the farm crisis focused on the Midwest as the "heartland," the crisis affected all farms of the country.

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JOKES, INSULTS, AND CHICAGO'S FIGHT FOR THE WORLD'S FAIR OF 1893

GUY SZUBERLA

"Chicago, . . . do learn to laugh at the right time."
— "A Little Talk to Chicago," *Puck* (26 April 1893)

Clara Louise Burnham, in her novel *Sweet Clover* (1894), recalled that the "public [held] its sides . . . over the exquisite humor of the idea that upstart pork-packing Chicago should . . . carry out a true World's Fair . . ." (125). Spurred by the city's bid for the Columbian Exposition, jokes about Chicagoans and Chicago multiplied in the mid-1880s and for years after. East Coast publications, even before New York and Chicago became rivals for the 1893 fair, had ridiculed the brash and half-civilized ways of Chicagoans. The New York humor magazine *Puck,* for a dozen years or more, had been printing jokes about the "brass" of Chicagoans, its uneducated and naïve young women, and the stink of the city's stockyards (3 March 1877: 3). As Chicago and New York struggled for the honor of holding the World's Fair, the jokes became more elaborate and the caricatures ever more grotesque. The Chicago press and its politicians, unwilling to be trapped and oppressed by Eastern humor, inverted these stereotypes and, in return, caricatured the pretensions, the wheezing age, and dowdiness of its seaboard rivals. Chicago's resistance illuminates Eastern humor, and that resistance, it will be argued, illuminates the way the city defined itself in 1880s and 1890s, the years identified with the first Chicago Renaissance.

From about 1885 through early 1890, Chicago, New York, and other cities competed for the honor of celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's Discovery of America. In the end, neither Columbus nor the 400th anniversary of his voyage of discovery had

much to do with the competition for the "World's Columbian Exposition." Chicago beat back New York, its closest rival, and bested other East Coast cities by raising more money and raising it faster; it also organized more effectively and exercised its already famous political clout in Congress and within its own state and region.[1] Congress voted to make Chicago the official site in February and March of 1890.

Histories of the World's Fair of 1893, with rare exception, pass over the jokes, ridicule, and comic libels that Chicago and New York exchanged.[2] New Yorkers, David Burg says in *Chicago's White City* (1976), carried on a "verbal battle with their rival" Chicago (42). But Burg's comprehensive history of the Columbian Exposition has little more to say about this "verbal battle." In his history of the Columbian Exposition, Dennis B. Downey notes, also without much illustration, that Chicago and New York engaged in "bragging and boasting, exhortations from the Bible, and even a bit of good-natured humor" (10). Judging by the number of comic insults and caricatures and the run of jokes in humor magazines, both New York and Chicago infused their promotional campaigns with ridicule and mockery. Sometimes, though, it's hard to take comic exaggeration seriously.

The competing cities' jokes and jibes mixed mock attacks with some hard-bitten hostility. Late nineteenth-century dialect humor, and burlesque and vaudeville acts, had posed the country bumpkin, the ignorant immigrant, the lazy black, and others against the upstanding and educated gentleman (Mintz 20, 24). Using similar oppositional pairs, *Puck* and New York humor magazines constructed their caricatures of Chicagoans. Cartoon figures like Mr. and Mrs. Porcipacker—crude and unmannered *arrivistes*—could be contrasted with sophisticated New Yorkers: "men who have been to Europe" and knew they "can not buy their Rembrandts by the yard" (*Puck* 11 December 1889: 272). The Chicago press countered—and in some ways deconstructed—such simple oppositional pairings with their own. The *Chicago Tribune* and the Chicago *Inter Ocean,* the main sources collected here, best illustrate what was then called the city's "good humor and sarcasm" *(Tribune* 12 January 1890: 1). To the hometown boosters, New York, home of the foppish and pretentious, was beholden to an "elite from abroad," while Chicago represented "more truly the best spirit, character, and aspirations of the American people" *(Tribune* 12 January 1890: 1; 18 July 1889: 4).

The two cities prodded and pricked each other's overblown claims, turning into jokes and insults the solemnly spoken declarations of their rival. Chicago poured into its self-promotion the kind of comic exaggeration Louis D. Rubin identifies with "The Great American Joke." Rubin says that the Joke "arises out of the gap" between an exaggerated or impossible "cultural ideal and the everyday fact, with the ideal shown to be somewhat hollow and hypocritical, and the fact crude and disgusting" (115). Chicago papers boasted about "the native charms of the delights of its climate," said that the city was destined to "be the Paris of America" *(Tribune* 12 October 1890). Some imagined that it was to rival Florence under the Medici.[3] New York's humor magazines— *Puck, Judge,* the old *Life*—were happy to expose all such overblown civic shams. With unchecked comic exaggeration, they opened wide "the gap" between Chicago's high-flying and grandiloquent visions of itself and some hard and crude everyday facts.

It would be wrong to say that, during the five or six years before the fair opened, Chicago and its East Coast detractors were engaged in a cultural conversation, a dialogue about an urban vision, civic myths, or regional identity. And yet, almost by accident, the play of comic exaggeration expressed local values and regional pride, and outlined ideas about the future of the American city. James R. Shortridge says in *The Middle West* that "the Middle West, particularly its more rural sections" responded to "Eastern laughter" with "self-righteousness" (49). In the fight for the fair, Chicago papers, politicians, and its after-dinner speakers chose to return "Eastern laughter" with their own insults and derisive hoots. Against the ridicule and caricatures from the East, Chicago was also declaring its identity—defiantly asserting the city had come of age.

PUCK'S CHICAGO

Founded in St. Louis in the mid-1870s, *Puck* began publishing out of New York in March 1877. Under its editor, the cartoonist Joseph Keppler, this weekly humor magazine quickly made itself into an important and national political force. David Sloane, in his history, *American Humor Magazines*, describes its role grandly: *Puck* "created [the] genre of vigorous political satire that established an American tradition in comic journalism" (Sloane 219). What made this possible was the talented band of cartoon artists Keppler

brought to the magazine. Keppler's own work as a cartoonist has often been compared to that of the great Thomas Nast. Frederick W. Opper, who drew many of *Puck*'s much-admired two-page center illustrations, was to be credited with the creation of the comic strip.

For a dozen years or more, starting in its earliest issues, Chicago and Chicagoans served as ready targets for *Puck*'s satire and comic caricatures. The city's drunken aldermen, its naïve and uneducated young women, its would-be poets and literati; its lax divorce laws, the crude manners of its *nouveaux riches* and "porkpackers," the slippery and lying ways of its bankers and businessmen—all were written up in mock travelogues, put down in two- and three-line squibs, and fleshed out in full-page cartoons. Like the *Onion* and the "Colbert Report" a century later, *Puck* dished up fake news stories with a happy indifference to fact.

Some of the parodies of news stories and travelogues veered towards tall tale performances. Take, for example, the magazine's overworked joke about Chicago's big-footed women. *Puck*'s jokesmiths insisted that Chicago was "famous for . . . the large feet of its women" ("Chicago," 23 July 1884: 330). In an early cartoon version of this joke, a diminutive Puck, a *putto* in top hat and tails, stares at a Chicago woman with grotesquely large feet. She wears shoes that look almost as tall and large as Puck. The caption beneath reads: "It's Wonderful How Everything Has Grown in this City!" (15 August 1883: 379). In "Anatomical Art in Chicago," another *Puck* cartoonist drew a pretty and fashionably dressed young woman wearing shoes that could pass for skis (24 December 1884: 267). The year before, the magazine's columnist James Abbott ironically acknowledged the many repetitions of the insult: "allusions . . . to the dimensions of Chicago girl's pedal extremity" have grown "shelf-worn [and] antiquated" ("Chicago Heard From," 11 April 1883: 91). Then, in paragraph after paragraph, he enumerates statistics on the foot size of Chicago women.

Throughout the 1880s, *Puck* presented Chicagoans as given to exaggerating the size and wonders of their city. In "*Puck*'s Pictorial Gazetteer: On Chicago, Illinois," we're told that one of the city's "inhabitants," having descended into hell, tells the damned burning with him: "This is nothing, you ought to have seen the Chicago fire" (4 July 1888: 312). In "Chicago," another mock travelogue, the city's social and cultural failings are catalogued, beginning with an obligatory joke about "the large feet of its women." Chicagoans should be

expected to lie about the city's population, show an indifference to "what is considered etiquette in older places," and, worst of all, give no respect to the "old fogyish and slow" ways of New York. The newly rich citizens of Chicago buy jewelry by the "peck," and prefer cheap chromo-lithographs to old masters and museums of fine art. "The standing of a Chicago business man," says *Puck,* "is measured by the amount of champagne he can 'open.'" One Chicagoan, on being told that his horses look fine, but "his groom is shabby," answers: "Crude, are we?" "I paid two thousand dollars for that turnout; how can there be anything crude about that?" (23 July 1884: 330).

That Chicago had opened the Art Institute in 1885 and then staged a groundbreaking exhibition of French Impressionists could never be gleaned from *Puck*'s comic journalism. The first Chicago Literary Renaissance was gathering force in the 1880s, but *Puck* never—except in ironic cuts—seems to have recognized that cultural awakening either. Chicago architects were creating a new and modern architecture; *Puck* saw only the "free and easy miscegenation of all schools" in the city's "architectural art" (12 March 1890: 34). *Puck* seemed bent on identifying Chicago literature and culture with the city's stockyards and the most provincial tastes of the Midwest's hinterlands. "The Chicago Stock-Yard Poets" (18 November 1885: 180) and "The Literary Movement in Chicago" (25 June 1890: 283) poked fun at the city's amateur poets and writers, real and imagined. The 1885 review suggests that its poets "far away in the limitless West" set the "cadences" of their verse to "the golden bell of the stockyard's freight engine." "*Lard and How to Render It*" was cited as a prime example of "the literary movement in Chicago." "This work," *Puck*'s reviewer generously added, "is enriched with a poetic preface by Miss Laker, secretary of the Bongtong Bibliophilic Association."

Puck had found it easy to mock Chicago's cultural ambitions. The city's claims to the World's Fair seemed even more laughable. After all, *Puck* and the New York press believed that "the World's Fair, in the nature of things, must be held in New York" (*Puck* 21 August 1889: 426). As the competition between the cities intensified, though, insults and scolding satire replaced flippant jokes and such peremptory declarations. "World's Fair Fancies," a full-page set of cartoons by F.W. Opper, signaled a turn in attitude. In the middle cartoon strip, Opper replays Aesop's "The Frog and the Ox": Chicago is the foolish frog of the fable, puffing itself up with vanity

and self-importance (6 November 1889: 178). Believing he can rival the mighty and much larger ox (New York), he boasts of his World's Fair ambitions to the smaller frogs in his pond (Omaha, Detroit, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Kansas City). Aesop's fable ended with the boastful frog puffing himself up in a vain effort to show that he could be as big as the ox. He does this until he bursts. The moral, commonly inscribed, warned against competing with superiors. You will destroy yourself before you can equal them. Chicago, it seemed clear, was destined to do the same.

Puck's cartoonists did their best to make Chicagoans look small, vulgar, and provincial. A week after the frog cartoon, Opper combined his considerable talent for satire with C.J. Taylor in "Between

BETWEEN THE RIP-SNORTING AND THE SLOW-GOING WOOERS.

Figure 1. F.W. Opper and C.J. Taylor, "Between the Rip-Snorting and the Slow-Going Wooers," *Puck* (13 November 1889).

the Rip-Snorting and Slow-Going Wooers" (13 November 1889: 194). New York and Chicago are rivals, courting a beautiful woman representing the 1892 World's Fair (See Figure 1). Taylor draws New York as a gallant and polite old man, tipping his hat to the World's Fair lady. He carries an armload of "carefully selected" plans for the site and financing. Chicago, in gross contrast, is a "rip-snorting," pis-

tol-packing cowboy. He throws a lariat towards the head of the World's Fair lady, as if to rope her in like a head of cattle. That Opper would draw Chicago as a cowboy might at first seem puzzling, but in 1889 this graphic symbol was conventional and legible enough for most readers. The cattle pens and meat packing plants—drawn faintly in the background—required cowboys, men on horses to

"RIVALS" — WITH A BIG DIFFERENCE.
Uncle Sam. — I am sorry, Mr. Chicago; but we want an International Exposition in 1892 — not a Dime Museum or a County Fair.

Figure 2. F.W. Opper, "'Rivals'—with a Big Difference," *Puck* 26 (11 December 1889); 666.

round up the cattle for slaughter. Chicago was part of what the East saw as the faraway and Wild West.

"'Rivals'—With a Big Difference," *Puck*'s 11 December 1889 cartoon cover, savaged Chicago and its claims to the Fair (See Figure 2). In this Opper cartoon, Chicago and New York are on their way to the halls of Congress, to bid for the World's Fair. Chicago has pushed to the head of the line. To underscore an obvious contrast, the crouching and grotesque "Mr. Chicago" is placed between the nobly erect figures of Uncle Sam and Father Knickerbocker. Uncle Sam and Father Knickerbocker, tall and venerable in appearance, symbolize old America. Father Knickerbocker again wears a three-

cornered hat, knee breeches, and buckled shoes, tokens of his descent from Revolutionary War heroes. Chicago, wild-eyed and grasping, displays a "CAST IRON CHEEK," waves balloons tagged "brag," "wind" and "bluster." Atop his hat, Chicago sports a fat little pig, an all too obvious reminder of the city's stockyards and pork packing. Under his arm, he carries bellows fitted to a horn. This is the windy city, the city that never stops blowing its own horn. No wonder Father Knickerbocker frowns at the sight of this lowly creature, and Uncle Sam says: "I am sorry Mr. Chicago; but we want an International Exposition in 1892—not a Dime Museum or a County Fair." Two weeks later, a *Harper's Weekly* cartoon repeated the joke, burlesquing a Chicago blowing a half-dozen horns (28 December 1889).

Despite New York's supreme confidence, Chicago won the critical congressional votes and the right to stage the fair. The day after the vote in the House, *The New York Times* screamed in headlines: NEW YORK ROBBED OF THE FAIR BY INTRIGUE. THE BOSSES FAVORED CHICAGO (25 February 1890). Predicting the worst, *Puck* sneered in disappointment two weeks later: "Chicago could make of any fair a poem in pork and a symphony in sublimated swine" (12 March 1890: 34).

Puck conceded the loss to Chicago in a cover editorial cartoon titled "The Cruel War is Over" (5 March 1890: 17). Father Knickerbocker tips his hat to Chicago, congratulating her on having carried off the prize of the fair. Here, in a gesture of grudging respect, *Puck*'s cartoonist C. J. Taylor draws Chicago as a proud and smiling woman dressed in a classical gown, a quasi-allegorical figure resembling Lady Liberty. Though she wears high-topped lace-up shoes instead of an ancient goddess's sandals, her figure and attributes generally conform to the idealized women Chicago's editorial cartoonists were then using as graphic symbols of their city. For this half-hearted expression of good will, Taylor foregoes the grotesque and misshapen characters that the magazine had routinely used to symbolize Chicago. A week later, though, *Puck* and Taylor reverted to the old forms: Chicago is represented as an ugly little man, crushed under a large globe labeled "World's Fair." He cries out "HELP!!!" (Cover, 12 March 1890). *Puck* could not let go the idea that Chicago, a "second city" or "a city of the second order," was incapable of holding a World's Fair (8 October 1890: 98).

What made Chicago a "second city" was plain enough to readers of *Puck* and, for that matter, to most readers of the New York press. Chicago was not New York:

> Our rich men are the men who have been to Europe; who have seen what foreign nations can do—who, in short, have had the Chicago idea educated out of them. They know that they cannot buy their Rembrandts by the yard; they know that when this country undertakes to hold an international exposition it [is] to be judged by standards established on the other side of the water. (11 December 1889: 272)

Chicago's ideas of a World's Fair, as *Puck* saw them, were Midwestern and provincial, grounded in "the Chicago theory that when you take the farm and the slaughter-house out of our civilization, there is mighty little left." The World's Fair in Chicago, it followed, "would be picturesque in plows, . . . marvelous in mowers, astounding in patent milkers, incomparable in automatic hog-feeders, and utterly illimitable . . . in all the moods . . . and forms and phases of Pork." *Puck*'s editors imagined a gigantic county fair. Midwesterners preferred sculptures "in butter" to the "works of Benvenuto Cellini." Little could be expected from a city and region that resisted "the ideas and tendencies of Eastern civilization" and ignored the cosmopolitan standards set by Europe and the "nations of the world." Concluding its recital of invective, *Puck* felt obliged to remind Chicago that a World's Fair should meet the general interests and finer tastes of the world, not just those of "Wolverines and Hoosiers" (12 March 1890: 34).

CHICAGO'S "BARBARIC YAWP"

Exposing Chicago's brag and bluster to ridicule did not silence the Windy City's boosters. Ridicule in the East Coast press and New York humor magazines brought on even louder and more outrageous shouts for the fair. After dinner speakers, the city's business and professional elites, and every one of its papers, especially the *Chicago Tribune*, never tired of saying that "The Fair Must be Held in Chicago" (*Tribune* 28 July 1889: 4). On different days, and in various articles and editorials, the *Tribune* named the city: the "heart of the continent," "the Young Giant of the West," "the typical American city," the "Paris of America" and "the city of the future."[4]

"Chicago Should Have It," the title for a Reverend Robert McIntyre's speech, typifies the spread-eagle rhetorical flights that lifted civic spirits and confirmed the city's pride. McIntyre told his audience that visitors would come to a fair in Chicago:

> to catch a whiff of pioneer air; they [will] come to behold the majesty of a great empire hewn out of the wilderness; the building of a city with a million souls on the spot where only a half-century ago the birch canoe of the red man skimmed the deep blue of the lake . . . . (*Tribune* 5 August 1889: 1)

Such boilerplate rhetoric about city's salubrious "air"—and reiterations of praise for Chicago's "pleasant summer climate"—had inspired *Puck* to drum up countless jokes about the smells of the stockyards and the poisonous sludge flowing in the Chicago River (*Puck* 27 November 1889: 217). When Chicago started crowning itself the "typical American city," *Puck*'s writers responded with jokes about the city's free and easy tolerance of "a vast throng of dirty anarchists" (27 November 1889: 224).

The *Tribune* and its editor and publisher, Joseph Medill, led a counter-charge against New York and the East. Early in the campaign, he argued that Chicago was claiming the fair "as a matter of right, not as a favor" ("Chicago and the World's Fair," 24 July 1889: 4). After winning the fair, Medill was to say that Chicago had "not been jealous of New York's claims. The rivalry between the two great sites was a friendly rivalry . . :" (*New York Times* 3 March 1890). Calling New York "the daughter of a horse-leech" and a "brazen hussy" in one editorial—calling New Yorkers "hawks, buzzards, vultures, and other unclean beasts" in another—could hardly have seemed "friendly" to anyone. In the editorial titled "The Place is Chicago," Medill said Ward McAllister, New York's most "prominent citizen," had acted like a "partially civilized hog." He topped this by inverting the conventional insult: "Chicago slaughters and packs its hogs. New York puts them on committees" (20 July 1889: 4). A week later, in "Chicago is a Candidate," he said New York was "Un-American," and added, with a finely turned proleptic twist, that "New York is a dead cock in the pit" (26 July 1889: 4). Medill's editorial, "Let the West Assert Itself,' was overloaded with comic exaggeration and regional pride, ending in this bit of borrowed poetry and deadpan humor:

> The modesty and bashfulness of Chicagoans are proverbial, but the people must shake off these qualities for the moment, if they want the fair. They must rise up and utter their barbaric yawp over the roofs of the continent or nobody will pay any attention. (23 July 1889: 4)

The "barbaric yawp" uttered throughout this editorial sounds less like Whitman, more like Chicago's fabled and frequent boasts about itself. Neither bashful nor modest, this defiant shout was an ironic acceptance of Chicago's "barbaric" identity. "Let the West Assert Itself" answered New York's jokes, insults, and condescension with loud laughter.

During the last months of competition for the fair, the *Tribune* tried to blunt jokes about Chicago by reprinting them in columns titled: "All Aimed at Chicago" (2 June 1889: 4), "The Green-Eyed Monster" (21 June 1889: 9), and "Jeers from the Jealous" (21 October 1889: 4). The *Tribune* found enough copy to print these columns two and three times a week. The insults were printed without comment; resentment and snappy comebacks were stored up for another day. Reprinting jokes and insults published elsewhere, the *Tribune* intended to ridicule what it saw as the jealousy of other cities. In the column titled "The Green-Eyed Monster" (21 June 1889: 9), for example, readers were given these lines of comic dialogue from the [Boston?] *Epoch*:

> Miss Hubber—Chicago is a rather windy city, is it not, Mr. Porker? Mr. Porker—Well, Miss Hubber, our citizens certainly do blow somewhat, but in view of the large number of hogs we slaughter every year there is reason for our blowing.

Type characters like Mr. Porker could have been found in almost any period American humor magazine or newspaper. *Puck* printed two- and four-line jokes about the odd- and ill-mannered acts of Chicagoans named Mr. and Mrs. Porkpacker, Mr. Porker and, on one occasion, a Mr. Abbatoir.[5]

The choice of Chicago as the site for the World's Fair barely slowed the back-and-forth flow of insults and ridicule between the two cities. *Puck* continued to remind its readers that Chicago was defined by slaughterhouses and stockyards and never let go of the notion that Chicago was possessed by the Midwest's crude tastes and an indifference to Old-World culture. Frederick Opper's cartoon, "Strictly Business," formed these fixed ideas into a simple but effective caricature. Opper drew three Chicagoans in Stratford,

England—a bearded farmer, slicked-up politician, and a cowboy. They are there to buy Shakespeare's home. As the trio puts it to a shocked Briton, they have inspected it, found it "genuoine," and want a price on "this 'ere old Shakespere home." They will ship it to Chicago, and "set her up on the Fair grounds" (30 July 1890: 366).

Chicago's cartoonists countered with their own comedic narratives and insulting caricatures of New York. For the front page of the

Figure 3. "CHICAGO IN MAY, 1893: She's to be Queen of the May, Girls! She's to be Queen of the May." *Inter Ocean* (10 May 1891), front page.

Inter Ocean, an editorial cartoonist imagined "Chicago in May, 1893" as "Queen of the May," drawing her as a young and beautiful woman who, from her throne looked down on a court of rival cities (10 May 1891). New York is caricatured as a dowdy and dumpy old woman (See Figure 3). T.E. Powers drew Chicago taunting New York over the loss of the Fair. Chicago is pictured as a laughing cowboy and New York as a degenerate dandy, sporting a top hat, tails,

and a monocle: "Chicago—Brace up old boy! Perhaps there'll be another anniversary in four hundred years, to which you can come

Figure 4. Charles W. Saalburg, Father Knickerbocker: "My, my! Chauncey was right when he said it was the greatest sight on earth." Chicago *Inter Ocean* (22 October 1893): front page.

via the Crow-Flight Balloon Line—if you're still on earth" (*America,* 27 August 1891).

During the months of the fair, the Chicago *Inter Ocean* published souvenir issues. In one front page cartoon, published during the triumphal closing days of the fair, cartoonist Charles W. Saalburg contrasted the youth, energy, and beauty of a Miss Chicago with New York, a gout-ridden geezer in a wheel chair (See Figure 4). Chicago, in this story line, represented the new and the modern; New York, the old and outdated. On another cover, Saalburg figured the city as a happy hog, wearing a Phoenix crown. (The crown was borrowed from Miss Chicago, who symbolized Chicago's rise from the ashes of the Great Fire.) The hog, smiling and triumphant, kicks New York, a Tammany Tiger, into space: "Chicago to New York—Get off the Earth!" ("Illustrated Supplement," 3 July 1893).

As the Fair's success became clear, Chicago's critics conceded the victory—even *Puck* set up an exhibition building on the grounds, printed souvenir issues with four-colored plates, and joined in celebrating the wonders of the magical "White City" on the shores of Lake Michigan. Gone are Mr. and Mrs. Porkpacker. Instead, the souvenir issues idealize Chicago, showing her enthroned as a radiantly majestic and allegorical figure or as a graceful and stylishly dressed young woman. For good measure, Opper's two-page center cartoon on 16 August 1893 satirized New York newspapers and editors, attacking their "snaky editorials" and "imbecile articles against the Fair." Did any of this mean that Chicago, in *Puck*'s formerly condescending view, had at last learned "to laugh at the right time" (26 April 1893: 146)? Perhaps it had. Henry Blake Fuller's novel, *The Cliff-Dwellers*, reopened the question and tested Chicago's sense of humor once more. Having his characters tell the old jokes about Chicago complicated the worn-out punch lines and muted the laughter.

LAST LAUGHS

Fuller wrote and published *The Cliff-Dwellers* in 1893, the year of the Fair. Four years later, in an article for *The Atlantic*, he said that "the date of the fair was the period at once of the city's greatest glory and of her deepest abasement." Though he speaks of "outside censors" and the "officious strictures of foreign visitors"—and may well have had in mind *Puck* and the Eastern press—he gives no names and specifies no particular attack on Chicago (534). His humor had been

sly and elusive in *The Cliff-Dwellers*, but there, however ambiguously, he assigned the insults and twice-told jokes to characters from Boston who condemned the dirt and disorder of Chicago.

During the 1880s, Fuller had placed several light comic poems in *Puck* and *Life*.[6] Because he read the magazines closely enough to publish in them, he knew, as well as any other Chicagoan, the Easterners' standardized jokes and tales told about his city. The familiar put-downs and type characters—brassy Chicagoans full of bluster and swaggering pride—reappear in *The Cliff-Dwellers*. So do parodies of the pounding rhetoric and snarling humor that the *Tribune* had sounded in its editorial pages. His novel has long been recognized as a landmark work of urban fiction and a classic of Chicago literature. Fuller critics, like Bernard Bowron and Kenneth Scambray, have read the novel as a pioneer work of American literary naturalism, as an important precursor to Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), as a critique of Chicago's brutal commercial ethos, and as a parody of the Victorian romance and marriage plots. In short, readers and critics, taking the work seriously, usually ignore the jokes and insults Fuller recast in his novel.

Modified and re-contextualized in Fuller's plot, the old jokes and newspaper clichés still had the power to sting. Not too surprisingly, in the year it was published, Chicago reviewers like Lucy Monroe and Mary Abbott read the book as an attack on the city (Scambray 83-4; Bowron 146). One scene in chapter eighteen suggests why Fuller's novel registered as an attack. A group of Chicagoans and Bostonians gather together at the home of Walworth Floyd, a transplanted Bostonian. They meet in a "sober little room," and fall into talk about Chicago, its defects and great promise. Calling Floyd's library "a sober little room" sets up an inside joke. Fuller is alluding to the "Little Room," the Friday afternoon gatherings in Chicago's Fine Arts Building. The city's leading artists and writers—including Fuller, the sculptor Lorado Taft, the painter Ralph Clarkson, the poet Harriet Monroe and her sister Lucy, Hamlin Garland, and others—regularly attended these intermittent Friday soirees. Pink tea was served to the "sober" gathering, and the talk, serious and politely funny, often turned to the state of the arts and culture in Chicago. Translated to Fuller's fiction, their "sober" conversation takes on a sharper edge and a declamatory tone.

Walworth Floyd, just before the library scene, had complained about Chicago, saying that on some days it might be better "to

remove the inhabitants and annex the whole place to the Stock-yards" (236). His put-down might well have been borrowed from *Puck*'s large store of stockyard jokes and caricatures of the city's "dirty anarchists." (Fuller, in a tidy inversion of jokes about brassy Chicagoans, makes Floyd head of a Brass Company.) A visiting Bostonian, his brother Winthrop, also criticizes Chicago's "beastly rabble" and its dirty and disgusting condition. He stirs up the loyal Chicagoans gathered in the room. Two of them join in asserting that "the present intellectual situation in Chicago" was "precisely that of Florence in the days of the . . . Medici." Another, the converted Bostonian George Ogden, says Chicago is destined to become the nation's "literary centre" and, before long, "the financial centre" and the "political centre, too." But the Chicago banker Fairchild, "the oldest and most sedate of the circle," outdoes even these exaggerated claims: Chicago "is to give the country the final blend of the American character and its ultimate metropolis." Uttering the name Chicago, he makes the word "a trumpet call" with "all the electrifying and unifying power of a college yell." He says, after a calculated and ceremonial pause, "Chicago is Chicago . . . the belief of all of us. It is inevitable; nothing can stop us now" (240-43).

Fuller uses Fairchild, an eponymous figure in the year of the Fair, to burlesque Chicago's well-known braggadocio and bluster. The "sedate" Fairchild can also stand as a parody of the grotesque and comic figures cartooned on *Puck*'s pages, an answer to their caricatures of a crude cowboy Chicago. But Fairchild's over-the-top rhetoric, his comic exaggeration of Chicago's greatness and destiny, holds a further significance. The exchange of ridicule and booster rhetoric in chapter eighteen gives us one more version of the Great American Joke. To all the inflated, if grand and heartfelt, claims for Chicago's "manifest destiny," Winthrop the Bostonian replies "I see . . . if you can only be big you don't mind being dirty" (242-43). The gap between Chicago's idealized projections of itself and a hard, persistent reality was large, and it took little wit and only a tired joke or two to point that out. What took a comic genius to see was that constant and comic exaggeration had in itself become funny. Not the tales, but the telling. The Chicagoans and their Eastern detractors—sniping at pretensions, sniffing at unformed manners—could be laughed at because they sniped and sniffed with such machine-like repetition. The last laugh, Fuller seemed to see, was reserved for the

mechanical and repetitive way that they repeated their jokes and kept shouting the same insults.

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NOTES

[1]"The World's Exposition of 1892" was given at least a half dozen names, incluidng "The Quadro-Centennial," "The International Exposition of 1892," "The World's Columbian Exposition," and of course "The Chicago World's Fair." Congressional wrangling and construction problems delayed the opening to May 1893. The most complete account of Chicago's promotional and legislative efforts can be found in Francis L. Lederer II's article, "Competition for the World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago Campaign," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Winter 1972): 382-94. Lederer, discussing the legislative history of this campaign, quotes the Chicago *Tribune* on the "fight for the Fair" in Congress. Lederer's article is paired with Robert D. Parmet's on the " . . . The New York Campaign" in the same issue, pp. 365-81. Except when otherwise noted, future references to the *Tribune* will be given parenthetically in the text. *Puck* will also be cited parenthetically in the text.

[2]In sketching the rivalry among cities, Erik Larson notes "the widespread perception that Chicago was a secondary city that preferred butchered hogs to Beethoven" (15-6). Like Burg and Downey, he has no interest in detailing the specific jokes and insults that fueled the rivalry. His *Devil in the White City* focuses on the architect Daniel Hudson Burnham, the "chief of construction," and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer (the "devil" of the title).

[3]See the long speech delivered by Bingham—a fictionalized D.H. Burnham—in Fuller's novel, *With the Procession* (162) and a smiliar set of predictions about Chicago's cultural ascendancy in his novel, *The Cliff-Dwellers* (240).

[4]The names or titles given Chicago can be found in the *Tribune* in these editorials and articles: "Should Be Held in Chicago, of Course" (23 November 1889: 4); "St. Louis and the World's Fair" (30 July 1889: 4); "The Place is Chicago" (20 July 1889: 4); "Chicago in the World's Fair Year" (12 October 1890: 12); "This is What Hurts New York" (10 March 1890: 10).

[5]Numerous jokes about Chicagoans—with a play on the words "pork" or "pork packing"—appeared in *Puck*. See "Honeymoon in Chicago" (28 May 1888: 75); "Western Modesty" (23 September 1890: 347); "Touching a Chicago Heart" (8 March 1899: 6); "In Chicago" (4 November 1903: 3).

[6]Fuller published "The Ballade of the Touriste" in *Puck* (20 July 1881(: 339 and "The Ballade of the Bank-Teller," *Puck* (7 September 1881):451. Bowron, without directly offering citations, notes that Fuller published "four honeymoon pieces" in *Life* in 1884 (Bowron 73).

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REMAKING MEN: MASCULINITY IN THE POETRY OF MARK HALLIDAY AND RODNEY JONES

KEVIN OBERLIN

Too often, poetry, like literary theory, has followed the path prescribed by Ian Gregson in *The Male Image*. Gregson insists that "what poetry does, through its habit of wrenching language into defamiliarizing shapes, is to make masculinity aesthetically open to discussion" (10). The principle behind Gregson's assertion is sound enough: to critique hegemonic values, one must somehow mark them, and Gregson is at least correct inasmuch as defamiliarizing language seems to be the practice of some contemporary poets, especially those he critiques, including John Berryman, Seamus Heaney, and John Ashbery. The aforementioned poets will be familiar to any graduate student of twentieth-century poetry but not easily interpreted by anyone outside of the academy. Indeed, even creative writers in the academy, who already separate themselves from literary theorists and most literature professors by studying current poets, cast a wary eye toward poets like Billy Collins, whose accessibility of language garners them a readership outside the ivory tower in spite of the fact that they generally make their livings in the academy. This raises the question: to whom does the defamiliarization of language open anything? Gender theory continually faces similar questions. As Raewyn Connell notes, "A large part of gender theory in the English-speaking metropole has become abstract, contemplative or analytical in style, or focuses entirely on cultural subversions," and is thus "unintelligible" to the mainstream (41).

Contemporary poets who resist the trend toward defamiliarization are precisely those best able to continue to do the work that Men's Studies theorists have been struggling to do: to analyze, dismantle, and mark masculinity, precisely because of their highly accessible language. Furthermore, this is most evident in Midwestern poets, those either raised in the Midwest or who have spent the major-

ity of their writing careers at institutions in the Midwest. This accessibility stems from the ability of Midwestern writers, as observed by Kent C. Ryden, to construct history from "materials at hand" and "assign meaning to their geography from within" with "few preexisting meanings handed down to them from the past" (513, 519-520). This essay examines work by Mark Halliday and Rodney Jones as Midwestern writers whose particular language choices and strategies address contemporary masculinity without succumbing to the alienating language or the "defamiliarizing shapes" of some of their contemporaries in poetry and criticism.

Some will find the choice to feature Mark Halliday and Rodney Jones in a piece on masculinity as represented by Midwestern poets initially perplexing. By birth, only one of them, Halliday, is a Midwesterner. His education as a writer occurred entirely in New England. Halliday's writing is notably influenced by the New York School poets. Jones was born in Alabama, and many of Jones's poems are set in the South, although a version of the South that frequently can be generalized to other regions of the United States. What makes Halliday and Jones Midwestern is where they settled: Illinois and Ohio, respectively. Indeed, both poets are good examples of the larger trend of one of the effects of poets gravitating to the academy by economic necessity: who they are and who they were can almost always be broadly defined by where they were raised and where they now teach.

Mark Halliday, born in 1949 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, has published several collections of poetry and criticism, and is frequently noted for his sense of humor and use of the rhythms of natural speech, both common for poets influenced by the New York School poets, particularly Frank O'Hara. From the standpoint of poetics, Halliday's work is most appropriately critiqued in the context of the New York School; however, his subject matter and the literal geography of his life and work make him a quintessential Midwesterner. Following his undergraduate education at Brown University and graduate education at Brandeis University, Halliday held teaching positions in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, most recently at Ohio University.

Born in Alabama in 1950, Rodney Jones is most often associated with the South, and his Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Elegy for the Southern Drawl* certainly capitalizes on those associations. Indeed, Jones was included in the 1999 collection *Contemporary Southern Writers* from St. James Press. What makes people too quickly label

Jones a Southern writer is precisely what makes him a Midwesterner: the intense effect of place on his writing and philosophy. In an interview with *Southeast Missourian* Jones says, "When I tried to write about what was in my heart, then I failed. But if I tried really hard to write about the country that I knew and the places that I knew, then I found I had some facility" (Greaney). Jones started writing as an undergraduate at the University of Alabama; however, the bulk of his work has been written since he began teaching at the University of Illinois-Carbondale in 1985. Like many transplanted writers, Jones's work reflects where he is and what he has become, as much as it reflects his roots, regardless of his choice of subject matter. It is appropriate here to quote David Baker, a poet regarded by critics as a Midwesterner in spite of being born in New England, who praises Jones for recognizing that "our history, our lives, and our language are better described as a field of ruptures, dissociations, and misrepresentations than as a linear or narrative continuum" (238). Baker further argues of Jones's 1993 collection *Apocalyptic Narrative*, "He is one of the most brilliantly readable poets currently making poems in America. His chronicles are both widely cultural and deeply personal" (240). While it can be argued that Jones takes on representations of specifically Southern masculinity in several of his poems, the larger argument his writing makes is for a more "widely cultural" re-envisioning of masculinity (Baker 240). Jones's work as a Midwestern writer and teacher, combined with his eclecticism (he is also a recognized singer/songwriter and musician), make him more Midwestern than some of Jones's more famous Midwestern predecessors.

Halliday and Jones use accessible language to confront outdated notions of masculinity. If the hegemonic masculine ideal is the strong, silent type, these men are determined to speak out, especially when it comes to their struggles with speaking out and with weakness. Their wrestling with masculinity evokes theories of sexuality postulated by theorists like Judith Butler and Ken Plummer, who see sexual identities as necessarily overlapping, messy, and ambiguous. Halliday and Jones, by acknowledging the messiness and uncertainty of masculine identity, transcend the masculine narrative of the previous generations of poets. Gregson points to Robert Lowell and John Berryman as the key male voices in the first generation of poets to allow for the interrogation of the masculine through gender dialogue invited by the confessional mode (10-11). At the same time, he recognizes that feminism more strongly influences the generation that followed them. In the

case of the confessional poets, like Lowell, each becomes bound up by a form of personal narrative, a form now thoroughly critiqued by postmodern and narrative theory, which suggests a clear and certain relationship between the poet and the speaker, the speaker and the poem, and the self and the word. The strategies that Halliday and Jones employ ensure that, while narrative may be employed in their poems, the narratives never become entirely complete or coherent. Instead, the stories they tell, if they may even properly be called that, always remain troubled by the ambiguities of contemporary life, and their surprisingly candid accessibility.

Calvin Thomas, whom Gregson adeptly attacks for Thomas's own alienating stances, encourages men to produce "writing that does something other than simply take up space," acknowledging the possibility of a permeable masculinity through accessibility (77). The challenge presented by Thomas, as well as Butler and Plummer, is not merely to speak out instead of remaining silent, but to discover different ways of speaking. Throughout the course of their poems Halliday and Jones argue with themselves, haggle, dither, doubt, backtrack, and evade in their pursuit of a new, complex masculinity. They are both keenly aware of the double-edge of humor and use humor as a way to appear simultaneously inviting and defensive. They invent their identities and histories from their immediate worlds as they overlap with the past and possible futures. They favor evasiveness as a method of indicating the complexity of masculinity and their own precarious positions in relationship to it. While Thomas and Gregson as theorists appear to speak to an audience limited by the seemingly impervious language of theory, Halliday and Jones are able to explore accessible language that allows for more complex and challenging definitions of masculinity.

MARK HALLIDAY: THE HYPERVIGILANT MAN

Referring to the need to "find the product" to keep mud out of his apartment in "Shopping with Bob Berwick," Mark Halliday writes, "Life was a series of practical problems and nothing else" (*Tasker Street* 10). Although he means for this statement to differentiate this recollection from other times in his life, many of Halliday's poems are wrapped up in the quest to understand life experiences as practical problems, regardless of how insoluble they might be. In doing so, he brings the often aloof and impermeable poetry and criticism of the

New York School (and, indeed, New York City) home to the Midwest.

Furthermore, he resists the trend of "intellectuals in the periphery [looking] outward to the metropole as the source of their concepts, methods, equipment, training and recognition" (Connell 46). Halliday boils down almost all issues of masculinity in his writing to finding the right product to solve a problem, whether he is musing over his own lust, worrying about his career, or attempting to communicate with his son. In doing so, he calls upon a humorous, Midwestern practicality that implicitly critiques theoretical abstractions. The speaker of "Removal Service Request" begs the "pragmatic seraphim from a god of gentle oblivion" to "Take away the heartbreaking photographs" in exchange for "standing alone under one naked burning bulb/a freed man" and orgasms every hour "with a new steak-fed cheerleader" (*Selfwolf* 23-25). Although the imagined solution cannot be real, it is representative of the kind of approach Halliday's speakers take to emotion at even their most rational. Halliday's speakers cannot get their minds off of the possibility of resolution. They try to explain what they feel, try to explain why they might feel that way, and even try to explain why it might be wrong, but almost always in the context of seeking some kind of solution.

Halliday's practical problem framework results in a high degree of instability in his poetry because his interrogations must always second guess themselves. Although he continually fails to acknowledge the male body as a source of his problems, he can't help but recognize the accountability he must have to his own explanations. After establishing the cheerleader fantasy as a suitable replacement for all of the memories taken away in "Removal Service Request," Halliday breaks the stanza on a moment of sexual climax and enjambs the line, "Or not" (*Selfwolf* 25). The next line continues with the repetition of "Or not," and then, "I'm tired." The reversal of the entire three pages of the poem's fantasy world occurs for exactly the same reason given for the fantasy's occurrence: the speaker is tired, too tired now not to sleep in spite of his earlier insomnia. By the time the poem concludes, it becomes clear that Halliday's dithering, in allowing him to relentlessly seek conclusions, also allows him to evade them entirely.

The most overt example of Halliday's hypervigilant approach to masculinity occurs in "Venus Pandemos," a somewhat lengthy monologue on the speaker's own lust. "What am I going to do with my desire/for women?" the speaker asks in the first lines of the poem (*Little Star* 26). The analysis ranges from a somewhat sincere consid-

eration of language to humorously glib evasions. In the course of his internal debate, the speaker acknowledges the violence of the male gaze, as well as the inherent pitfalls in using the female body as a way to interrogate his problematic masculinity. In doing so, Halliday at least begins to analyze "male power, male hegemony, with a concern for the effect of this power on the female subject," a step Tania Modleski insists is necessary for a critique of masculinity to be successful (qtd. in Thomas 62). The speaker insists that "'Lust' seems such a fierce hairy word, I don't think/it quite applies," but later confesses that "'visual rape' is not a meaningless phrase," alternating between a view of lust as an appropriate response to beauty and an inappropriately aggressive masculine response to women's bodies (26, 30).

In a kind of mock blazon, the speaker talks about estimating a woman's breasts, ass, face, and so on, but spends considerably more time debating the appropriateness of the words. This is partly an admitted evasion because he does not want to "belong with/Hugh Hefner's legions of Total Assholes," but he is sincerely concerned by the fact that the word "breast" unsettles him, looking like it should rhyme with "yeast," and that "'Ass' seems such a nasty word,/perhaps antagonistic, certainly crass" (26, 27). He does not like using these words in conversation but always has them in mind, suggesting discomfort with his own objectifying behaviors. Halliday's speaker seems to be aware that his humorous tone makes him charming, but also that the defense it provides will not ultimately be effective enough. When the speaker asks himself why he demands that breasts be "definite," he responds, "To help make her manifestly Other./Why? Hey, I don't know! Do I have to explain/everything?" (27) The speaker is intelligent enough to be aware of the theoretical implications of his behavior but also is a little nervous about where his self-analysis leads him. He has taken a first step with "an act of self-reflexivity," acknowledging his performance of gender, but he is aware he has not ultimately followed through with what Frank Lay describes as "subversive bodily acts that are capable of disrupting the performance pattern which reproduces oppression" (228). He has looked at a woman through a certain lens and knows he will do so again. Does he have to explain everything? He at least feels an obligation to try because he knows that his desire must be critiqued because it can and will continue to be so easily perceived as sexist and oppressive.

The speaker second guesses the sufficiency of his discussion when he wonders "if any intelligent feminists/will ever read this poem," saying, "I hope so; though the prospect makes me tense" (27). More than simply trying to explain himself to himself and to whoever might read him, he feels he must also bring his masculinity before an imagined court of feminist readers. Because he imagines that after a mere two pages they are still condemning him as "Shallow, horny, and exhibitionistic," he must go on (27). The speaker's need to interrogate his masculinity seems to be forced on him by an external world that finds it suspect. After considering the "sick nexus of sexism and capitalism" that brings concepts of possession, control, and conquest into the vocabulary of male sexuality and then dismissing all of them as too "grandiose and arrogant," he asks, "Is it a defining quality of beauty/that it won't leave us alone?" putting the onus for his desire on beauty as an abstract idea (28-9). To ignore a beautiful woman without some form of ogling, he says, would be "death-in-life," although he later second guesses this line of thought as well, finding that it just leads him back to the "penis shoving home" as a "war machine blitzing all the way/to the citadel" to plant a flag so that it can "normalize" an objectified body and move on (29-30).

There seems to be no conclusion the speaker can come to that does not require him to fold back on himself and reconsider, but he seems most comfortable with the idea that "this is a problem imposed on [him] by beauty" (30). Perhaps the sense of comfort comes from acknowledging that no amount of interrogation can give him control over his own masculinity if the circumstances that create it, whether they are imagined feminist readers or social conventions of beauty, are beyond his control. He can admit responsibility for the problem of his own masculinity, even participate in a social critique, but he cannot ultimately be responsible for providing a satisfactory explanation of his masculinity or keeping any other kind of control over it.

By the time he says at the poem's conclusion that "an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN is a PROBLEM," he has made it clear that he does not mean to blame women nor beauty for his desire, but that he does mean to implicate them as inextricable factors in the problem of masculinity because it is, as so many have argued, socially constructed. The speaker's monologue brings him to the conclusion that, although masculine desire cannot merely be accepted uncritically, it also cannot simply be blamed on men. Understanding masculinity, as is the

case with any gender construct, requires participation by everyone, because everyone is involved in constructing masculine desire. The speaker says "all this" so he can bring his "problems out into the open" because "it's supposed to be healthy," but it only makes him feel "a little better; but not relaxed" (32). To be relaxed, he must be joined now by all those he has implicated in his discussion, we whose responses he has only been able to guess and second guess, because all of us are part of the "problem."

One weakness of "Venus Pandemos" as a poem proclaiming honesty about masculine desire is its curious impersonality. In spite of the glib, confessional tone of the speaker's voice, his comments are abstract and ungrounded. Although this helps Halliday contribute to the notion of masculinity as universal, rather than merely belonging to men, it sacrifices the opportunity to convince the reader that a real, particular individual might experience masculinity this way. At the other extreme in Halliday's work would be a poem like "Seven Baskets" in *Jab,* which consists entirely of personal details built into a narrative of hypermasculinity. Making seven baskets in a row serves as a central point of stereotypical masculine success that emphasizes a successful career, sexual exploits that "set a new standard for self-assurance/in the history of athletic Dell-Viking poets," and the convenient separation of different lives, all of which are meant to make up for an earlier humiliation (80). Although the patent ridiculousness of the egotistical speaker reveals the poem to be a critique of this kind of masculinity, the fantasy world of the poem ultimately limits its ability to illuminate something as complex as masculinity. For that reason, it is more worthwhile to consider a poem that bridges "Venus Pandemos" and "Seven Baskets" in style and content to contrast a more nuanced approach to masculinity with "Venus Pandemos."

In "New Wife," the speaker helps his wife unload groceries, all the while wondering how she sees him and what the repercussions would be if she could get into his head. He wonders,

> What if my new wife sees through me in 1993
> on a long August day of the greenhouse effect
> and realizes that in the end I choose
> five times out of six
> to do what might protect my ego from its wormy fears
> instead of what might help her live
> or help someone else live?

> In the rippling wet heat of that long day
> she comes to see that my real priority
> emerging beyond accidents and gestures of this week
> is to publish poems and stories and thus win praise
> not so much because of a great Belief in the Art
> but because I was unbrave on the soccer field in tenth grade (*Tasker Street* 36)

Immediately, the speaker contextualizes his experience with a date, a time of year, and figurative language. Although he asks questions that are as serious as those asked in "Venus Pandemos," the setting suggests a different level of intimacy. Admitting the details of one's lust for women might be intimate in terms of subject matter, but the speaker of "New Wife" expresses an intimacy that is far more present. It has a place, and it involves specific, contextualized people. The problem of masculinity described in "Venus Pandemos" affects everyone, but the problem in "New Wife" affects real people, whose fears are "wormy" and whose thoughts are influenced by "the rippling wet heat" of a specific moment and place. The events the poem describes did not happen in Connell's "metropole" or in the abstract; they happened next door. The speaker fears that his new wife will see his willingness to put himself first most of the time, admitting that his reasons for doing so are personal to the point of being petty.

Beauty is not responsible for this speaker's actions, nor "Belief in Art," just his own inability to forgive himself for being "unbrave," and for not moving two women, both mentioned by name in the poem, to kiss him. The speaker fears his wife will see that he sees himself as "a forgettable fleck of nothing," which means to him that his "Belief in Love is therefore frail/and could bend and even break if pressed against/my myth of Great Achievement" (36). This speaker is far less concerned with implicating all people in the problem of masculinity than he is in understanding his own place in the problem. He has subscribed to the myth that men must achieve and believes that he has placed it before his new wife.

As Halliday does so often, the speaker second guesses himself, asking parenthetically and repeatedly, "Is this true?" Is it true that he has lifted up the "myth of Great Achievement" above the lives of others? "Can writing this poem," he wonders, also in parentheses, "make it less true?" (36). Halliday does not give us a specific answer, so his speaker must assume "All this/grows apparent to her/as we unload groceries from the car and I dish out some sour remark/about

the sameness of our dinners while merciless heat reflects/down from my scalp, scalp of balding writer in his forties" (36). As privileged to the speaker's thoughts as the reader is, the new wife bears witness to the speaker's petty grousing and aging body. The myth is no longer simply the speaker's achievement, but his virility. In three short lines, the speaker fears the worst: "She sees./What then?/She leaves me" (36). When his masculinity is stripped as bare as his head, he fears his wife must see him as "some forgettable self-licking small-headed egotist who can't grow up," his language bringing to mind a flaccid penis consumed by ineffectual masturbation (37). He has repeatedly built himself up at the expense of all else to try to compensate for early failures, and now he must take account.

Of course, in any of Halliday's self-interrogations there is always room for at least one more capitalized, enjambed "Or." Maybe, the speaker thinks, his new wife merely imagines she understands why the old wife "allowed herself to lose" him, suggesting the speaker's partial acknowledgement of his responsibility for that failure, too. As in "Venus Pandemos," it seems to be the speaker's recognition that responsibility must be shared that allows for a kind of temporary closure. He finds relief not in a masculinity that requires him to put his achievements before all else to compensate for moments of weakness, but in one that allows the responsibility for life's challenges to be shared. He calls it "a testing of love, the shoulders and arms of love tested/by a weight more than bags of groceries/that we haul up the dim stairs" (36). Not only must the speaker acknowledge the limits of his own body, he also gives love a body with "shoulders and arms" so that it, or more appropriately the speaker and his wife through it, can share the weight of their pasts. The problem has not disappeared as the stairs are still dim and the bags are heavy, but the speaker has recognized a framework for understanding that relies on more than his inflated trust in himself.

RODNEY JONES: THE HUMBLE MAN

At the conclusion of an early poem Rodney Jones describes "a way of thinking of saints: how a man/On a mountain comes to resemble that mountain,/Then is the mountain, his speech/Meant for silence, silence for his words" (*Going Ahead* 31). The devout man bleeds into his surroundings, becoming sainthood, an abstract concept, an impenetrable one. He becomes that with which he is associated. Silence and

speech are also identified with each other, which seems somewhat fitting for a poem that describes a character's actions without ever giving him a voice. The implication throughout the poem that the man's actions, "staying home," speak for him builds him into the mountain (30). In his impenetrability, the man becomes representative of a narrow view of masculinity that prizes the marmoreal façade to the exclusion of all else and that defines itself by associations with the phallus. It is cold, alienating, and, superficially, a perfect defense against weakness and humiliation. Although the tone of the poem's conclusion suggests Jones holds an admiration for the man he describes in spite of the implied criticism of the man's reclusion, he develops in his later writing a much broader view of masculinity.

Jones's exploration of masculinity ranges freely from boyhood to manhood, focusing on the notion of lives as stories and puts a Midwestern stamp on it not only in terms of the language he uses, but also the activities he describes, specifically work that crosses traditional gender boundaries. This particular performance of gender is "bringing identities into existence through action" through an overlapping of identities over time (Connell 42). Jones views present sexuality as a function of past sexuality, placing a high degree of significance on an examination of adolescent sexual experiences, but instead of defining manhood against boyhood, he views masculinity as encompassing both. Instead of defining adult sexuality against adolescent sexuality, he defines sexuality as a whole by contrasting stories of sexual experience with stories that could have happened, but did not, that is, actual experience against potential experience.

In "The Life I Did Not Live," the speaker imagines "trailing a woman [he] knew" and contemplates alternative choices he could have made in his life (*Apocalyptic Narrative* 55). Rather than trailing off completely into the fantasy world, he reigns himself back in the middle of the poem with the short, solid declaration of an actual self, "But I am forty," emphasizing his "One life to hold, one night that weeps/From the block of all the time there is." Definition of an individual self, or any aspect of that self, happens for Jones in relation to "all the time there is" and all of the potential that time holds, rather than in relation to another fixity. A story defines itself by not being one of an infinite number of other possible stories. This coincides with Ryden's descriptions of Midwesterners, who "continually construct the past anew from the materials at hand" (513). Where Halliday relentlessly second guesses, Jones allows for ambiguity by

considering infinite possibility, drawing from "the materials at hand," his past, present, and possible future, reconstituting each out of the other as the poem or situation demands.

When he reflects on his college experience driving in a car ahead of an esteemed professor, Jones writes, "When a young man drives alone/It is as if a faithful animal holds the wheel/While he draws from the bounty of his ego/The wishful story of his life to come, a saga of martyrdom and nudity . . . I thought my life would pass in erotic gentleness" (*Things That Happen Once* 35). Jones embeds the impenetrable notion of masculinity in the speaker's assumptions about his life. The speaker drives alone, sees his ego as infinitely bountiful, and feels his physical self to be a faithful animal. He imagines that he stands above his life as it spreads out luxuriously beneath and ahead of him, one of noble sacrifices and gratifying sexual experiences.

The narrative myth is one that will be familiar to most Americans, and one frequently associated with stereotypical definitions of masculinity. It also assumes that the speaker could not possibly become the professor, which is, of course, where Jones finds himself now. What the speaker discovers in the car wreck that follows, and in the uncomfortable sexual overtones of the way the male professor simultaneously pleads for his company and offers him comfort, addressing the speaker as "honey," is that actual experience limits and defines our lives" abstractions. Instead of gentle and erotic, he finds he feels "like a woman/Struck down in a field and ravished by a god" (37). Instead of the lone man feeling confident on the highway, he feels kinship with a classical myth, with a victimized woman, and with a greater and more confusing complex of ideas than he had ever suspected would comprise his own identity. Masculinity for Jones is not defined against boyhood, femininity, or any potential opposite, but in the context of all other possible definitions of the concept.

Because Jones refuses to define masculinity against femininity, they often seem partners in a kind of co-conspiracy in his poems. What emerges from this, perhaps the most interesting aspect of masculinity in Jones's work, is a view of sexuality in which masculinity and femininity are fluid, merging together into a form in which distinctions between the two become meaningless. The fluidity here is less that of Luce Irigaray's metaphor for femininity as opposed to phallic rigidity, as it is Rosi Braidotti's "melt-down of the male symbolic in order to provide for the radical re-enfleshing of both men and women" (qtd. in Thomas 70). In Jones's poems, men and women are

not masculine and feminine; they are just sexual. In "A Prayer to the Goddess," the speaker laments the time he spent in adolescence with various religions seeking "What kind of thing [he] was" (*Things That Happen Once* 65). He remembers a time when he was worried he had gotten a girl pregnant, recalling his prayers to the stars, to the stones, and to the clouds that she would not be pregnant or that he might die to avoid having to deal with the repercussions.

Now, as an adult, he tells the goddess, "Confused as I was, I did not even know you existed/Except that the pith of everything worshiped and forbidden/Inspired some vague and unkeepable promise of the world." In spite of the sense of humor the speaker now seems to have about his "adolescent systole-diastole, sex and suicide," as well as his appeals to all the different religions to understand himself, and in spite of the comparative seriousness with which he now addresses the goddess, the poem does not suggest literal paganism on the part of the speaker. What he does embrace, through recognizing the goddess as an alternative way to understand sex, is a holistic view of sexuality. The "vague and unkeepable promise of the world" at the "pith of everything" is the unity of sexual experience. His mistake in adolescence was reverting to a stereotypically male isolationism when what would have helped him understand what was happening was an appeal to the goddess, "the warped cradle of the waxing moon." Where trying to be masculine in a very limited sense led him to the "systole-diastole" and death, recognizing a broader sense of sexuality would have allowed him to acknowledge abundant life in the sexual relationship that caused him so much panic.

Jones acknowledges the necessity of understanding masculinity as one with femininity more simply in "Doing Laundry" when he writes, "When I tied steel on the bridge, I was not so holy/As now, taking the hot sheets from the dryer,/Thinking of the song I will make in praise of women,/But also of ordinary men, doing laundry" (*Elegy* 102). Holiness and validity are not defined by a narrow view of work as masculine or feminine, but through the kind of thinking and meditation the work inspires. Through the lens of Midwestern practicality, Jones challenges the notions of the male provider and of work as something that must yield fiscal benefits, instead examining how work factors into gender identity. Indeed, Jones offers an elaboration on the Midwestern poet Philip Levine's critique of those who "don't know what work is" (19). Jones's speaker considers the meditative quality of "Pouring the detergent just so," but at the same time that the

work "is not always the folded, foursquare, neat" (101). He imagines that his doing the laundry has freed up some women to do other kinds of work, but rather than seeing this as a burden taken on in the name of sexual equality, he sees it as work made valuable by its own merits. The poem does not conclude with him martyring himself by making a song "in praise of women" for doing so much laundry, but rather by offering shared praise for men and women as they share work. Rather than merely reversing archaic gender expectations for certain types of work, Jones insists that there is nothing masculine or feminine about any given work. "Doing Laundry" suggests a world in which ordinary men and women are praised for doing ordinary work, a world in which perceiving work as gendered would be meaningless.

What Jones values most in "Doing Laundry," and indeed in most of his poems, is humility, pride being perhaps the greatest obstacle he describes in bringing masculinity and femininity into union. As he watches a mimosa tree begin to die in "Mimosa," the speaker considers all of the memories and folk wisdom that surround such trees for him, wondering how and whether to try to save the tree. "It is the time," he says, "I put my faith in beauty and in weakness," offering us a strategy for understanding the life that is "dying at each juncture" (*Transparent Gestures* 29). This dying, the pruning off of possible limbs that define lives against their infinite potential, must be approached with a humble appreciation of beauty and acceptance of weakness, because there can be no other way for a single human being to face that kind of possibility.

Toward the end of Jones's sequence, "Ten Sighs from a Sabbatical," he brings some closure to the notion of embracing weakness as necessary in order to understand the failings of prior conceptions of masculinity:

> My father, for all my childhood, would oppose
> my sighs as others might object to profanity.
> If I had finished splitting a pile of logs
> or loading a truck of hay into the barn,
> I had only to lean back, inhale a great gulp
> of air and expel it with an undiminished *whew,*
> and there he was like Marcus Aurelius.
> Long I held tight, but now I give out
> and go down the cleansing breath
> dead-legged and bath-headed with joy. (*Kingdom of the Instant* 77)

The language Jones uses to describe the father makes the father's understanding of masculinity clear. To be masculine means to be in "opposition," to support the profane over the sensitive. The father immediately quashes the exuberance of the "great gulp/of air" the speaker expels "with an undiminished *whew*" by standing over him "like Marcus Aurelius," insisting that a sigh is no appropriate response to physically grueling labor.

What the speaker realizes that the father does not, of course, is the necessity of the great sigh. It is only the humble admission that the body is weak and the work is hard that makes the work worthy of doing. Masculinity as the father defines it has nothing to do with the nature of the labor or the response to it. Indeed, it is the father's opposition that diminishes the speaker, because the sigh is "undiminished." Held in, the sigh is "tight," but let out it is "cleansing." The erosion of the old notion of masculinity and its relationship to a specific kind of work allows the speaker to feel his own body and to appreciate the experience. It may leave him "dead-legged," but it is not the death the adolescent with a narrow view of masculinity fears in "A Prayer to the Goddess." Rather, it is a life-affirming weariness. The speaker is now "bath-headed with joy," emphasizing the feeling of cleansing rejuvenation at the same time that the image evokes the heaviness felt after hard labor, like the hypothetical splitting of logs. In this case the hard labor is the life-long work of humbly accepting weakness in spite of the previous generation's looming prejudices, a sharp contrast to both traditional Midwestern definitions of work and traditional definitions of masculinity.

When Jones's poems praise humility, they offer an understanding of masculinity that provides "ways of talking to each other across boundaries" (Connell 49). In "The Privacy of Women," a poem in which Jones explores his relationships with the women in his family and the ways in which the genders considered together create a familial continuity, he writes, "It does not say in any book that the division will be clean/Between mother and son/or father and daughter" (*Apocalyptic Narrative* 65). Such boundaries are artificial and preclude actual human experience. Instead, we must have the humility to explore and, if possible, to transcend definitions. In the same poem, Jones writes, "My love, my mother, my one daughter, my song, my salt evocation,/Given completely to their keeping,/I give up my last shyness." This, then, is the struggle of men in Jones's poems and in life as he understands it: to understand, undermine, and over-

come masculinity, men must give up the shyness that holds up the illusion of inviolability, embracing instead an open, spoken humility and vulnerability.

Of course, both Halliday and Jones continuously struggle with what Jones calls the "priapic beast," the old masculinity of domination and impenetrability. Halliday's struggling seems to be less fruitful than Jones's, his poems acting as Möbius strips that never quite seem to break free of the grip of machismo for all of their twisting. While his call for a shared social responsibility for gender identity points toward the kinds of overlapping identities described by gender theorists, it is perhaps less convincing than Jones's efforts. Jones, like Halliday, recognizes the beast and is as troubled by it, but he also acknowledges the potential for embracing all feelings as parts of masculinity. His *speakers* are more clearly vulnerable, and their *physical bodies* are more clearly vulnerable.

Most importantly, both poets insist on speaking out on the subject of masculinity by interrogating it and themselves in accessible language that does not insist on tidy conclusions, necessarily leaving them and their speakers emotionally and physically vulnerable. When faced with new definitions of masculinity, each of these men struggles with uncertainty, fear, failure, and hope. They attempt to establish a connection between the self and the word and by doing so create fluidity among their selves and their masculinities, a fluidity as slippery and elusive as any identity.

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BEARING WITNESS: ECOLOGICAL MEMORY IN THE ESSAYS OF SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS

CHRISTIAN KNOELLER

Reading landscapes for their environmental history, contemporary Midwestern literary naturalists carry on the legacy of the region's pioneering ecologists, especially Paul Errington and Aldo Leopold. Leopold argued that to fully appreciate a place involves recognizing changes to the landscape, especially how human use has repeatedly reshaped wild ecosystems and too often compromised their integrity. He sought to instill conservationist sensibilities in future ecologists beginning with the capacity to read landscapes for evidence of ecological processes over time. Reading nature as text had in fact been a recurrent trope throughout much of Leopold's work and actually has antecedents in earlier American literature including nineteenth-century Transcendentalists, perhaps above all Henry David Thoreau, as well as subsequent conservationists such as John Muir. The writings of Scott Russell Sanders fit squarely within this tradition. Throughout many volumes of essays and memoir, he repeatedly returns to the theme of landscape change: the relentless destruction of prairie and forest ecosystems converted for agriculture, a process culminating in the practices of modern industrial farming. His narratives of environmental history—including laments for lost habitat—underlie his calls for environmental advocacy and form the basis for envisioning ethical relations to nature.

Sanders frequently invokes this sense of environmental history. He follows Leopold and Errington in recounting the geological processes that shaped the Midwestern landscape and created its extensive wetlands at the end of the last Ice Age: the region's environmental history in deep time. He describes a deep-seated desire to have witnessed the "primal country" of the Midwest prior to European settlement, "one that preceded all maps" (*A Conservationist Manifesto* 129). He recounts the astounding pace

and extent of alterations to this landscape during the nineteenth century—leaving only scattered remnants of native woodland and prairie preserved. Moreover, Sanders laments how the original abundance established over millennia has been largely exhausted in less than two centuries as fertile topsoil has eroded and been depleted of natural nutrients, leading to dependence on petrochemicals and, more recently, genetic engineering to increase yields at the expense of environmental degradation. He characterizes present-day agricultural ventures in the Midwest as the culmination of a long-held vision of European settlers in the Americas who routinely moved on after denuding entire landscapes of verdant ecosystems.

As Sanders concludes, "Of all the regions in America, the Midwest is most easily—if superficially—subdued, and therefore the one where the failure of our efforts, the waste of riches, the betrayal of promise is most painfully evident. If literature of the Midwest began as the story of arrivals and departures, it has evolved into a literature of loss" (*Writing from the Center* 48-9). "The dream of dominating the wilderness," he continues, " . . . is the story of the whole continent in miniature . . . played out here in the Heartland with fiercer energy and more bitter disillusionment . . . to control nature with a thoroughness and zeal unmatched by any other region" (*Writing from the Center* 44-45). The sprawling industrial farms of today's agribusiness, he suggests, represent a sad legacy, "the latest expression of our drive to simplify the land . . ." (*Writing from the Center* 47).

Narratives of environmental history written by Sanders and Leopold epitomize the representation of ecological memory in Midwestern literature.[1] *Ecological memory* is a pervasive term in the field of landscape restoration; it refers to the biological processes that enable the regeneration of ecosystems following disruption due to natural or human-induced causes. Dynamic biological processes such as plant succession and species diversification are poised to resume as soon human "improvements" are left untended—whether forests logged off, wetlands drained, or prairie sod plowed under. Native species returning of their own accord represent ecological memory in a botanical sense. By extension, the concept of ecological memory can be applied to literary representations of landscape change such as narratives of environmental history. "What we call landscape," Sanders reminds us, "is a stretch of earth overlaid with memory, expectation, and thought," suggesting the prospect of stew-

ardship and restoration (*Hunting for Hope* 7). As ecocritic Scott Slovic observes, while a "rhetorical mode of critique and complaint and dismay recurs in Sanders's work . . . the price of perception, of awareness, it appears, is the compulsion to worry—to notice loss and degradation, to rail against it," there is the countervailing voice of hope: "the language of revelation and celebration. . . .[and] the achievable transformations of lifestyle that might offer us solace and some chance of sustainability" ("Scott Russell Sanders: A Portrait" 104-6).

In *A Conservationist Manifesto*, Sanders posits a set of ethical principles that perpetuate and extend Leopold's land ethic, leading ecocritic William Barillas to hail Sanders as "the Midwestern writer who has done the most to develop the implications of Leopold's land ethic and aesthetic for the nature essay" (102). With an aphoristic style resembling that of *A Sand County Almanac*, the book's title essay begins with an evocation of both environmental destruction and restoration. Sanders laments the widespread loss of habitat and bears witness to extinction of species in our time. He acknowledges human culpability for ongoing deforestation, pollution, erosion, and climate change and, like Leopold, the corresponding sense of ethical responsibility for protecting the ecological integrity of the natural world. In an earlier work, he asserts that "we bear a solemn obligation to conserve the earth's bounty, for all life. This means we should defend the air and water and soil from pollution and exploitation. It means that we should protect other species and preserve the habitats they rely on" (*Hunting for Hope* 168). Yet he also offers an alternative, more hopeful vision of environmental restoration. According to Barillas, "As did Aldo Leopold, Sanders advocates reinhabiting a location in North America, learning about its natural and human history for the sake of citizenship as well as spiritual growth" (103).

Given his philosophical kinship with Leopold, Sanders shares the concern for environmental history. In *The Country of Language*, he recounts some of his earliest experiences in the wild as he "learned to *read* the woods and fields" (20, emphasis mine). He describes being introduced to the art of tracking by his father, an avid hunter: "scanning for animal tracks. Here was another alphabet for me to learn . . . . As I learned to recognize animal tracks and tree bark and leaf shapes from my father, so I learned the alphabets of flowers and vegetables and fruits from my mother, who was always a gardener" (23-4). In *A Private History of Awe*, Sanders vividly depicts these

early experiences that kindled his passion for both nature and language that has remained with him for a lifetime: "On our walks, I begged to know the names of garden plants, crops in the fields, trees in the woods and so I learned peanuts and okra, sorghum and burley, ironwood and sweet gum. After I wore out my father's patience, I would go ask my mother the names of flowers and spices. *Zinnia. Peony. Oregano. Basil*" (26). Like Leopold, Sanders has long seen the natural world as text to be read.

Sanders's perception of environmental history was initially shaped by places he knew as a youth including 21,000 acres of former farmland in Ohio surrounding a munitions plant where his father worked. "Scattered through those thousands of acres were hundreds of foundation holes from farmhouses and barns that had been bulldozed in 1940 for the building of the Arsenal. There were abandoned orchards, beds of asparagus and rhubarb, clumps of perennial flowers that kept pumping out blossoms among the weeds, and family cemeteries growing up with brush . . . . Muskrats paddled through the scum leaving black trails. Beavers built dams in the creeks. Foxes hunted mice in the fields. High in the tallest trees, eagles made nests out of sticks. Deer meandered everywhere" (*A Private History of Awe* 47). Wildlife flourished so well that the Army eventually hired a trapper to eradicate what were considered unwanted vermin—including coyotes, foxes, beavers, muskrats and minks—adding to the litany of species eliminated there in an earlier era, as Sanders explains, distilling several centuries of environmental history: "The old-timers got every last lion and bear and buffalo before we ever came along" (*A Private History of Awe* 66).

Sanders further asserts that memories of places from childhood exert a lifelong influence on our relationship with nature—perhaps none more powerfully than bearing witness to destruction of landscapes we once cherished. "No fate," he declares, "could be more ordinary" than to face the desecration of such hallowed ground, those very places that have awakened our personal appreciation of nature (*Staying Put* 12). Consider how his essay "After the Flood," for instance, depicts landscape change to his childhood home in rural Ohio. He vividly recounts the dilapidated state of the place upon the family's arrival: "It was a failed farm, Dad said, which made it cheap enough for us to buy. The fences were mostly down. Plows, a harrow, a manure spreader, an iron-wheeled tractor, and other old equip-

ment rusted in a ravine at the edge of the woods. The pigpen was a warped box on skids" (*A Private History of Awe* 84).

Returning there as an adult, he attempted to square his memories and emotions with a place that had been irrevocably altered when the neighboring Mahoning Valley was flooded. His family's farm was abandoned when the river was dammed, leaving an indelible mark on his imagination—and a deepened appreciation for the ecological processes that commence when any tract of land reverts to the wild. "A dam was built," he explains, "the river died, and water backed up over most of the land I knew" (4). Even after many years' absence, he tells us, this remained for him the "place by which to measure every other place" (*Staying Put* 4). Moreover, he writes, "One's native ground is the place where, since before you had words for such knowledge, you have known the smells, the seasons, the birds and beasts . . . even if you become intimate with new landscapes, you still bear the impression of that first ground" *(Staying Put* 12). A particularly lyrical reflection in *The Private History of Awe* suggests an innate desire to perceive nature intimately, to identify with the wild: "A child is more like a forest, gathering every drop of rain or flake of snow, every fallen leaf, the slant of sunlight and glint of moonlight, the fluster and song of birds, the paths worn by deer, the litter of bones and nuts and seed, and whatever the wind delivers, taking it all in, turning everything into new growth" (43). Indeed, Sanders recalls how as a schoolboy he had even fantasized about belonging to the wild: "I wanted to go my own way, like a coyote that steals through the woods, sniffing and snooping, pondering things, howling now and again in the safety of darkness, evading all traps" (*A Private History of Awe* 69).

Upon his return to the family's former homestead, Sanders finds that the landscape and farm buildings inextricably fixed in his memory are gone. Forest had already begun to reclaim the place. "The field where I had baled hay," he reports, "now bristled with a young woods" (*Staying Put* 8). He recognizes trees he had helped plant as a boy towering above a forest canopy, "fifty feet high, brimming over the woods that used to be our cleared land" (8). He realizes that in the time since his departure as a child, "All the while, cedar and sumac and brambles, like the earth's dark fur, [had been] pushing up though my past" (9). A succession of indigenous plant species had in the span of half a human lifetime begun to establish a wild woodland community. As he concludes in the essay "Telling the Holy," "the

Mahoning River, long since dammed, still runs in me . . . In memory, a forest I have not seen for twenty years still murmurs with the voice of my father naming trees . . . I am bound to the earth by a web of stories . . . By keeping the stories fresh, I keep the places alive in my imagination" (*Staying Put* 150). In fact, the grief he experienced returning to find his family's farm buildings razed, pastures overgrown, and the river valley itself submerged, gave rise to an intensified desire to preserve the natural world whenever possible: "This ground was lost . . ." he conceded. "But other ground could be saved, must be saved, in every watershed" (*Writing from the Center* 8).

The representation of landscape change in literature can be derived not only from such personal experience, of course, but from a broader historical record and past accounts as well. In "The Force of Moving Water," for example, Sanders recounts natural abundance found historically along the Ohio River. At the time of early exploration, the watershed teemed with wildlife. Early visitors such as George Croghan, writing in 1765, described a landscape abounding with wild game—notably bears, deer, and buffalo—providing easy pickings for hunters. Artist and naturalist John James Audubon portrayed much the same ample supply of game half a century later, also noting bountiful birds such as grouse, teal, and turkey. Such natural abundance endured there well into the nineteenth century, Sanders reports, with bears, beaver, deer, otters, muskrats and squirrels common along the banks, and fish of over a hundred kinds still plentiful in the river. Along the shore were verdant woodlands brimming with biodiversity.

And yet, as the century progressed, exploitation of such natural resources took its toll, as Sanders recounts: "The pattern of habitat destruction and relentless hunting has been repeated for species after species . . . . The lynx, wildcat, panther, elk, otter, bear, and wolf disappeared from the region; the green parakeet vanished altogether. The whooping cranes dwindled almost to extinction" (*Staying Put* 81). This litany of habitat loss, wildlife decline, and local extinction represents a familiar narrative of environmental history on the American frontier and bears witness to several centuries of ecological degradation in the wake of initial settlement and subsequent development. Indeed, even as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Audubon had already begun to recognize such trends in many parts of North America, including the Midwest (Knoeller). For Sanders, such accounts by Audubon and his contemporaries provide

a baseline for appreciating the vulnerability of the region's natural abundance.

Like Leopold, Sanders perceives an ethical imperative in safeguarding life, human and nonhuman, "in all its dazzling array" (*Writing from the Center* 138). In fact, he views ecological health and social justice as "inseparable" (212). According to Sanders, preservation of traditional cultures, languages, and lifeways of indigenous peoples is part and parcel of protecting the ecological integrity of the natural world. The corollary is to incorporate a concern with cultural diversity and social justice with environmental ethics. Genetic diversity represents the biological legacy of evolutionary processes; so, too, cultural diversity reflects the accumulated human history of inhabiting a wide variety of landscapes in myriad ways. In "Telling the Holy," Sanders contemplates the extent of indigenous cultural memory that vanished as tribes were displaced and white settlers laid claim to land in their wake:

> We live in a land that has been known, remembered, spoken of with reverence and joy for thousands of years . . . . In my own region of the Ohio Valley, there are few traces left of the aboriginal way. As the Shawnee, Miami, and other tribes were driven out, by arms or treaty, we lost the benefit of their long-evolved knowledge of the animals, the plants, the seasons, the soil itself. We lost nearly all of their stories and songs. (*Staying Put* 167)

"We must help them stay on their native ground," he declares, "help them preserve their languages and skills, for their experience can enrich our common fund of knowledge about living wisely on Earth" (*A Conservationist Manifesto* 217). "In seeking a way of life that is durable," Sanders contends, "we have much to learn from those indigenous peoples who have lived in place for many generations without degrading their home" (*A Conservationist Manifesto* 217). In this formulation, cultural diversity is to human well-being what species biodiversity is to ecological communities. Indeed, the two are intertwined. "Just as DNA stores within our bodies a deep evolutionary inheritance," he observes, "so language stores outside our bodies the cumulative discoveries of our species" (*A Private History of Awe* 31). Sanders's inclusive vision is one consistent with Leopold's: "Our effort to honor human differences cannot succeed apart from our effort to honor the buzzing, blooming, bewildering variety of live on earth" (*Writing from the Center* 137).

In addition to Leopold, Sanders is also heir to another Midwestern naturalist, Indiana's Gene Stratton-Porter, whose *A Girl of the Limberlost* (1909) was among the most widely read novels of its time with its evocation of primordial wetlands and their ecological bounty as well as the redemptive power of nature. She was one of several pre-eminent writers from the region to portray the power of the wilds to restore both physical and emotional well-being. Characters in works such as Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River" set on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Sanders points out, often "feel restored and liberated by contact with the land . . . this nurturing link between person and place" (*Writing from the Center* 38). In later life Stratton-Porter set about restoring native species by transplanting wildflowers by the thousands. Yet as Sanders explains, "The Limberlost she relished was untamed . . . she celebrated the fecundity and beauty of the Limberlost, which appears in her books as a kind of Eden" (*A Conservationist Manifesto* 150-1).

In "Telling the Holy," Sanders depicts a pilgrimage he made to Loblolly Marsh Wetland Preserve, to witness a modern-day restoration of a fragment of the original Limberlost Swamp in Indiana's Jay County. His account of current restoration efforts and evocation of increasing biodiversity there in *A Conservationist Manifesto* reads like a Whitmanesque catalogue of native species:

> All around us now the dry stems of last year's foxtail, switchgrass, Indian grass, big bluestem, and little bluestem wave on the uplands . . . These grasses were planted, along with a number of wildflowers—blue flag iris, purple coneflower, wild bergamot, indigo—but other plants have come back on their own, including milkweed and hemp dogbane . . . White swaths of boneset are blooming now, along with bold yellow wands of golden ragwort and demure white clusters of daisy fleabane . . . . Broad-leafed and narrow-leafed cattails have found their way here to crowd these pools, and so have rushes, sedges, plantain, smartweed, cottonwood, and willow. (*A Conservationist Manifesto* 153)

While a good number of these plants have been deliberately reintroduced, others have arrived unbidden: " . . . seeds from some of these native species may have lain dormant in the muck for the past hundred years, waiting for the corn to go away and the water to return . . . . The marsh is rousing, as if waking from a long sleep . . . . " he

concludes, "ancient rhythms that are slowly returning to this long-used, much-loved, and richly imagined ground" (153).

In *Hunting for Hope*, Sanders cites a compelling litany of ongoing efforts at environmental stewardship throughout this country and the world, suggesting the promise of restoration: "returning animals and plants to areas from which they had vanished, reflooding drained wetlands, gathering rare seeds, replanting forest and prairies, cleaning up rivers, helping endangered species and battered lands to recover" (37). When environmentally friendly legislation rewards stewardship, moreover, the tide of relentless development can sometimes be stemmed. For example, the Conservation Reserve Program, enacted by the federal government in 1985, paid farmers to take tens of millions of acres of marginally productive cropland out of production. As a consequence, Sanders reports, "these habitats have recovered, soil erosion has declined, water quality has improved, and wildlife has multiplied" (38). Such initiatives for environmental restoration, he realizes, are inspired by a combination of love of the land and a knowledge of ecology, much as Leopold had championed.

Bearing witness to the history of landscape change—the crux of ecological memory—underlies environmental ethics in our time: a lament for natural abundance lost tempered by a recognition of nature's capacity for regeneration. Restoration of native species and indigenous ecosystems, as advocated and practiced by both Leopold and Stratton-Porter, continues today in places such as the Loblolly Marsh. Like his predecessors among Midwestern naturalists, Sanders grasps this fundamental ecological precept: preserving the diversity of indigenous species ensures the stability and resilience of a biotic community. What is more, acknowledging that ecological integrity is essential to the biological processes that sustain all life necessitates taking an ethical stance. In the end, what begins with reverence for the natural world has led Sanders to perpetuate the legacy of pioneering ecologists by advocating the preservation and restoration of wild places in the American Midwest.

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NOTE

[1]While the term *ecological memory* has been employed in a wide variety of disciplinary contexts ranging from landscape architecture and restoration to

ethnobotany (see Nazarea), it is intended here in a more generalized descriptive sense corresponding to narratives of environmental history.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2010

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, during 2010. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence within the twelve-state area that defines the Midwest. Fiction and poetry using Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including (if applicable) designations of locale within square brackets at the end of each citation. However, because of space constraints, primary source materials are limited to separately-published works; those appearing in literary journals and magazines are generally not included. Secondary sources, usually journal articles, books, or doctoral dissertations, are listed by subject.

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

A	Anthology	juv	Juvenile fiction
bibl	Bibliography	Lang	Language; linquistics
biog	Biography	M	Memoir
corr	Correspondence	N	Novel
crit	Criticism	P	Poetry

D	Drama	pub	Publishing; printing
I	Interview(s)	rev	Review essay
jrnl	Journalism	S	Short fiction

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