MidAmerica XXVII

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In Honor of
William X. Kienzle

PREFACE

Whether *MidAmerica XXVII* is the first wave of the new century and millennium or the last of the old is not a subject that will inspire discussion and debate among members and scholars for much of the future, although I subscribe to the latter view, just as I'm convinced that the turn of the century is its mid-point rather than the end of one and the beginning of the other.

What is important is the fact that this issue is neither a beginning nor an end, but it is part of a continuum that began in 1974 and that will go on. This issue, like its predecessors, continues to explore the richness of the Midwestern literary heritage that members of the Society began with the first Society conference in 1971, an exploration for which there can be no end.

Suitably this issue is inscribed to William X. Kienzle, novelist, Detroiter, and recipient of the Mark Twain Award for 2000.

November, 2000 DAVID D. ANDERSON

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HALE-BOPP

DIANE KENDIG

Looking ahead, I would have asked to have it come
for me as for the Siberian farmer, Sebenov,
who in 1905 watched a second sun crash to the taiga
scorching his skin and knocking him off his porch,
so close the thunder of it rumbled for hours,
a modern take on the road to Damascus, I'm sure.

But at the time, preceded by stories
of thirty-nine suicides and my own lifetime luck
of eons of not seeing, though positioned below
meteor showers or with friends who spied
all the falling stars I missed, I asked for nothing,
and Hale-Bopp dawned on me like the end of a nap.

The twelfth hour of the trip home,
where we turn a tad south off the turnpike to Fremont,
I cooled my cheek on the passenger window
and eyed the fuzzy fluorescent halo that wagged
an admonishing finger, erasing my diagnostic
obsession, loss of balance and nerve.

And seeing the broomstar did not veer off to Toledo
nor trail behind us to mark a mall, though it trailed
itself, set itself inside by windows, classically centered
and not violating any frame of reference, not even
hanging at the edge like the Bayeux tapestry,
I thought, *this is it, sister: what you are getting.*

And so on the road to Fostoria, nowhere, really,
we pulled off into a field facing northwest, placed
the comet in the middle of the windshield,
positioning ourselves for the long view,
to be visited by light, not struck down, burned,
or taken, just stopped in our tracks for a respite.

University of Findlay

NOVELISTS AND BIOGRAPHERS: THE SINCLAIR LEWIS, AUGUST DERLETH, AND MARK SCHORER TRIANGLE

KENNETH B. GRANT

One could say of Mark Schorer's biography *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* much the same as Samuel Johnson did of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: it is a masterful work, but no one would ever wish it to be a single page longer. Schorer began his project a few months after Lewis's death, and in 1961, after nine years of research, he published what many reviewers instantly identified as the definitive biography of the United States's first Nobel Laureate, a massive book of more than 800 densely packed pages. The front page *New York Times Book Review* concluded with an observation that came to be echoed by other critics and general readers regarding Schorer's treatment of Lewis:

> Between Mark Schorer the cultivated literary man and Sinclair Lewis the writer of natural talent, there is a great distance and no easy way of bridging it. Clearly aware of this problem, Mr. Schorer tries very hard to keep his impatience under control. However, he has lived too long with Lewis and suffered too much with him, so that occasionally he gives way to a kind of maturity-mongering, a running judgment on Lewis' mistakes.
>
> Well, it is not hard to see the failures in someone else's life, and every biographer, I suppose, is obliged to record them; but there are moments when a reader looking back upon the shambles of Sinclair Lewis' years and reflecting that such a tragic waste is far from unique to him, may feel for this brilliant and stricken man a more open sympathy than Mr. Schorer allows himself to express. (Howe 34)

While Irving Howe had hoped for "a more open sympathy," the *New Republic's* reviewer found the minutely detailed concentration on Lewis's character failings simultaneously "fascinating" and "too near revulsion" (Scott 16). This paper seeks to explain a cause for this

absence of compassion in the biography by investigating the relationships and interconnections among Sinclair Lewis and two rising, young Wisconsin writers, Mark Schorer and August Derleth. Through the shifting perspectives afforded by these three writers, I hope to show that Irving Howe may be mistaken when he writes of the great and unbridgeable distance between Sinclair Lewis and Mark Schorer, for biographies are inevitably autobiographies, and *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* reflects the failures not just of Red Lewis's life but of Mark Schorer's as well.

We know from Schorer's biography that Sinclair Lewis used his fame and influence to support new writers at the beginning of their careers; that was how August Derleth came to meet him in Milwaukee on November 4, 1937, the day before Lewis was to give an address at a convention of Wisconsin educators. Lewis had been moved by Derleth's first serious novel, *Still Is the Summer Night*, published under Scribner's distinguished editor, Maxwell Perkins. He intended to promote Derleth's novel in his scheduled address the next day. Derleth recounts the meeting in his book *Three Literary Men: A Memoir of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters*. In Lewis's hotel room, they touched on a number of topics—their mutual appreciation of Thoreau as well as their mutual rejection of Carl Van Doren's *Nation* essay on "the revolt from the village." During their visit, Lewis displayed his typical restlessness, intensity and impulsiveness: "You write too much," he tells Derleth (10). When a group of reporters and photographers arrive, Derleth recalls Lewis erupting in a characteristic outburst:

> He exploded when one of the reporters asked where I was from. "Christ! He doesn't even know where he's from!" ... To the reporter he replied, "Don't you know this fellow's already written six books, he lives in Wisconsin, he's always lived there? Do something to let the rest of the state know about him." (14)

He turned to another of his visitors to add caustically: "They don't know a first-class writer out here until the rest of the world shoves him down their throats!" Derleth's memoir depicts Lewis's theatrics much as Schorer's biography, Lewis play-acting before his Midwestern audience of guests, journalists, and photographers.

The next day Lewis read passages from *Still Is the Summer Night*, and praised a number of Wisconsin writers, among them Mark

Schorer for his novel *A House Too Old*. He reserved his kindest words and greatest detail for Derleth:

> He looks to me like an important national, maybe international, figure ... After about four hours with him, maybe twelve or fourteen hours with his book, I feel that he is a personal friend and I'm prepared to go to bat for August Derleth, the author of Still Is the Summer Night. ...You have the beginning here of a young man who is a writer of the first importance, and with that, you have the indication that Wisconsin, which has been distinguished in so many ways .... [for] its part in literature, may have an enormously greater part. (16)

Derleth was delighted by this enthusiastic recognition. Shortly thereafter, Lewis wrote in support of Derleth's Guggenheim application, and Derleth dedicated his next regional novel, *Restless Is the River*, to Lewis.

A footnote in Derleth's *Three Literary Men* chides Schorer for focusing on the "less pleasant aspects of Lewis at the expense of such positive facets as his constant espousal of young writers" (13). Here, Derleth speaks from the perspective of the anointed young novelist; Schorer, always in competition with Derleth, had received only passing notice from the Nobel laureate. In fact, Derleth's memoir of Lewis provides clues that Lewis may have been sharply critical of Schorer as a novelist and a person. Comparing *Still Is the Summer Night* to another novel, Lewis remarked to Derleth, "Your people are real. You believe in them. You sympathize with them. but there isn't a sympathetic character in all of this book,' he said, pushing aside another of the novels he had been reading. 'Just the same—he can write. The trouble is he doesn't really like people; he's all wrapped up in himself'" (10). In another footnote, Derleth observes that Lewis' observation was on target; in the future, the author would write only "two more novels which, while technically sound, contained not a sympathetic character, left readers singularly cold, and then fell silent as a creative writer." Of the authors identified in the memoir, only Mark Schorer wrote two more novels, and the phrase "fell silent as a creative writer," describes Schorer's shift to academic writing. How prophetic it was that Lewis identified Schorer as lacking in empathy and prone to self-involvement as these become criticisms of Lewis in Schorer's hands. If Lewis were describing Schorer, there can be little doubt that Derleth carried Lewis's message back to

Schorer as the two young men were never inclined to spare each other any gossip—no matter how painful or humiliating. Since Schorer was capable of giving as good as he got, we may only speculate on how these events may have been reflected in Schorer's approach to the biography of Lewis. To understand Schorer's likely response to Lewis' assessment, we need to turn our attention from Lewis to the relationship between Schorer and Derleth.

Both Derleth and Schorer were born in Sauk City, Wisconsin—Schorer in 1908, a year earlier than Derleth. They lived a few blocks from each other, but the geographic proximity was complicated by a difference in social class. Derleth's family—no matter his claims of aristocratic Bavarian ancestry—was decidedly working class. His father labored in the family blacksmith shop earning no more than $75 a month. Schorer's family owned the local canning factory, and Mark Schorer's father would eventually employ Derleth during the summers, giving him the "soft job" of mixing brine for the canning process.

During the summer of 1926, Derleth began collaborating with Mark Schorer on macabre stories for the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. Years later, Schorer would describe the creative pattern of their collaborations:

> It must have been in the summer after my first year at the university and before his first year there that we rented an empty cottage hanging over the river for $5 a month, our "office," and became collaborators. For years he had read a magazine called *Weird Tales* and felt that he was an authority on the kind of stories that it published; he had, in fact, already published some stories of his own in that periodical. He persuaded me that I, too, could become a writer, and so we rented that place in that summer and wrote weird tales together. We would discuss a plot; I would write a first draft, and sometimes, at his order, a second; he would then rewrite it; and we would submit the result. We sold quite a number of those stories to *Weird Tales*, being paid anything from $15 to $25 for each, depending on length. (135)

Destined to follow Schorer to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Derleth used the proceeds from these early publications to buy books for his library and to augment the $8.15 his father sent him weekly to pay his university expenses.

Schorer's reminiscence of his relationship with August Derleth in *Pieces of Life* is contained in a section aptly titled "Decadence." They would meet at the Sauk City library where they eagerly read the

romantic adventure novels of Alexandre Dumas and Rafael Sabatini. Eventually, they discovered writers of the late nineteenth century decadent movement, especially Oscar Wilde and Joris-Karl Huysmans. Their relationship developed into something more than a simple youthful collaboration in writing pulp fiction. Perhaps for Schorer their physical attachment constituted only simple adolescent sexual exploration, but for Derleth who with youthful enthusiasm fashioned himself a decadent, the sexual component of their relationship was certainly more.

Later, as undergraduates, Derleth felt himself increasingly estranged from Schorer. Schorer paid Derleth infrequent social visits and avoided introducing Derleth to his fraternity friends. Many times, Derleth found Schorer impaired by drink. As fellow English majors, Schorer had fewer opportunities to snub Derleth. They found themselves together often in the classroom, and Schorer relied on Derleth to provide him with ideas. As Lewis had sold plots to Jack London in his early years, so Derleth provided Schorer with plots for not only the weird tales they co-authored, but also for Schorer's UW-Madison coursework, particularly English 105, a course taught by Helen C. White. Some of the plots were freely given, other material was not. In a letter to Dr. Louise Phelps Kellogg of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Derleth writes about his relationship with Schorer:

> One of these pieces I wrote then was entitled "Dawn"—a simple, and inconsequential story of a farmer's wife's yearning to escape the drudgery of her work. One day I had occasion to go through some papers of Mr. Schorer's in search of a portion of one of our collaborations. I came upon a story entitled "The Ocean's Blue," one of his stories; a simple passing glance was enough to reveal to me a similarity to "Dawn." Forthwith I read the story and saw that it was a frank plagarism. Perhaps 'frank' is not the word. I appropriated the manuscript and so informed Mr. Schorer. (August Derleth to Louise Phelps Kellog)

According to Derleth, one of the stories he willingly gave to Schorer appeared as part of the ending of Schorer's novel *The Hermitage Place* in 1941. But when Derleth discovered that Schorer had used some of his notes without his permission in *A House Too Old*, the friendship was broken. For years, Derleth kept a monograph written by Edward Klein, *A Plagarism of the Mind*, detailing Schorer's liter-

ary theft with the thought of placing the manuscript in The August Derleth Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. He never did. Klein's thesis was eventually found among Derleth's personal papers in 1997. Derleth was reluctant to speak publicly about his relationship with Schorer—he wrote to Kellog to counter some negative comments Schorer had made regarding Derleth to the historian. Derleth fictionalized the destruction of their relationship during their undergraduate years in his homoerotic novella, *Marius*, an unpublished manuscript among the few restricted materials in the August Derleth Collection. In the biographical novella, Schorer's insincerity, callousness, lack of empathy, and alcohol abuse are detailed in incident after incident.

While Derleth confided to a few close friends and through suppressed texts Schorer's failings, Schorer credits Derleth with emotional tough skin in his own set of accusations. He says of Derleth, "He was a great putter-downer, especially of me. I never tried to put him down because he was impervious to the attempt. He had the hide of an elephant in his dogmatic certainties" (Schorer, *Pieces* 132). Years later, after their falling out over Schorer's plagarism had scabbed into a civil correspondence, Derleth explained his feelings to Schorer directly. Schorer, claiming a gap in his memory, wrote Derleth asking for personal anecdotes about Jean Toomer's wife, the novelist Margery Latimer, who died in childbirth in 1932. Derleth responded: "That whole Margery Latimer matter is a sensitive area, and I suppose you couldn't possibly have adduced better proof of a bad memory than by invading it" (August Derleth to Mark Schorer). Derleth reminded Schorer that Derleth himself had begun a correspondence with her, shared his letters with Schorer, and that Schorer had then begun his own correspondence with Latimer, even visiting her. When Latimer died in August, 1932, Derleth reminded Schorer that he was still working for Schorer's father at the canning factory when Derleth called the Schorer household to see if he could travel with them to the Latimer visitation in Portage. Derleth was stung by Schorer's response: "you said you'd rather not take me, 'You [Derleth] might not know how to act.' I'm not surprised that this bit was blocked out in your memory; it naturally wasn't in mine because it chilled an otherwise warm and intimate relationship." Schorer cast Derleth as an outsider as well as a social misfit, just as he would make a point to do to Lewis almost thirty years later.

Another exchange in this same pair of letters points up the disparity in importance their early relationship held in their lives. For Derleth, both hurt and tender memories mingle; for Schorer, an emptiness expressive of devaluation. Schorer writes: "As to decayed memory: I have no idea what day in Madison in 1925 you were referring to in your last letter. And what, for God's sake, did I have to give or not? Except the obvious. You say that on that day I gave what I had to give, implying that it wasn't very much. How right!" And Derleth responds:

> An inability to give of oneself is a common failing. December 30, 1925, I went with you to Madison...but the point of remembering it is that my money (I never had v. much) ran out long before yours, and you generously shared yours with me. On the way home you fell asleep in my arms in the back seat; I insisted on getting out at Jaeger's corner and walking home to cool off. No, I didn't have any reference to "the obvious"—there was pretty much of that, relatively infantile as it was, and that was a situation which in one way or another I've been through many times— i.e., either on the one side or the other—the one loving, the other being loved—but it's very seldom that affection is genuinely mutual—I've seldom known it.

Schorer's absence of memory and Derleth's detailed reconstruction of an event almost forty-five years in the past is telling. Schorer recollects only the adolescent sexual exploration; Derleth, not just the sexuality, but the tenderness and affection which bound him to Schorer during their teenage years.

In *Wisconsin Writers and Writing*, a series of lecturers prepared in 1963, Derleth passed judgment on Schorer as fiction writer and biographer. How closely do the observations he makes echo those of Sinclair Lewis regarding Schorer years earlier in Milwaukee? How closely, as well, do they point to the compassionless character of *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*? Of Schorer's novels and short stories, Derleth writes:

> One feels, on reading them, that these are carefully studied exercises, but not really very creative; their excellent prose style is simply not enough to lend them impact and strength in view of Schorer's failure to arouse any sympathy for them. This failure is peculiarly Schorer's and the secret of it lies in the fact that Schorer has never been able to put himself very much in the place of others. He remains objective in his perspective, and as long as he can write out of personal experience—out of what he has learned directly or felt or seen—he commands respect, but the moment he is required to project himself into the personality of

> someone else, he falls down, he is too conscious of self, he cannot escape the limitations of self. (Derleth, *Wisconsin Writers* 77-78).

In a letter to S. Philip Colehour, who attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison with both Derleth and Schorer and Harvard with Schorer, Derleth suggests that Schorer suffered from envy and disappointment—envy that Derleth had earned artistic success with *Walden West* and disappointment that his biography was denied the Pulitzer Prize he had hoped for. Schorer, Derleth observed, got even by refusing to list *Walden West* on the New York *Herald-Tribune* list of outstanding books. "choosing instead to list two minor if good works by people on his staff who, he frankly admitted, he wanted to be indebted to him!" (AD to Colehour 28 Jan 63). Assessing Schorer's fiction in the same letter, Derleth writes, "his characters are cold, one seldom cares about them, they do not involve one. Lacking warmth himself, he cannot somehow get it into his characters. This should not follow, but it does, in this case. He is contemptuous of his family—father, brothers, etc.—and his own holds him in contempt. Last time he was here—last June—he spent an hour here running down his family, complaining of his inconveniences, etc. About an hour after he had gone, I was appalled to realize that I was thinking about Mark as of somebody who had died. And I guess, in a very real sense for me, he had died." In *Wisconsin Writers and Writing*, Derleth acknowledges Schorer's achievement in writing *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*, but he expresses a familiar reservation as well:

> Schorer was in my opinion a dubious choice as biographer of Lewis, but he has nevertheless acquitted himself quite well in this monumental work. True, he is guilty all too frequently of looking down his academic nose at Lewis—he shows the scorn of the academician for the creative writer; he does it in unnecessary snide footnotes and asides, and he does it in dwelling far more on Lewis's shortcomings as a man and writer than on his better aspects. (Derleth, *Wisconsin Writers* 79).

The image we have of Schorer by Derleth, Colehour, and others resonates with the similar image Schorer presents of Lewis. Both Schorer and Lewis were troubled by alcohol, both Schorer and Lewis suffered from blunted creativity, both Schorer and Lewis could not maintain friendships for long, both Schorer and Lewis experienced disintegrating relationships with parents, spouses and children. In one sense, Schorer's "snide footnotes and asides" may hint at conscious and painful self-recognition. Why was *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* so absent of compassion or sympathy? Very likely these tender feelings were absent in the character of Mark Schorer. Derleth felt Schorer lacked self-understanding just as Schorer felt Lewis did. Perhaps Schorer's assessment of Lewis might apply equally to himself:

> Perhaps there was too much, and too much in conflict, to have made self-knowledge possible. Not many men are doomed to live with such a mixture of warring qualities as he was. Consider him at any level of conduct—his domestic habits, his social behavior, his character, his thought, his art—always there is the same extraordinary contradiction. Sloppy and compulsively tidy, absurdly gregarious and lonely, quick in enthusiasms and swiftly bored, extravagant and parsimonious, a dude and a bumpkin, a wit and a bore, given to extremities of gaiety and gloom, equally possessed of a talent for the most intensive concentration and for the maddest dishevelment of energies; sweet of temper and virulent, tolerant and absurdly intolerant, generous and selfish, kind and cruel, a great patron and a small tyrant, disliking women even when he thought he most loved them, profane and a puritan, libertine and prude, plagued by self-doubt as he was eaten by arrogance. (810)

The series of contradictions Schorer enumerates about Lewis describe the contradictions that others observed in Schorer. If true, the Lewis biography becomes simultaneously a shadow Schorer autobiography, and the created image of the subject mysteriously assumes the raiment of the writer. The lack of charity, the inclination to focus on the petty, the failed human relationships—much of what we wince at while reading *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*—have all passed through the distorting filter of the personality of his biographer.

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HOLY CROSS AND "HE'S SO FINE"

PAUL SOMERS

"I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning,
I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All, all, all over this land!"

As the folk trio on the altar finished with a flourish that struck Greg as rather on the prideful side, Greg and Mary Ellis knelt on padded risers among the crowded maple pews. She nudged him and they shared a little smile: It had long been their private joke to refer to this church as "Saints Peter, Paul and Mary."

Greg had on his blue blazer, pleated tan slacks and blue button-down Oxford cloth shirt, open at the throat. Mary wore a similar outfit, substituting a tan skirt for the tan slacks. His beard and curly brown hair were neatly trimmed, and her "naturally frosted" hair was short and swept back.

He shook his head in perplexity: "How in Heaven's name had he, once staunch, now back-slidden Methodist, happened to wind up in a Catholic church, even if it was St. Jerome's student parish? Granted, the service opened with the old Protestant hymn, "This Little Gospel Light of Mine," progressed to "If I Had a Hammer," and might well conclude with a Bob Dylan tune, but all that could not obscure the fact that he was kneeling while a Priest said Mass at the altar—even though the Priest spoke in English and encouraged parishioners to call him "Leo." Greg thought with mingled sadness and relief that it was just as well his mother wasn't alive to see this, or rather hear of it; he was sure she would have refused to come. He had never understood why, but she had always hated Catholics. For that matter, so had he, in a blind, knee-jerk sort of way. What would he have thought twenty years ago if he could have foreseen this turn of events?

He, Mary, and their daughter, Hannah, had been coming to St. Jerome's for four years, since he had begun to teach at the University,

but he still felt a little dizzy whenever he examined his now familiar surroundings, which would have been so foreign to him half a lifetime ago.

Minutes before, he and Mary had watched on tiptoe as the white-cassocked Priest administered First Communion to their daughter and another child, a little boy, and welcomed them as adults into the Community of the Church.

Adults? Community of the Church? That wasn't funny. He couldn't imagine ever considering his precious daughter an adult. He pretended to be kidding when he called her his Little Princess, but he really did dote on her. And as far as the Community of the Church went, it had taken him nearly half of his life to come to grips with that.

There had been a time, nearly forgotten now, when he had seldom thought of Mary without reflecting sourly that she was named for Mary, Mother of Christ, as had been so many millions of Catholic Girls over the centuries.

Their first meeting, in the student union, had not boded well for an interfaith marriage: "May I sit with you?" he had asked.

"Would you consider marrying a Catholic?"

"Not in this lifetime," he had exclaimed.

"Good!" she said and scooted over to make room for him. The rest was romantic history.

Her Catholicism had repelled the Protestant in him while intriguing the rebellious son. They argued religion in the early weeks, but he had lost interest; aside from having memorized the names of the books of the Old and New testaments in Sunday School, to win a baseball bat, he wasn't much on theology. Just as his mother had warned, she, *they* knew how to debate, had all the answers.

"You mean," Greg had asked incredulously, "that you can commit any crime you feel like, confess to a Priest, and then everything's OK?"

"That's right," Mary had astonished him by answering. "If you commit a crime you still have to answer to the law, but the sin is forgiven if you truly repent."

The boy who still felt guilty about stealing that bag of marbles from the dime store when he was eight found it hard to imagine such largesse.

Since the days of those early theological debates, the church's position on political and social issues had alienated Mary. In recent

years, however, the responsibility of bringing up a child, combined with their discovery of the comparatively liberal campus parish, had brought Mary back and Greg with her.

She had never pressured Greg about religion, letting him work out his own accommodation. Going to church with her helped to desensitize him, and he hadn't protested when she enrolled Hannah in "CCD" classes for religious instruction. That was as far as matters went, though; when Mary's grandfather asked her if Greg had "turned" yet, she answered:

"Poppy, he hasn't even signaled!"

While he had neither signaled nor turned, Greg had become more or less comfortable with the Church. He missed the Latin Mass. Sometimes, like today, he became so carried away that he actually genuflected: "Good for the body, as well as the soul," he joked. And, although he, himself, had never been required to eat fish on Fridays, he agreed with traditionalists that the abandoned dietary law had been a good idea. In addition, the free donuts and social hour in the basement after Mass had a folksy, congregational touch that made him feel at home. "Maybe I'm signaling," he told himself.

The Sunday following St. Patrick's Day was almost exactly ... nineteen years after the incident which had made such an occasion inevitable.

Students at Mary and Greg's university had observed three beer-drinking holidays per week: Wednesday nights and Fridays and Saturdays from noon on. There were other festivals, such as individual birthdays, Money from Home day, and End of Exams. St. Patrick's Day had been one of the biggest, though; no matter what day of the week it fell on, large numbers of eager beer (that's all the village ordinance allowed) drinkers would swarm uptown to the bars for green beer, free party hats, and good times.

And on that long-ago St. Paddy's Day, Greg and Mary had gotten an early start. They had skipped Sunday dinner to meet outside of St. Mary's Church after she had finished with Mass. Although he fancied himself a militant Methodist, Greg had not actually gotten around—or up, as it were—to attending Church since he came down to school three years ago.

They made a nice couple; he was a bit too bony, she a bit too plump, but they were conspicuously in love. He hadn't given her his fraternity pin, although he knew she would like to have it, would like to have him. He was a Junior, and pinning was more serious that it

might seem to a first year student like Mary. Being pinned was, to an upperclass male, perilously close to engagement. Besides, so serious a step would mean that she would have to meet his parents. He shrank from the prospect of a confrontation between his giggly Catholic girlfriend and his somber Methodist mother. Yet they continued to see each other every possible moment, to neck and joke about how he hated to part with his only piece of jewelry.

He liked her smile and how she kissed and the way her wavy blonde hair looked against her green corduroy coat with the snow white collar. Sometimes, when they were in an especially silly mood, she would do her praying mantis impression, crooking her wrists like insect forelegs and darting her rolled-up tongue in and out as she turned her head stiffly from side-to-side.

They soon reached the dark and teeming bar, where Greg's roommate, Robbie had saved them seats. As soon as he saw them, he began to fill two short glasses from the huge gallon pitcher of green beer.

"Where the hell ya been?" he demanded with characteristically good-natured belligerence, the stub of a Camel jutting up from one corner of his wide mouth. As they slid into the narrow booth across from him, he addressed Mary: "You must have burned every damned candle in town."

She laughed nervously in spite of herself, her blue eyes narrowing to slits. Cigarette still in place, he leaned toward her, squinting and mimicking her giggle. "Ya curly-headed mackerel-snapper, next thing I know, ya'll have my roommate going to *church*." Straightening up and puffing out his narrow chest, he rolled his eyes toward the firmament and delivered the next line with great satisfaction: "Heaven forbid!"

He and Greg laughed uproariously—that's what friends are for—and Mary continued to giggle.

"Here's to the Pope and St. Patrick!" Greg proposed a green toast.

"And the President," added Robbie, who was a generic Protestant, himself. They all emptied their little glasses in three or four gulps and banged them down on the initial-scarred table.

"Hi, Greg!" Towering over him was a statuesque, dusky-haired blonde; broad -hipped, big-breasted, with a pug nose and plenty of freckles. She had on a green sweater, green and gold plaid skirt, green knee socks, and a little green paper derby, perched at a tipsy angle. Holding the hat steady with one hand, she bent down and wrapped a firm, full arm around his neck and kissed him enthusiastically on the

mouth. "Happy St. Patrick's Day!" Looking only at him, she laughed, her nose crinkling, and let her hand linger on his shoulder as she straightened up imposingly and let the current of the crowd sweep her along.

"Uh, yeah," Greg mumbled belatedly. "Happy St. Patrick's Day." His wet lips still tingled—from the sheer force of the kiss, of course, not from any emotional impact.

"Who was *that*?" Mary demanded loudly, "Paddy's pig?" but the kiss-and-run artist had passed out of earshot in the uproar. Robbie had collapsed in his seat, tears of laughter in his eyes. "That," he choked, "was The Bear."

"Who the hell is The Bear?" Mary turned on the sheepish, red-faced Greg.

"Oh, she's just that girl that just wished me Happy St. Patrick's Day," he replied ingenuously, intent on refilling their glasses.

"I know *that*. Who *is* she?"

Seeing a chance to create Pandemonium our of chaos, Robbie volunteered: "She's the one who used to like to have Greg stick his tongue in her ear."

"*What?*"

"But I never went any farther than that." Greg omitted to say that it was not for lack of effort.

"That's really dis*gust*ing, Greg!"

"But I haven't taken her out since I started dating you."

"You'd better not!"

Robbie was still laughing. "Paddy's pig!"

Knowing from experience that silence was the best strategy, Greg stared into his beer glass, trying to hide a half-cocky smile. "He's So Fine" by the Chiffons was playing on the juke box, loudly enough to be heard even above the babble.

"He's so fine (doo lang, doo lang, doo lang; doo lang doo lang)
Wish he were mine (doo lang, doo lang, doo lang, doo lang; doo lang doo lang)
That handsome boy over there,
The one with the wavy hair.

His own hair being wavy, short though it was, Greg always considered this to be his song, because he assumed it described the way Mary felt about him

Don't know how I'm gonna do it, (doo lang, etc.)
But I'm gonna make him mine, (doo lang, etc.)
He's the envy of all the girls,

Greg had to admit that this last was something of an exaggeration.

It's just a matter of time.
So fine, so fine, so fine, so fine, etc.

At just this moment, Mary moved closer, even closer that she had been before the assault, if that was possible, took his arm and rubbed her cheek against his shoulder. "I still love ya, Pervert."

He kissed her, smearing one lens of his glasses.

"Try to stick your tongue in *my* ear, and I'll twist it off."

"Yes, Ma'am."

She toyed with his pearl-encrusted fraternity pin.

"Hey, keep your little paws off my only piece of jewelry. You just want to have a candlelight so all the girls can stand around and squeal," (By way of illustration, Greg and Robbie went "Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!" in unison.) "and you can be a big deal."

She grinned up at him. "I was just thinking how much better it would look on me."

A few minutes later, they were joined by Robbie's fiancee, Donna Jean, a secretary from Dayton. Robbie told of the great Road Trip to Cincinnati that he had planned, and they all left. He put down the top of Donna Jean's aging but very clean Chevy convertible to let in the spring day, which felt more like early May than mid-March.

Mary and Greg leaned back and surrendered to the blast of their passage through the country air, letting the fresh wind blow away the bar smoke, the exams, the term papers, everything. An hour later, they entered the section of Cincinnati that Robbie had been talking about. It was an old neighborhood, occupied by working class Irish and German Catholics, plus a few artists and left-over beatniks, who had moved there for the European quaintness.

Old Holy Cross Church was the center of the neighborhood, and Robbie parked nearby to show it to them. Feeling extremely Protestant, Greg glanced uneasily about. On a paved playground, girls of junior high school-age were skipping rope. Most wore white sweat shirts with *Holy Cross* in green upon the front. He scrutinized the girls for extraordinary signs but could find none. It somehow disconcerted him that their language was American and their chants familiar ones:

Cinderella, dressed in yella,
Went upstairs to meet a fella.

The only one speaking, Robbie kept up his tour guide's patter. Greg looked up suspiciously, apprehensively at the grimy stone church, which did not soar above the weary neighborhood, but rather dominated it by sheer bulk.

"You guys have *got* to see the inside; it's really cool."

"Wait a minute." Mary opened her small madras clutch purse. "I left my scarf in the car." They waited while she trotted back up the street. As Greg watched a Priest cross a courtyard and slip through a door into a smaller building, lines from Blake echoed in his mind:

And Priests in black gowns were making their rounds
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

When she returned, out of breath, Greg asked if men had to cover their heads, too. She said no.

"I've got a scarf, guess I'd better put it on," Donna Jean announced sacrificially.

They entered and stood just inside, blinded by the transition from sunlight to cathedral gloom. Greg noticed Mary taking some water from a fixture by the door and making a plus sign on her chest. Now he could see the unexpectedly vast interior of the church, the ornate altar close on their left, the endless rows of pews receding far to the right. From a large alcove, garishly colored statues of Mary and Joseph and several Saints loomed as if they might swoop down from their pedestals and seize him. The display struck at the very marrow of this indirect descendant of the Puritans who had cut off the head of King Charles for just such idolatrous excesses.

The door behind them opened and a middle-aged woman brushed by, moving surely in the dimness among the pews in front of them. Dropping to one knee, graceful in spite of her bulk, she sidled into a pew, pulled down some sort of miniature bench and, it seemed to Greg, *flung* herself onto her knees and began purposefully working her beads.

Suddenly claustrophobic, he wanted to leave the oppressive hush; the statues and their centuries of Catholicism were crowding in on him. Mary squeezed his arm reassuringly, but it didn't help. He watched as the woman left the pew and moved up the center aisle to the altar rail. She reminded him of one of James Joyce's fanatical Irish women. Mary was whispering explanations to him, but he didn't hear. Deeply appalled, he looked on as the woman went over to a bank of

thick candles on the side of the altar, lighted one, and dropped heavy coins into a metal box.

As she knelt, eyes closed in prayer, his uneasiness turned to fear, and he wanted to shout, to rouse her from that devout trance. He glanced down at Mary's uncharacteristically serene features, which appeared to mirror those of the woman praying at the flickering candle bank, and recalled in panic that months ago, when there were exchanging life stories, she had told him that she had actually entered a convent right after high school. He hadn't paid much attention at the time, and he couldn't remember why she had left, or if anything prevented her from returning some day. Choked by more than the incense, he had to get her out of that church.

"Let's go!" he hissed.

When they were back on the bright street, he put his arm around her shoulders and hugged her fiercely.

"Hey!" she yipped in surprise, then threw her arm about his waist. "What's got into you all of a sudden?"

"That Old Time Religion, I guess." It was a gag line, but he delivered it grimly. The Holy Cross girls were passing on the sidewalk, and he studied them, perceiving this time something alien in their opaque eyes.

"Hey, you're really shook, aren't you?" She turned her face up to his.

He growled, "Ehhhhh," a harsh, choking sound that could have meant almost anything.

Riding home with the top down, they kissed a lot more than they had on the way out, and, when she toyed with his fraternity pin, he wordlessly took it off and began, clumsily, to fasten it onto her now rumpled blouse.

She was incredulous. "Are you serious?" After weeks of teasing, she was stunned by this unexpected capitulation. "Why now?"

He murmured into the wind: "Because I just realized how much I love you." He had never before felt the need to tell her. She had been able to allay his jealousy of her former boyfriend, but the Holy Roman Catholic Church was a bit more formidable that a mere Sigma Nu.

"Do you *really* mean that?"

As he looked deep into her blue eyes, he felt himself spinning and falling down into a terrifying, seductive abyss of centuries-old tradition and ritual; of rosaries and Hail Marys, of warm, yielding flesh and rigid, cold restrictions. And, for the first time, he let himself go. But

she could break his fall, if he clung to her. They could break each other's fall.

"Yes, I love you."

Much later, he would have the courage to ask for details of her brush with Sisterhood. He learned that, full of adolescent piety, she had sailed into a convent following her graduation from high school. Giddy novices are tolerated only in movies, and she had realized her lack of a vocation in time to enter college in the fall.

Half of Greg and Mary's religious difficulties had begun right then, on that green-beery St. Patrick's Day night. Dutiful son that he was, he made his weekly collect call home and broke the news of their pinning to his mother. When, in the course of their conversation, she had finally asked the religion of "this Mary," Greg had quipped:

"I don't know, but she has a string of beads a mile long."

So funny, so sensitive. A thousand times he had wished those heedless words of scarcely post-adolescent rebellion unsaid. It had taken his mother six years to get over them, six years of hell for Mary. He had committed a similar blunder with her mother the first Thanksgiving they had spent at Mary's parents':Warming to the hearty dinner-time give and take that so contrasted with his own family's laconic meals and having received the mistaken impression from his course on James Joyce that he was making a universal Catholic pleasantry, he referred to the turkey's tail as "the Pope's nose." This time, Greg, himself, had paid the six years' price. After that, he took Mary's word for it that Joyce was not the most reliable guide to appropriate Catholic religious customs and promised not to try any more literary allusions on her family.

All that agonizing, all that soul-searching: What had it been about? Most of the outside circumstances that had seemed so pressing back then were either changed or absent now. The year was 1985 and the Mass was in English. His mother was dead (he could only hope that he had made up for the pain he had caused her), and so, too, as a footnote, was the parish Priest who had reluctantly allowed them to be married in the Catholic Church, but outside the altar—a distinction which had meant little to Greg but was not lost on Mary's family. Her mother had grown to tolerate him after the birth of her granddaughter. Mary's grandfather, also gone now, had adjusted easily to Greg's reluctance to signal or turn.

The memory of that long-ago afternoon was like an old movie: he could see the colors, hear the music, even smell the incense and taste

the kisses; but the terror, the urgency, were gone: Mary had been the mainstay of his life for so long that he could barely recall the panic which had filled him on occasions when they missed connections.

Mary's elbow brought him back to the present. It was time for the Handshake of Peace. He had noticed earlier that one of his students was sitting in front of them. Tall and coltish, with jet black hair and high cheekbones, she had alternated between casting covert glances at him over her shoulder and whispering to her girlfriend.

Now, he realized that she had turned and extended her hand. Gazing at him through long black lashes, she murmured, "Peace be with you."

He smiled in recognition, took her hand and responded: "Peace be with you."

Mary gave him another nudge and whispered mischievously into his ear: "Somebody has a crush on her professor!" She came closer to giggling than he had seen in years. The giggles, along with the praying mantis impressions, had stopped long ago, even before she had become a Director of Personnel.

He blushed a little, shrugged, and whispered back: "What can I say? When you've got it, you've got it."

The Mass at St. Jerome's was finished, and the Recessional moved away from Mary and Greg down the far aisle, to a spirited guitar rendition of "Blowin' in the Wind." The Priest in his white robe with gold trim brought up the rear of the column, holding the hands of the young people whom he had just introduced into the congregation as adult Christians. Greg tried in vain to catch Hannah's eye as she left the altar, but she looked right through him just as those Holy Cross girls had years ago. The unexpected recollection of those rapt eyes chilled him.

The Communion a few minutes earlier came back to him, also. How trustingly she had closed her eyes, like that woman in Holy Cross Church, to accept the sacred wafer, not just from nice Father Leo, but from the *Priest.* Greg tried to keep track of her after the procession passed him, but all he could see was her straight back, the erect carriage that reminded him of her mother. His eyes blurred and his throat closed; folk music or not, it was too much like a wedding; his little blonde girl was leaving with a Priest and a boy whose curly brown hair suddenly brought to mind Ken Whatsisname, the boyfriend of Mary's first year roommate. (Not until years after their marriage did Mary tell him that "He's So Fine"— "that handsome boy over there,

the one with the wavy hair"—had made her think of Ken, not him. That revelation might have wounded his pride twenty years ago, but now it was just a "Whaddaya know?" and certainly did not detract from their love.) Time had twisted the kaleidoscope of their lives, and the colored shapes of their past had shifted, like broken shards of stained glass, into new forms.

Mary squeezed his arm and he could see tears on her cheeks. In the spasm of emotion his throat and chest ached and his eyes burned, but he didn't give in. Even when his mother had died, he hadn't wept until days after the funeral, and he wasn't going to now:

Protestants don't cry.

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DROWNING IN A SEA OF COMMODITIES: CONSUMER CAPITALISM AND MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE IN FULLER'S *CLIFF DWELLERS* AND *WITH THE PROCESSION*

KEVIN W. JETT

The late 19th century witnessed rapid social changes as a result of competitive capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization. This transformation created a volatile environment for a pre-Civil War middle-class accustomed to a more conservative, genteel temperament. Embracing Jeffersonian republicanism, evangelical virtues, and free labor, this business-minded bourgeoisie espoused an old-fashioned individualism. They sought public recognition through finely cultivated social codes and mannerisms and respectability through the gradual accumulation of wealth and property, prompting Alexis De Tocqueville to once remark that the "passion for physical comforts is essentially a passion of the middle classes; with those classes it grows and spreads, with them it is preponderant."[1]

Nevertheless, bound to a producer-ethic mentality and to the desire for material success through hard work and honest business ethics, the established middle-class could not understand its offspring, who comprised a rising new middle-class following the Civil War. Advocating wage labor and consisting of salaried employees such as clerks, salesmen, managers, and other professionals, the modern bourgeoisie felt the pressure of tremendous industrial growth, mass production, and predatory capitalism. The small craft-based shops of the older middle-class succumbed to the rise of big businesses and factories in the 1870s. To survive, the new middle-class constructed a consumer-oriented society and reconfigured their parent's cultural ideology to include excessive ambition, pecuniary consumption, pretentious socializing, as well as combative and sometimes amoral business practices. Alan Trachtenberg summarizes the changing cultural and economic climate in the 1870s:

> New social roles developed for culture. Changes in social structure, the polarization of rich and poor, and the growth of a salaried middle class anxious about its own status opened the opportunity—indeed, created the necessity—for the healing properties identified with high culture. When narrowly defined as art, polite cultivation and manners, genteel styles of speech and dress, culture seemed antithetical to the rough and tumble of everyday life, to the quotidian and the practical.[2]

The acquisition of impractical and extravagant commodities became a way for the new bourgeoisie to feel its self-importance. If one failed economically to reach the affluent classes, then the purchasing of expensive items at least gave the appearance of opulence and social influence. As William Leach asserts, "the cardinal features of this culture were acquisition and consumption as the means of achieving happiness; the cult of the new; the democratization of desire; and money value as the predominant measure of all value in society."[3] Furthermore, the rise of department stores and advertising in the 1870s contributed greatly to the new consumer culture. Rachel Bowlby explains how "people could now come and go, to look and dream, perchance to buy, and shopping became a new bourgeoisie leisure activity—a way of pleasantly passing the time, like going to a play or visiting a museum."[4] Just as industry produced standardized goods, advertisers and businessmen worked together to create a mass psychology of consumerization, whereby the tastes and fashionable interests of each member of the modern bourgeois would be indistinguishable.[5]

Understanding the new class of professionals was not limited to sociological studies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Important literary figures such as William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, and Theodore Dreiser often assessed the general effect of consumer capitalism on the new middle-class in their fiction. Specifically, Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* demonstrates the moral degradation of the rising middle-class, criticizes those who only channel their energies into accumulating wealth and rising to social prominence, and more importantly, reaffirms genteel notions of morality.

Amy Kaplan, in her insightful study *The Social Construction of American Realism,* notes that consumption, especially its manifestation in such works as Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie,* helped the middle classes compensate for their social powerlessness.[6] She argues that the new middle-class became sentimentally attached to commodities and used its buying power as a comforter from the cold, impersonal, and often unstable,

urban industrial environment. Building on Kaplan's point, I believe consumerism in the late 19th century paved the way for a new middle-class ideology that not only abandoned the conservatism of the pre-Civil War generation, but also forced what remained of the genteel class to either assimilate into the new class structure or confront exclusion from fashionable social circles.

Unlike his literary mentor, William Dean Howells, Henry Blake Fuller explores this acculturation of the genteel class into the new consumer-oriented society in his two best-known novels about Chicago: *Cliff Dwellers* (1893) and *With The Procession* (1895). His novels demonstrate how consumerism forced the old and new bourgeoisie to address feelings of class inequality with Chicago's elite. Ironically, Fuller's exploration of social class dynamics in the city anticipated the social theories of Thorstein Veblen, who, in his *Theory of the Leisure Class,* investigates the propensity of the middle-class to emulate the upper classes materially as a way to offset feelings of social inferiority. In fact, one Fuller scholar, Bernard Brown, claims that "Veblen could have taught Fuller nothing about the mechanisms of conspicuous consumption."[7]

Fuller experienced Chicago's endless energy, its industrial force, and its tremendous economic growth between 1880 and 1900. Such rapid economic prosperity made the acquisition of money preponderate among the people of Chicago and contributed greatly to the firm divisions in that city's class structures. Moreover, social climbing characterized Chicago society because economic opportunity was abundant if one willingly abandoned social mores.[8] In addition, Fuller, as well as many intellectuals and regional writers from the genteel class, longed for pre-industrial stability and morality. Jay Martin, in a study of American literature from 1865 to 1914, observes these nostalgic sentiments:

> Progress seemed unworthy of the past it had lost for men. In such a difficult time, Americans longed for simpler conditions, and made a mythical past embody their collective fantasies. Thus, the emphasis on regionalism beginning in the '80s was essentially a retreat to the past and defense of past points of view, due largely to the fact that the traditional assumptions of American culture were in conflict with new circumstances of American life.[9]

Fuller understood that the new middle-class could not fully shed the genteel skin of the preceding generation and often vacillated between

refined standards of behavior and the social conventions of a new and growing industrial culture. Bowron notes that Fuller himself could not escape his parents' "Old Settler" virtues, for he "never forgot their essential humanity" and "never fully transcended the limitations of their ideas."[10] The old bourgeoisie, for Fuller, did not simply disappear; its value system evolved to meet the demands of consumer capitalism. Social historian Burton Bledstein further posits that "one of the deepest dualities of middle-class America was its simultaneous potential for determinism and acquiescence, self-control and self-knowledge."[11]

Fuller's first novel about Chicago, *Cliff Dwellers*, critiques middle-class social climbing and illustrates the resulting hybrid from a genteel middle-class and modern bourgeoisie merger. The product of this amalgamation of old and new values can be seen in the character of George Ogden, who is torn between his connection to "Old Settler" virtues and the pressure he feels from his wife Jessie to climb the social ladder. Early in the novel, we find evidence of George denouncing privately one particular unscrupulous member of the modern middle-class, Eugene McDowell. After McDowell discredits eastern gentility and advocates western materialism and social striving, George seemed to see before him the spokesman of a community where prosperity had drugged patriotism into unconsciousness, and where the bare scaffoldings of materialism felt themselves quite independent of the graces and draperies of culture."[12] George, like Fuller, is disgusted with the new breed of businessmen who carelessly divorce culture only to embrace pecuniary interests and self-advertising. Nonetheless, both grudgingly admit that, in the Industrial Age, wealth can provide an opportunity to achieve aesthetic goals—whether in music, theater, art, or literature. Thus, we have part of the reason why George marries Jessie Bradley.

George's marriage to the well-bred Jessie is an attempt to adjust to the current tide of consumerism, but his salary as a young executive at the Underground bank fails to support his wife's extravagant spending and results in his embezzling money from his bank to pay the bills. Richard Sennett explains George Ogden's predicament in his observation of middle-class marriages in Chicago during its most intense industrial growth: "Behind the wife's vigor was a sense of shame about being just 'respectable' and living in a middle class community. The result of this shame was twofold. The wives were constantly pushing their husbands to succeed. The women were led also in pretentiousness."[13] Uncertain where his genteel upbringing and its cultural ideology fit into modern society and hoping to impress Jessie, Ogden allows himself to compete socially with Arthur Ingles, the president of his bank and a man whom he has little chance of trumping financially.

Though Ogden marries Jessie, we learn that he did have a choice. He could easily have married a woman more suitable to his emotional sensibilities in Abbie Brainard, but his own social aspirations and traditional notions of morality complicate matters. George is more aware of the absurd struggle for social prominence around him than others, but for a time, he ignores this insight and avoids those who might ruin his public image and spoil his chance at social prestige:

> He thought of Abbie Brainard, and he thought of her family—a divorced sister; a disreputable brother, whose future was to sound, perhaps, depths yet undreamed of; another brother, whose coming marriage was but conclusive evidence of the coarseness of the family grain. And the father —his scandalous success; his tainted millions; his name a byword. Those bawlings in the streets; those disgraceful and degrading pictures; the stench of the whole scandal. (205)

George Ade, a journalist and writer from the Chicago Renaissance, claimed that middle-class people in general often feared compromising their ability to climb the social ladder and "wouldn't scourge a man simply because he wore a morning coat in the afternoon. Again, if his private life were redolent of scandals they would not tolerate him as a companion, no matter how often he changed his clothes."[14] Furthermore, Ogden's decision to ignore his feelings for Abbie and marry Jessie could also be attributed to his admiration for Jessie's "Old Settler" parents and their traditional middle-class virtues.

After he is caught embezzling money from the bank and following Jessie's death,Ogden loses his fortune and social position but, in true Howellsian form, retains enough self-awareness and self-knowledge to find redemption. He eventually marries Abbie Brainard, the woman he truly cares about, and while conversing with her at a social gathering, acknowledges the dangers of emulating Cecilia Ingles and her entourage:

> But he knew perfectly well who she was. He knew that she was Cecilia Ingles, and his heart was constricted by the sight of her. It is for such a woman that one man builds a Clifton and that a hundred others are martyred in it. (324)

George discovers that though success in the Industrial Age depends upon accepting the modern consumer society, one does not necessarily have to abide by its every convention. Thus, despite foregoing his

traditional values in a ruinous marriage to Jessie, he reacquires his genteel integrity in his marriage to Abbie. In other words, Ogden's second marriage reconciles his "Old Settler" beliefs with his desire to fit in with his more acquisitive contemporaries. Abbie's inheritance will provide him with the opportunity to achieve his cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic goals.

Cornelia McNabb and Eugene McDowell best represent middle-class social strivings in the novel, but their differences lie in Cornelia's retention of some older middle-class values and McDowell's rejection of them. Cornelia begins the novel as a waitress but takes night classes to learn stenography. With ambition, determination, and luck remarkably similar to Dreiser's Caroline Meeber, she lands a position in Erastus Brainard's bank, whereby she eventually begins seeing Burton Brainard, the banker's son. From here, she marries into the socially elite of Chicago. McDowell, on the other hand, is a crooked real estate man who drains his wife's inheritance, an inheritance she shares with her brother, George Ogden. His unethical ascent in society can be seen in his attempted role as mediator in an underhanded business deal that would benefit the affluent Arthur Ingles and grant him some favoritism.

Copying the social fashions of Cecilia's circle of friends is the primary concern of almost every character in the novel. When George first runs into Cornelia working as a waitress in a small cafe, he notices her obsessive preoccupation with the Ingles. She has virtually memorized day-by-day accounts of their social activities from the society section in the newspapers:

> But there's Mrs. Arthur J. Ingles, three-hundred-something Ontario Street—do you know *her*? Now there's a woman that interests me. She's in the papers every day; she goes everywhere. She's way up, I guess; I'd be wild if she wasn't. She was at a dance last Tuesday, and she gave a reception the day before, and her sister is going to be married next month. (69)

Here we catch a glimpse of Cornelia's motivations for seeking social mobility. She craves social prestige, materialism, and self-importance, even if it means sacrificing her individuality for the lifestyle and culture of a group of people whom she has never met.[15]

Throughout discussing the Ingles with George, she frequently refers to the "heliotrope satin," "ornaments," "diamonds," and other expensive items Mrs. Ingles wore at a recent ball. Cornelia, like

Wharton's Lily Bart and Dreiser's Caroline Meeber, measures her self-worth against such commodities, and not surprisingly laments,"Why shouldn't *I* be wearing heliotrope satin to dinner some time?—if not under the name of Cornelia McNabb, then under some other as good or better ....My sakes, how I envy that woman" (70)? In this passage, Cornelia convinces herself that wearing such expensive objects is her birthright since she has maintained an "Old Settler" hard work ethic. Later, when Cornelia rises to the position of secretary in the Underground bank, George notices that she expressed her rise "by several subtle alterations to her dress, and that she had succeeded in enveloping herself in a promising atmosphere of gentility" (115). Her movement upward in society warrants a certain amount of conspicuous consumption and genteel mannerisms to sustain her social aspirations. And, given Stuart Ewen's observation that the mass production of low-priced goods imitating high-priced merchandise was common during the Industrial Age, we can see the beginning of Cornelia's internalization of upper-class values. Furthermore, modern commerce and the rise of department stores allow her to experience an unfamiliar role considering her class status: that of consumer. Thus, the conspicuous display of commodities affords her a false sense of equality with the affluent classes above her.

Moreover, Cornelia accepts advice from a minor character, Mrs. Floyd, just before she begins seeing Burton Brainard, and becomes indebted to her for "points in costume, speech, and behaviorism" (154). As Jan Dietrichson emphasizes, "the very wealthy social leaders like the Ingles set the tone for the middle-class, creating by the splendor of their participation in social life a false ideal of stylish and expensive entertainment and daily living."[16] Looking to better herself and feel socially significant, Cornelia imitates the Ingles' standards of dress and "had not been above cultivating an intimacy with a girl who worked for the excessively dear and fashionable house that dressed Mrs. Ingles" (190). Again, Cornelia emulates willingly the tastes of the social elite despite compromising her individuality, just so long as she narrows the cultural gap between her and Cecilia Ingles. Thus, the typical traits of the old middle-class such as perserverance, frugality, and self-sufficiency that we find in Cornelia the waitress have partially given way to Cornelia the leisure class socialite.

Despite her quest for social prominence and her general acceptance of Cecilia's ostentatious circle of friends, she still preserves a certain amount of the old middle-class virtue. For instance, she takes pity on

Abbie and her relationship with Erastus Brainard's ostracized son, Marcus. Cornelia could easily have told Erastus of Abbie's secret meetings with Marcus to somehow advance socially, but she elects to remain silent in the matter.[17] She is also rather daring in her condemnation of Erastus for his cruelty towards his daughter Mary, who married a poor man against his wishes. Though submitting to materialism and social prestige, Cornelia still keeps her moral integrity and sense of loyalty. She, like Ogden, eventually negotiates successfully her "Old Settler" virtues with the material demands of the modern bourgeoisie.

Jessie Bradley is another character in the novel with the same social aspirations as Cornelia, but the viral new age of consumerism and affectation has so infested her that she destroys herself and her marriage to George Ogden. Upon meeting Ogden at a dinner party, they both notice Arthur Ingles across the room, and Jessie immediately comments upon his gray hair: "Don't you think it's lovely for a man of his age to have gray hair—gray that's almost white? I shall do all I can to make *my* husband gray-haired before he is middle-aged" (90). Not only does this passage ironically foreshadow Jessie's treatment of Ogden, but her dwelling on such unimportant trivialities and her ambition to emulate the wealthy also parallels Cornelia. Since Jessie cannot truly understand what it means to live such an opulent and prescriptive lifestyle, she can only mimic the insincere behavior of the socially elite to compensate for her lack of economic independence. As long as George can satisfy her material needs—carriages, fresh flowers, house furnishings, clothes—Jessie can at least accept her middle-class status because such pecuniary consumption gives the impression of wealth. When George cannot maintain their extravagant lifestyle, she slips into depression, takes ill, and eventually dies. Unlike Cornelia, who retains some remnant of genteel integrity and genuine human compassion, Jessie loses what humanity she might have had and forfeits her soul to the new consumer age.

Her death symbolizes a lack of character, for once one strips away the thin veneer of surface appearances and false images of wealth and social prestige, she has little inner strength to draw upon. At one point, while George and Jessie lounge in their new apartment, George surveys their living room, notices such novel elegancies as a tea-table and realizes that "on the purchase of this adjunct to polite living Jessie had brought all her insistence to bear. Life to her had now come merely to mean receiving and being received; and to receive at all she must receive correctly and elegantly" (271). In passing a fancy teacup to

George's friend Brower, Jessie's hand tremble weakly and her wrist "fluttered with a pitiful palpitation" (272), thus demonstrating how severely her allegiance to materialism and her emulation of the wealthy had damaged her vitality.

Jessie's complete break from her parents and the "Old Settler" values that they uphold also contributes to her downfall. Whereas George finds salvation and self-knowledge by not discarding all that he learned in his conservative, virtuous upbringing, Jessie lacks a sound moral conviction because she does. In fact, the second half of the book chronicles her irresponsibility as a mother and as a wife. Her moral downfall climaxes when she removes her own mother from a guest list for an upcoming dinner party; the gesture reinforces her outright rejection of the older middle-class. In short, Jessie Bradley conveys Fuller's' admonishment of the new middle-class for shedding the virtuous qualities of its genteel predecessors.

Fuller's second and most well known novel on Chicago society, *With The Procession*, also investigates the friction between pre-Civil War middle-class and the consumer-oriented middle-class of the Industrial Age. David Marshall and his wife Eliza represent old-fashioned frugality, self-sufficiency, and conservatism. Nonetheless, they live in an environment where they have failed to keep up with the economic and social pace of a city undergoing extensive changes in its class hierarchy. Lagging behind in the social procession has ostracized them from Chicago's elite social circles. Their daughter, Jane, notices the problem and solicits one of Chicago's most respected socialites, Susan Bates, for help. On the other hand, David Marshall's son, Roger, and his business partner, Belden, represent the more materialistic, aggressive, and ambitious social climbers of the new middle-class. To ascend the social ladder, both willingly speculate in risky business ventures and participate in immoral business tactics.

As in *Cliff Dwellers*, Fuller illustrates in *With The Procession* the new bourgeoisie's imitation of and dependency on upper-class social codes and conventions. For instance, Sue Bates's reliance on the new consumer age and the opinions of its affluent classes fosters a false sense of self-worth, and she needlessly sacrifices her genteel qualities for a contrived and manufactured public image. When Jane Marshall visits Mrs. Bates to ask for help in promoting Rosy's debut into society, she meets a socialite drowning in a sea of useless commodities. Mrs. Bates takes expensive music lessons, purchases fine art, preserves a little used library, and keeps an expensive writing table simply

because it is fashionable. In fact, Sue admits as much to Jane:

> But really, I don't suppose I've written two lines at that table since it was put there. And as for all these books, Heaven only knows where the keys are to get at them with. I can't do anything with them; why, some of them weigh five or six pounds.[18]

Her discussion of the library suggest a lack of inner growth; rather than focusing on the content of the books, she can only speak of their size and weight. Ironically, her fixation on the physical characteristics of the books is appropriate since she closely monitors her own physical appearance and often neglects her genteel soul. The same can be said of her knowledge of art. She can recognize a painter and identify the genre from which a work originated, but outside of these generalities, she knows very little. Having such expensive commodities simply keeps her at the front of the procession, something she embraces at all costs: "Keep up with the procession is my motto, and head it if you can. I do head it, and I feel that is where I belong. When I can't foot it with the rest, let me drop by the wayside and the crows have me" (58). Mrs. Bates's extravagant home captivates Jane, but she recognizes that it is mostly for show, murmuring to herself how silly it is that Mrs. Bates "doesn't get any music out of her piano, doesn't get any reading out of her books, and doesn't even get any sleep out of her bed: (59)

Maintaining her lead in the procession, however, has taken its toll. In a cramped, dingy corner of the Bates' home is a small room containing antiquated furniture, old-time wall paper, a shabby writing desk, a small piano littered with sheet music, and a cheaply-made book shelf containing well-worn books. Though Sue has accepted Chicago's new social demands, it is here that she can remember nostalgically a more modest past. And it is here that she lets her guard down and permits Jane a glimpse at her "Old Settler" qualities—qualities brought to the forefront at the end of the novel when she genuinely feels for David Marshall and offers him unconditional financial assistance.

Fittingly, the trendy rooms in Sue's home enclose the small room representing her "Old Settler" roots, thus symbolizing how the shallow public image she maintains to stay with the procession has imprisoned her genteel past. During their conversation in the room,

Sue confides in Jane and admits to growing tired of "having a footman on each toe and a butler standing on [her] train" (62), but despite her longings for the past, she still sacrifices her inner self at the altar of conspicuous consumption. She even allows social standards govern her choice of flowers to decorate her veranda, claiming that her position in society warrants it. As John Pilkington summarizes, "in Susan Bates, we see that Chicago has elevated external forms over the inner growth of the individual."[19] Nonetheless, Sue survives because she never completely rejects her genteel past, as indicated by her preservation of the "Old Settler" room; instead she acclimates to the new industrial climate, something David Marshall refuses to do.

Whereas Jessie in *Cliff Dwellers* relies too heavily upon modern bourgeoisie values, David Marshall, in *With The Procession*, places too much stock in his traditional past. David is an "Old Settler" like Sue Bates, but unlike her, he completely dispels the new middle-class for its corrupt business ethics and its social ambitions. While speaking with Tom Bingham, he expresses his disgust for fashionable consumption in Chicago's elite social circles:

> I don't need to go to art-galleries to understand what opportunities my son has had to learn to paint; the foreign exchange man at our bank could tell me all about that. And I don't have to go to concerts, either, when I want to make my contribution to a benevolent object: I can sit right here in this room and draw checks, and be told just how much to draw them for, too. (131)

Obviously, the practical side of Marshall cannot accept the artificial and unproductive social conventions of the new industrial climate. On the other hand, his daughters, Jane and Rosy, deem the emulation of those members in the procession necessary and vital to the family's survival. Out of love for Jane, he adjusts his lifestyle to accommodate her. Unfortunately, he destroys himself in the process.

Seeing a chance for her father to gain public recognition, Jane persuades him to speak in front of an audience of local businessmen. In helping her father with the speech, she "prepared a long address after the most approved rhetorical models: a flowing introduction which walked all around the subject before going into it" (171). But when the time comes to deliver his speech, Marshall forgoes a pretentious and contrived reading of his essay and , instead, simply recites the bare facts. Ironically, the speech is a success and reveals Fuller's twofold use of it.

First, Marshall's success undermines the socially elite's prescriptive notions of what constitutes a well-written speech—Fuller's literary jab at the upper class. Second, he illustrates the impossibility of David compromising his genteel past and accepting the social changes that came with industrial progress.

Later, this shows through when David allows his children to talk him into selling their home and building a new one complete with all the latest architectural designs. The motivation to leave their old home, which, like Susan Bates's secluded room, represents their early middle-class lifestyle, stems from a desire to identify with Chicago's social leaders. Nevertheless, the combination of expanding his business, Roger's costly speculations, and his daughter's need for clothes and other fashionable trinkets places Marshall on the brink of failure. Instead of ascending the social ladder, Marshall, just before he dies, is left with an ungrateful daughter in Rosy and an empty new house:

> The first slight flurry of snow dusted the dead weeds of the open spaces round the house, and the reflections from it passed through the clear, broad panes of the windows to strike a grimmer chill from the shimmering surfaces of ash and oak. Never before had the world seemed so empty and so cold and so unsympathetic. (263)

Unlike Sue, Marshall never possessed the financial stability or will to accept the new class structure and cultural changes in Chicago.

On the other hand, Marshall's siblings try adapting to the social changes, with varying success. Truesdale, Marshall's second son, has benefited from his father's fortune and become spoiled in the process. After coming home from Europe, where he learned how to paint, he avoids his father's business and devotes his life to leisure. For a time, he too buys into the superficiality of the rich and, in one particular instance, tries his hand at imitating what the affluent classes consider art.

While visiting his distant relative Lydia Rhodes, he meets Bertie and falls in love. Lydia asks him to paint Bertie's portrait, but rather than capturing something genuinely aesthetic, he only concentrates on what objects should accompany her in the portrait. In this instance, Truesdale acknowledges the modern bourgeoisie's preference of form over content, thus supporting Bowlby's notion that the new middle-class of the Industrial Age typically believed "good art" should take on the rationalized structures of industry.[20] Truesdale's whimsical doctoring of the portrait resembles the typical use of art in the advertisement arena, where the mechanistic manipulation of beautiful images sold merchandise. Since Truesdale hopes to sell his artwork, he must conform to the consumer's often ostentatious and superficial demands. To his credit, however, Truesdale become disillusioned with Chicago's elite endorsing such a shallow use of art that he leaves Chicago for the Orient.

Probably the best example of sacrificing genteel virtues for social advancement occurs in the preparation of Rosy's wedding. Rosy has established herself in society and gained the acceptance of such social leaders as Cecilia Ingles, but in doing so, she has siphoned her father's wealth and sacrificed his well-being. While perusing the guest list for the wedding, she crosses out those names she deems unimportant; many have been faithful friends of the Marshall family for years. At one point, Jane realizes how indifferent and unsympathetic her sister has become since gaining social favor: "Was it not to some such social triumph as this that for a good six months she had bent all her own endeavors? She tried now to make the triumph seem as glorious as it should, but she could not feel that she was succeeding" (263). For the first time, Jane realizes how much her family has sacrificed to join the procession. Imitating the rich has made them snobs and intolerant of others. As Pilkington notes,

> the fluidity of Chicago society encouraged an exaggerated emphasis upon what Fuller considered unimportant trivialities. The right name, the correct address, the proper associations became matters of undue concern to a class of people whose money scarcely covered the thin veneer of their lowly origins.[21]

In other words, the Marshall family's younger generation has replaced integrity and loyalty with social ambitions; thus, in their quest for social prominence, they have lost the genteel qualities that gained them their wealth in the first place.[22] Nonetheless, though Rosy may have completely lost contact with her "Old Settler" values and her brother Truesdale flees the country rather than face the new consumer age, Jane, like Ogden in *Cliff Dwellers*, arrives at an understanding. The reader is left confident that she will most likely find a happy medium between the two extremes her father and sister represent.

Fuller's novels on Chicago demonstrate the intense struggle between two very different middle-class generations, one either adapting or dying off in its attempt to accept the rapid industrial growth and urbanization of Chicago and the other hoping to solidify its new consumer-oriented values. Those who elect to abandon completely their past such as Jessie Bradley and those who remain strictly within the old

middle-class such as David Marshall cannot make the concessions needed to survive. Others like Mrs. Bates and George Ogden may lose a portion of their individuality to the new consumer culture, but they at least recognize, accept, and adapt to the social changes.

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NOTES

1. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1963), p. 129.
2. Alan Trachtenberg, *the Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), p. 145.
3. William Leach, *Land of Desire* (New York: Random, 1993), p.3.
4. Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 4.
5. See Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976) for a more detailed discussion of how advertisers and businessmen helped create a consumer culture in the late 19th century.
6. Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 147.
7. Bernard R. Bowron, *Henry Blake Fuller of Chicago: The Ordeal of a Genteel Realist in Ungenteel America* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1974), p.135.
8. For a more comprehensive study of Chicago's class dynamics in the latter part of the 19th century, see Susan Hirsch and Robert Gales, *City Comes of Age; Chicago in the 1890s* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1989). See also Stephen Longstreet, *Chicago 1860-1919* (New York: David McKay, 1973).
9. Jay Martin, *Harvest of Change* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 83.
10. Bowron, p. 6.
11. Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 55.
12. Henry Blake Fuller, *Cliff Dwellers* (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968), p. 50. Hereafter cited parenthetically.
13. Richard Sennet, *Families Against the Cities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 47.
14. George Ade, "The Advantage of Being Middle Class," in *Chicago Stories* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963), p. 75.
15. Kaplan makes a similar point regarding Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. Much like Cornelia, Lily's self-esteem, her self-worth, and her social ascendency are dependent upon how well she displays herself publicly in dress and in mannerisms among New York's elite. In the first major social gathering in the novel, the wedding between Lily's cousin, Jack Stepney and Miss Van Osburgh, Kaplan observes in the book *The Social Construction of Realism* , that "Lily identifies not only with the mystically veiled figure of the bride but with the fully exposed objects, the jewels" (91). And, after attaining social prestige, Lily's identity changes and becomes dependent upon how well the class she comes from views her (90).
16. Jan Dietrichson, *The Image of Money in the American Novel of the Gilded Age* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 351.
17. Cornelia's actions in this matter parallel Lily's decision to not use the love letters she stumbles across in Wharton's *House of Mirth*—letters that would have exposed her rival, Bertha, and delivered Lily from social ruin. Her compassion for Selden, who might have suffered the same fate as her since the letters are meant for him, saves her integrity.
18. Henry Blake Fuller, *With the Procession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 50. Hereafter cited parenthetically.
19. John Pilkington, *Henry Blake Fuller* (New York: Twayne's, 1971), p. 104.
20. Bowlby, p. 8.
21. Pilkington, p. 92.
22. A later Chicago writer, Robert Herrick, draws upon similar themes in his novel *The Memoirs of an American Citizen.* Van Harrington, in his climb to the top of the social ladder, is torn between social mobility and Christian ethics, between traditional standards of virtue and the ruthless competitiveness industrialization demands. Van eventually disregards his old middle-class upbringing, and believes that to survive industrialization one must participate in the city's corruption or else fall by the wayside. Van justifies his actions in the name of progress, but in the process, he compromises the integrity of his friend Jaffrey Slocum and sacrifices his close friendship with May Rudge. The first person narrative suggests that Van is feeling guilty over choosing success and money over his early middle-class principles.

"[T]HE SIGNIFICANCE AND BEAUTY OF ORDINARY THINGS:" THE NONFICTION OF JOSEPHINE W. JOHNSON

MARK GRAVES

As the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for her first novel *Now In November* (1934), Josephine Johnson emerged from relative obscurity as a new Midwestern voice, chronicling the emotional oppressiveness and alienation wrought by the Depression. With the publication of her spartan short story collection *Winter Orchard and Other Stories* (1935) and the proletarian *Jordanstown* (1937), she established herself as a committed advocate of equal opportunity and the natural world. While these works did much to solidify her reputation as a conservator of memory, justice, and the untouched wilderness, it is in her full-length nonfiction appearing late in her career that Johnson's lyricism and attention to image and detail best emerges. With homage to the works produced during the most prolific stage of her career, the 1930s, her extended nature essay *The Inland Island* (1969) and her highly impressionistic memoir *Seven Houses* (1973) both serve as the logical outcome of Johnson's lifelong commitment to her craft and the political and social causes she saw in jeopardy in the Vietnam era.

Considering how identifiable winners become with the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize, any commentary on Josephine Johnson's contribution to Midwestern and American literature cannot ignore the impact of her first prize-winning novel on her artistic life and career. Quentin Carter, in his study of Johnson's development in light of the Pulitzer, asserted that the 1935 award "placed Johnson in the forefront of literary intelligentsia and required development of a public mantle that the young writer, socially empathetic to a fault, hesitantly but gracefully donned" (183), In the early 1930s, with a burgeoning record of published short stories and poems in national magazines, Johnson captured the attention of editor Clifford Fadiman at Simon and Schuster with her short story "Dark" about a blinded World War

I veteran. Certain of Johnson's already mature voice at age twenty-four, he inquired if she had completed a novel, a feat that Johnson's innate insecurities had prevented her from attempting. When in a relatively short stretch of time, she produced what would later become *Now in November*, Fadiman eagerly recommended its publication. If Johnson's story of a Missouri farm family struggling to survive during the Depression was not as anticipated or heralded as the newest work by better established authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald (with *Tender Is the Night*), the novel mustered respectable sales and, perhaps more important to the young writer, encouraging critical reviews. Edith Walton, writing in *The New York Times* considered the novel "[f]irmly wrought, poetic in the best sense...[and] complete and self sustaining..." (6). Similarly, Jon Cheever writing in *The New Republic* went so far as to call it "surely the most composed book that has ever come out of Missouri" (191).

Johnson's critical reputation in this most prolific stage in her career would peak with the publication of her first novel, but her work would never fail to spark lively debate or comparisons to the best writers of her generation. Although not all critics were as certain of Johnson's control in her first novel as her most laudatory reviewers, they nonetheless agreed that she was a new voice with tremendous talent whose further work was to be anticipated. They would not have long to wait, for Johnson's eclectic collection of short stories called *Winter Orchard and Other Stories* was published in 1935. Considered by one critic more an exploration of autumnal moods than short fiction (Gannett 15), to use a particularly apt natural metaphor for Johnson's work, the collection received less favorable reviews that her prize-winning novel, but all recognized in Johnson the traits of a rare and insightful observer of (human) nature and social ills.

Echoes of Johnson's commitment to remedying racial and economic inequality could be heard throughout both *Now in November* and *Winter Orchard*, but they would take full voice in her 1937 poetry collection *Year's End* and last fictional work of the decade, *Jordanstown*. Although the economic instability which fueled much of Johnson's political and artistic output in the 1930s abated, she found a form to illustrate her socialist credo in writing the novel. But 1937 was not a banner year: both the poetry collection and *Jordanstown* were not reviewed favorably. Johnson herself even considered the novel a failure. She would conclude the decade with the

publication of a children's book in 1939 called *Pauline*. Another novel on vintage Johnson themes, *Wildwood*, would appear in 1945, but readers would have to wait almost twenty years for her last novel and short story collection to appear, a period in which she settled into, for the first time, a relatively stable and happy life as wife and mother. Although not in the forefront publicly in these years, Johnson enjoyed living the life which would ferment into *The Inland Island* and *Seven Houses*.

Thematically, readers of Johnson's canon easily recognize her commitment to and rare understanding of human and natural landscapes, whether they are scarred by the ravages of nature, as in the prairie fire that serves as the climax in *Now in November*, or bolstered by the inevitability of a new spring and the hope in adversity in which much of Johnson's fiction so often culminates. In *Jordanstown*, for example, after enduring the ostracism of the community for his defense of workers and watching his best friend die from poor health and living conditions, Johnson's protagonist can still utter with gusto "...I believe still in the decency of men....I believe that there are enough of all things for every man, and we shall not give up or be quiet" (358). Technically, Johnson portrays both hope and adversity in a lyrical style considered "dream like" by one of her earliest reviewers. (Walton 6). Her tightly woven lyric texture is often so seamless that choosing only one image or passage to illustrate her use of language and cadence is often difficult. The last paragraph of *Now in November*, however, forecasts the thematic and technical achievements which epitomize both *The Inland Island* and *Seven Houses*. Pondering the significance of ten years of struggle, Johnson's female narrator seems to sigh, musing:

> Love and faith are gone....But there is the need and the desire left, and out of these hills they may come again. I cannot believe this is the end. Nor can I believe that death is more than the blindness of those living. And if this is only the consolation of a heart in its necessity, or that easy faith born of despair, it does not matter, since it gives us courage somehow to face the mornings. Which is as much as the heart can ask at times.(231)

In an interview conducted soon after the publication of *Seven Houses*, Johnson acknowledged that her first novel cut "too close to the bone" (Larsen 76). If *Now in November* reflected in fictional form the trials of a young writer of rare and unique empathy, then *The Inland Island* is a chronicle of another kind, a lament or manifesto

against the destructiveness of another era by a mature woman who had given life by this time herself. Readers would be hard pressed not to recognize in some form that Johnson was influenced by Thoreau's *Walden* considering the ways in which Johnson celebrates and politicizes the untamed wilderness. Both Thoreau and Johnson protest the encroachment of civilization, most significantly in their commentaries on the political issues of their respective eras, for Thoreau, slavery and government invasiveness, and for Johnson, the destruction of the Vietnam War and urban sprawl.

As an essay divided into twelve segments to reflect the twelve months of 1967, *The Inland Island* records Johnson's observations of life in the 37-acre tract of land outside of Cincinnati that she and her husband allowed to return to wilderness. While the twelve chapters or stanzas in the prose poem all reflect the differences brought about by the change of seasons, they all converge in nature itself. The attention to detail in the work informs like a woodland tapestry. Consider, for example, Johnson's eleven-page parable of the beetle versus the aphid, emerging from behind leaves as winter gradually leaves Ohio in April that year. Perhaps commenting on the tenuousness of all life itself, Johnson writes,

> Having no memory, nor expectation of disaster, only an instinct for pleasure and for survival...the aphids do not expect to be devoured. Already packed and succulent with sap,, transformed to a honeydew, their big, foolish eyes warning them of nothing, their four sharp stylets inside the grooved beaks plunged into the leaves, happily and mindlessly they pump the sap into their bodies. They look like green paper bags full of water....The lady-beetle, brisk and hungry, alighting on the nearest apple tree, runs briskly to the nearest leafing cluster, pinches up the nearest aphid in her jaws, and chewing briskly, fills herself deliciously full of honey-dew and masticated aphids. And the possible birth of one billion aphids is drowned in a little bug less than six millimeters long. (59-60)

In one form or another in practically all of the author's significant work, nature provides solace and redemption for the weariness of the human soul, but Johnson is never blinded by the mortal sacrifices necessary to continue the natural cycle.

In fact, Johnson's affinity for and insight into the wilderness is so great that she anthropomorphizes the woodland creatures she observes. When a mateless mockingbird drives all feathered rivals of comparable size and might from a bird feeder, Johnson casts him as an emperor banishing his enemies from the banqueting table, writing,

> He ate from his private table compulsively and, oddly, indifferently, as though to justify what was in truth not hunger but the lust for power. Because he permitted the chickadees, the tomtits and the sparrows to feed within the invisible estate, he seemed to think of himself as a benevolent lord, establishing his land to be held in fee for the weak....(31)

At one point, the seasons themselves become stock characters in an old-fashioned melodrama. The "old dying waxy" fingers of villain winter returns to lay their slimy, cold grasp on the "...soft, green, trembling flowered blanket" of spring's virginal heaving bosom, eventually vanquished by the power of life renewing itself and good prevailing over evil (56).

As a natural essay, then, *The Inland Island* is phenomenal in its attention to and treatment of natural environs. As a political manifesto, the work is an equally strong denunciation of war, devastation, and the destruction of wilderness. Johnson's commitment to natural conservation is obvious: no one could look at the environment with the reverence her writing reflects and not rally for its preservation. She poignantly laments what the encroachment of civilization with its paved streets and housing allotments means to the infant landscape and the soul of its conservator, both laid bare:

> ...I can't separate the beauty of this place from the destruction of this place—the sewer water, the soapsuds, the hunters, the trappers, the dogs, the decay of the trees, and the planes overhead, the sound of saws in the south and the north and the east and the west. The target practice of the neighbors, the pollution of the air from sewers and burning garbage, from factories in the valley and even dust from Oklahoma. A world of war and waste. (26)

For a woman whose personality, by her own admission, could be at best described as tentative, her political activism through her work might seem surprising. Johnson, however, used much of whatever public collateral she earned winning the Pulitzer Prize by supporting tenant farmers and the cause of labor during the 1930s. Her history of political activism, then, makes her outcry against the Vietnam War more understandable and consistent. She asks, "How long can I go on pretending the world is not changed beyond recognition? The blood from that one nation which we ravage flows all over the world...." (38). She longs for "[a] pagan man....[t]o deliver us from our sinking wars of religion, wars of patriotism....in which we use the bodies of burned children to ward off our childish nightmares of a

Communist world. Our war for democracy in which we blind, burn, starve, and cripple children so that they may vote at twenty-one" (46-47). In her October excerpt, she mourns the young people beaten and jailed because they refuse to kill (135). She considers the Pentagon a "terrible mass of concrete on our minds, on our hearts....[which] cannot fit...anywhere in the natural world" (152-153), Johnson's measure of worth and merit.

Scattered amongst the glorious portrayals of nature, these comments reveal Johnson's opposition to urban sprawl as intimately linked with her opposition to the war in Vietnam. As a natural conservator, she considers both the outcome of a darkness inside the hearts of men externalized. It is as a mother and a woman, however, upon which she bases her strongest opposition to the Vietnam War. In an uncharacteristically direct statement in *The Inland Island*, she laments:

> I am sick of war. Every woman of my generation is sick of war. ...Wars rumored, wars beginning, wars fought, wars ending, wars paid for, wars endured. When I was seven we entered the First World War, and since then my lifetime has spanned a half-century of wars. My husband was in [World War II] for four years. My son has served two years as a conscientious objector. We who are opposed to war know what all the frustrated of the world must feel. The war is escalated degree after degree after degree. Unannounced; denied; discovered; done. ...
>
> The very fact of this constant knowing tempts one to deny the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. (91)

For someone putting her environmental and political philosophies in practice by surrounding herself with the natural world despite the clear economic advantages of selling 37-acres of prime real-estate, no reader would be surprised that episodes of autobiography are threaded through *The Inland Island.* That was not her primary intention, however, for four years later, after the death of her husband, she came in from the outside metaphorically with the memoir *Seven Houses*. Subtitled "a memoir of time and places," Johnson provides few concrete details of her life growing up and living in the series of seven houses from which she takes the title, mostly in Missouri and Ohio. Instead, Johnson concentrates on moods, feelings, and impressions rather than verifiable details, also indicative of her earliest works. Each house, however, comes to represent a distinct phase in Johnson's development as a woman and an artist. She would come to regard them as "shelters on a long slow traveling....Some...much loved, through which one flowed as the gemmules flow through the parent sponge, and some as close as the shells of turtles...as much a part of oneself as head and claws" (33-34).

Johnson's saga begins with Oakland, her mother's large brick home surrounded by ten wooded acres she described as "represent[ing] a great deal of money, won by a great deal of work (and the absence of income tax) at a time when such things were possible...by an immigrant child from Ireland" (11). In the library where photos of nameless and ageless relatives stared down from the walls, Johnson indulged her love of reading. The house she was actually born into Johnson merely refers to by its street number, 203, to represent its starkness and endless steps and Johnson's alienation from familial warmth. She refers to herself as "[b]orn within the margin of...Gemini's power and doomed already to a dual soul," as "[a] blend of seaweed, tar and wet mosquito netting," as a child born in June under the unglamorous birthstone of agate "[d]eeply disappointing...to a romantic child" (35-37). As if to anticipate unpleasant questions from readers, she asserts about her undoubtedly painful upbringing, "the important things of childhood have very little to do with reality....I have no intention of describing the long subterranean world of childhood" (37).

Her next home, street number 621 in Kirkwood, Missouri, would be more modern, the home Johnson's aunts would build after the death of their father and the sale of Oakland and its conversion to a Catholic school. Johnson's father would move his family into the home to live with her aunts for four years after the First World War, a happy period for the author except for the ill humor of her father. During this period, Johnson began attending a private school in Kirkwood, when she would not only receive formal education but when she also became aware of racial barriers, symbolically represented by a rutted street and cow pasture at the foot of 621's garden. She writes of her community, "In Kirkwood there was, at that time, a place for everything and everything in its place. The poor, the widows, the Negroes, the children. Each had a place. And they stayed there" (64). The harsh world of racial and economic injustice Johnson would escape with summer visits to Rose Cottage, the home of her aunts which she would immortalize in perhaps her most light-hearted story "Arcadia Revisited," published in the *Winter Orchard* collection.

Interestingly, the home Johnson lived in the longest is the house which receives the least exploration in Johnson's memoir. When

Johnson's father sold his successful wholesale coffee business, he settled into comfortable retirement in a stone house called Hillbrook built atop a knoll fifteen miles from St. Louis. Just a few short years later, he would be dead of cancer when Johnson was fifteen, an event she saw frankly as a relief. (Carter 6). From the time of her birth, her father represented a brooding, oppressive influence in her life, and the violent, emotional discord between Benjamin Johnson and his oldest daughter, the mentally unstable Mary Elizabeth, threatened the sensitive young woman. "I loved that place," Johnson writes. "I know every inch of it, and every hour of the day and every season. But I have no will to write about it now. Too much pain. Too long ago." (86). In defense of her father, however, his building of this mountaintop retreat served as a catalyst for Johnson's literary ambitions. "I had a rolltop desk in the attic under a dormer window..., and I wrote," she remembers. "I wrote if not endlessly, then enormously, fulsomely. I seemed to be waiting to begin to live..." (86-87).

Life began for Johnson when she met and eventually married her husband of almost thirty years, Grant Cannon.Almost half of her memoir is consumed by her years as a young mother and wife in Old House in Newton, Ohio, an 1810 clay and brick structure which was the first house either had ever owned. She saw the property as "beautiful and majestic in the way that houses never are anymore....in need of eternal vigilance, as are old and crumbling people, beautiful and majestic though they be in age" (89). As a lover of all things beautiful and natural, the teaming life in and around the edifice presented particular joy and sorrow for Johnson. She mourned the necessity of trapping the rats and mice that often crept into the crevices of its cracking foundation. She reveled in the return of springtime warmth, but experienced regret at the tadpoles trapped in drying pools cut off from their water supply when the river receded after a spring flood (96). She wondered if nature would not take its revenge when thousands of bats had to be exterminated from the attic of the house, knowing that the health of small children was not compatible with the continued roosting of the wild creatures (117-118).

For ten years, the Cannons enjoyed the changing Newton seasons, but fears of encroachment sent them to the plot of land that Johnson would commemorate in *The Inland Island*. There, Johnson's idyllic world would gradually grow smaller not only because of urban sprawl, but also because of the death of her beloved husband in February 1969, an event she describes in an unpublished, unfinished manuscript she tentatively titled *The Inland Island II*. Although clearly Johnson was undoubtedly affected by these large life-altering events, one gets the impression that Johnson's perspective on living and writing was much more influenced by "the significance and beauty of ordinary things," an emphasis she clearly adopted in the image and detail employed in all of her works but in *The Inland Island* in particular. If true, then Johnson articulates her philosophy even more comprehensively early on in a story she called "The Quiet Day" in the *Winter Orchard* collection. She writes,

> It is better to trust the small and not human things for a more enduing happiness, and it almost seems sometimes that the vast and important experience we go stumbling after will never give as much happiness as the little sound, the streak of color, or the brief taste of something in the mouth. It is not very wise to trust too much in people or expect very much of love or name or place. Perhaps after all, the meaning of life is written along the margin and not on the page itself.... (32)

The last marginal note of Josephine Johnson's page would record her death brought about by complications from pneumonia on February 27, 1990 at age 79, author of four novels, two collections of short stories, one book of poetry, one nature book, one children's book, one memoir, and multiple short stories and poems in a career that lasted over fifty years.

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TRAMPING ACROSS AMERICA: THE TRAVEL WRITINGS OF VACHEL LINDSAY

DAN GUILLORY

During and immediately following World War I, a small group of Midwestern Modernist poets suddenly emerged on the national scene. Sara Teasdale, Harriet Monroe, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, and, of course, Vachel Lindsay, were all experimenting with the possibilities of line and language, to say nothing of subject matter. In a few short years, taboo subjects and unconventional meters were appearing in the pages of "little magazines," especially Harriet Monroe's hugely successful *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, founded in the city of Chicago in the year 1912. What most distinguished Vachel Lindsay from his highly talented peer group was the speed with which he appropriated his poetic persona, a combination of revivalist fervor and old-fashioned vaudeville, even including a trademark posture—right arm and right palm cocked at a strange angle, head proudly tilted back, and voice alternately booming at high-decibel levels or whispering almost to the point of becoming inaudible. Unlike his peers, Lindsay had no clearly defined social or occupational niche. Sandburg, after all, was a journalist, Masters a lawyer, and Monroe a combination of editor, impresario, and fundraiser. Teasdale was the poet of leisure. But Lindsay had dropped out of Hiram College and was unable to hold any sort of permanent job. Again and again, he was forced to rely on emergency loans from his physician-father back home in Springfield, the Capitol City which provided him with inspiration for many of this political poems (like "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan").

But Lindsay had come by his poetic persona honestly. His time at Hiram had not been entirely wasted. If his medical courses suffered, his self-education in Blake, Dante, and Milton flourished. And Lindsay's subsequent art studies at the Chicago Institute of Art and the New York School of Art (under the highly influential and charismatic

Robert Henri) created a unique frame of reference for the developing poet. Without a great deal of external guidance or encouragement, Lindsay had discovered the European tradition of the *Künstler*, or "artist figure," as suggested by the career of R.M. Rilke or by the English Pre-Raphaelites. In fact, by adopting the curvilinear *art nouveau* style of the late Victorians and coupling those graphic designs with oftentimes mystical utterances, Lindsay transformed himself into a kind of twentieth-century William Blake, a composer of verse that was accompanied by telling illustrations. Lindsay's unshakable faith in the primacy of art, and in the power of poetry to revolutionize society and its various infrastructures, helps to account for the extraordinary initiatives he undertook between 1906 and 1912, when he "tramped" across America on the apparently Quixotic assumption that he could actually "trade rhyme for bread." With Springfield as his center, he traced pathways in both directions, going as far as New Mexico in his westerly swing and all the way to New Jersey on his eastern journey. By the time Lindsay undertook these mind-boggling forays, he had completely repudiated the middle-class and its shackling workaday world. As quoted by Mark Harris in the anecdotal biography, *City of Discontent*, Lindsay explains to one of his New York bohemian friends exactly why he had rejected a job as a gas-tubing salesman. In the process, he outlines his artistic manifesto as conceived on the eve of his magnificent tramping:

> "You can go around gas-tubing until your beard is as long as Methuselah's, but you do not have time to write poems or draw pictures. Then when you've gas-tubed the whole blasted city what do you have? But write a poem like Dante wrote or a *Hamlet* or be a Homer or even Markham or Swinburne and you've done something really practical. ...All that is left is the word. The only practical thing to do in the world is to write or paint." (93)

So the point of Lindsay's wanderings wasn't to *test* his artistic beliefs, but, rather, to put them into actual practice.

Lindsay was, after all, the supreme utopian of the Midwestern modernist poets. Partly because of his Campbellite upbringing (which had been reinforced at Hiram College) and partly because of his Populist sentiments, Lindsay had fashioned a home-made version of Utopian philosophy in which Springfield would become a *locus amoenus* or "perfect place" upon which the rest of pragmatic America could model itself. In fact, on his return to Springfield, after

his sporadic wanderings and after he had written and self-published the explosive but unread pamphlets entitled *War Bulletins* and *Village Magazine* (which declared aesthetic "war" on society at large while idealizing Springfield as the perfect village or human-scale settlement), Lindsay composed *The Golden Book of Springfield*, a bizarre, episodic novel of sorts set in the Springfield of 2018 but published while the poet was living in a vividly real Springfield of 1920.

In the "Introduction" to the recently reissued edition of this long out-of-print volume, Professor Ron Sakolsky meticulously details Lindsay's complex acculturation as a Christian-Socialist thinker with strong mystical tendencies. Sakolsky quotes Lindsay who is explaining that he and other writers "had in common what might even be called a Swedenborgian Springfield, the Springfield of the 'Map of the Universe;' a Springfield of Visions" (Sakolsky civ.). But it is important to stress that Lindsay's "golden" Springfield is tarnished by war, factionalism, gossip, and outright pettiness. Like all utopias, Lindsay's utopia is something of a "dystopia," too. If Lindsay felt so powerfully drawn to this city on the Illinois flood plain, then why did he choose to take to the road, even if his aesthetic theories needed immediate application? While there is no simplistic answer to this very reasonable question, a few facts suggest themselves. Lindsay needed a certain amount of breathing room away from the influence of his domineering father—and overly attentive mother. He had been thinking high, utopian thoughts during the whole time he was composing the *War Bulletins* and *The Village Magazine*, so a casual walk across America may not have seemed such a daunting enterprise to the young aesthete. After all, the real Springfield offered him little hope of employment or social acceptance, a painful truth that inserts itself into the story-line of *The Golden Book of Springfield* as a series of bitter remarks uttered by the impulsive heroine, Avanel Boone. She dresses him down rather thoroughly:

> "There is nothing respectable about you. All the best people of the city make fun of you and wish you would leave town....You have offended all our first families by your queer manners and gauche ways....I do not believe you even know how to make out a check or keep a bank book" (228).

Perhaps the best explanation for Lindsay's abandonment of Springfield and taking the "high road to nowhere" can be found in the title of the two unique books he subsequently produced:

Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty (1914) and *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (1916). If the world is accessible to a mystical sensibility—that is, if the physical environment can be used as an *opportunity* for spiritual revelation—then that world should be explored in all its fullness. So Lindsay adopts the roles of mendicant and evangelist, becoming beggar and preacher, all in the service of a higher Good.

Lindsay simply fashions his episodic, journal-like entries from the letters he sent back home while trooping about America in the halcyon years that preceded the first World War. Cars were making a dramatic difference in the cities but less so in the rural landscapes that Lindsay typically favored. The Model T, after all, had just recently made its wobbly appearance (in 1908), and commercial radio was still in the future. A simple world could still be counted upon to welcome the novelty and entertainment provided by a wandering bard. In any event, farmers and squatters and hermits opened their doors to Lindsay, and the rest of the country wanted to read about these droll "human interest" adventures.

Notably, Lindsay had no model by which he could compose his works. But Lindsay's genius lay precisely in his originality and in his ability to break new literary ground. In 1915, the same Lindsay had published *The Art of the Moving Picture*, a work not only ahead of its time but remarkably this-worldly when juxtaposed with Lindsay's other-worldly writings and drawings. One should never pigeonhole or underestimate the genius of Vachel Lindsay, nor should the reader be surprised that Lindsay, although certainly appreciative of the documentary (film) image, did not try to provide his reader with a filmic equivalent of the tramping. A few place names are included, but the real stage is totally internalized. These tramping books are the literary equivalents of Vachel Lindsay's spiritual home movies. The reader/viewer is pulled into the rush of the narrative without having a clear sense of any predictable outcome. Lindsay is non-teleological: the books are open-ended. But along the way, there are multiple opportunities presented for meditation or commentary on the preceding events. Thus, if Lindsay had no real literary antecedent or model for his tramping books, he certainly provides a potential model for all writers who follow him in this characteristically American mode. Directly or indirectly, here are a few authors and titles that may have benefited from Lindsay's pioneering efforts: John Steinbeck (*Travels with Charley*); Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*); William Least Heat Moon (*Blue Highways*); and even Robert Pirsig's ponderous tome, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.*

Although Lindsay reports dozens of events, mostly details about work, transportation, or food, there are recognizable "peak" moments also embedded in this free-flowing narrative. Without a doubt, the single, most important moment occurs in Great Bend, Kansas where Lindsay (temporarily employed as a farm hand) observes a bronco named Dick as he is savagely whipped to death by a group of sadistic farmers intent on breaking the proud animal's spirit. In this instance, Lindsay provides all the gory details then comments: "I have been assured that this is the only way to subdue the beasts, that law and order must assert themselves or the whole barnyard will lead an industrial rebellion" (*Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* in *Tramping Across America* 72). Obviously, the poor bronco is a metaphorical stand-in for the exhausted factory-workers of the day, but even more importantly the rebellious horse is a spirited emblem of the true artist who will not be "broken" by the savage environment of the twentieth century.

This powerful recollection led directly to the composition of one of Lindsay's most famous poems, "The Bronco That Would Not Be Broken," which is further identified as a "Souvenir of Great Bend, Kansas":

> In that last afternoon your boyish heart broke.
> The hot wind came down like a sledge-hammer stroke.
> The blood-sucking flies to a rare feast awoke.
> And they searched out your wounds, your death-warrant tracing.
> And the merciful men, their religion enhancing,
> Stopped the red reaper, to give you a chance,
> Then you died on the prairie, and scorned all disgraces,
> O bronco that would not be broken of dancing.
> (*Collected Poems* 78)

There is even more evidence of Lindsay's intimate, existential involvement with this "obstreperous" beast. As a lad, Vachel Lindsay had nearly burned down a neighbor's field of harvest hay. What happened next is well described by Mark Harris in *City of Discontent*:

> Papa looks pleased and Vachel thinks that now he will lay aside the strip of leather and not do what he has planned to do. "Take off your shirt. A boy has got to learn neighborliness and respect for other people's property." Papa says it as if it were a commandment *Thou shalt*

> *not set fire to property.* "One little match could burn all Springfield down." *Thou shalt not burn the town down.* And Papa does what he came to the barn to do, and Tom and Charlie whinny and beat the sides of their stalls with their hooves....and they go inside to Papa's study and Papa spreads cool goose grease on Vachel's back, and they go to supper. (22)

The goose grease ultimately proved to be an ineffective ointment, however, since the blows were etched permanently on Vachel's memory if not on his hide, and the savaging of Dick the Broncho (some twenty years later) serves as a "trigger device," a Jungian term for a catalysts that triggers powerful and deeply imprinted memory.

In the example of the "Broncho" poem, the tramping test serves as a natural companion to poem which it helps to explicate and reify all at once. The tramping narrative also provides other valuable clues for interpreting the Lindsay canon as a whole, chiefly in the form of two motifs that appear often enough to catch the attention of even the most casual of readers.

The first motif is that of metaphorical description—that is, Lindsay's stylistic reliance on rather literary ways of packaging and delivering his meaning. An ordinary chair and other household items become an opportunity for poetic thinking. In a virtually postmodern and highly interactive way, Lindsay forces the reader to rethink these everyday realities and experience them in a fresh, new way:

> A chair is a sturdy creature. I wonder who captured the first one? Who put out its eyes and taught it to stand still? A table-cloth is ritualistic. How nobly the napkin defends the vest, while those glistening birds, the knife, the fork the spoon, bring one food. (*Tramping* 137)

In fact, the lucky reader will reap the benefit of Lindsay's metaphor-making over and over, as when a group of common black-eyed Susans are described as "marching like suffragettes to get the vote" (*Tramping* 28).

The second motif is that of perceived racism, especially in the quoting of verbal slurs like the following:

> There are just a few white people, and more mutations every day. The white people ought to keep their blood pure. Russians are white people. Germans, English, and Americans are white people. French people are niggers. Dagoes are niggers. Jews are niggers....There is going to be a big war in two or three years between all the white people and all the niggers. (*Tramping* xxvi-xxvii)

Lindsay drops his customary metaphorical style in these racists reports, and that shift is significant because it clues the reader that Lindsay is so disgusted by this speech that he wants to present it verbatim, in all its evil sleaziness. This obvious concern for the feelings of others—African Americans in particular—ought to help in contextualizing Lindsay's most difficult poem for the contemporary reader, "The Congo." It is too facile to dismiss Lindsay or undervalue the whole canon because of the apparent racial insensitivity in that one poem. So a close reading of the tramping narratives may open a new discourse among Lindsay readers—and, more importantly—non-readers.

By 1920 Lindsay was the first literary superstar, the most renowned poet in the English-speaking world. As Eleanor Ruggles, one of Lindsay's most thorough biographers notes, he was in England; and the climax of that trip was a reading at Oxford University, where, according to a first-hand report by a fellow poet, Robert Graves, Lindsay ignited the crowd, and in forty minutes had them "roaring like a bonfire" (Ruggles 275). At that point in his career, Lindsay had a charismatic effect on his audiences, and undoubtedly he enlarged the audience for poetry in general. Although *Poetry* magazine is usually credited with advancing Lindsay's career, it may well have been the other way round: Lindsay may have helped to put *Poetry* on the literary map. He also paved the way for a long line of performing poets, including Robert Frost, Allan Ginsberg, and even Rita Dove. Perhaps the strain of being the master performer, the trooper who invented the college circuit of reading venues and who read at public sites, even serving from 1924 to 1929 as Poet Laureate for the city of Spokane, Washington—all these duties ultimately overwhelmed the man known as "the prairie troubadour." Near the end of 1931, in the icy throes of winter and the Great Depression, he drank a bottle of Lysol on the stairwell of the old familiar house at 610 South Fifth Street, the very house where he was born some fifty-two years before.

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"A GERMAN *MAIN STREET*" AND MORE: HEINRICH MANN'S *DER UNTERTAN* (1918) AND SINCLAIR LEWIS'S SATIRICAL NOVELS OF THE 1920s

FREDERICK BETZ

Among the great satirical novelists represented in Penguin's Twentieth Century Classics are Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) and Heinrich Mann (1871-1950), the older and lesser known brother of Thomas Mann.[1] But while the Penguin editions of *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922) are expertly introduced and annotated by Martin Bucco (1995) and James M. Hutchisson (1996), respectively,[2] the reader is unfortunately provided with no such orientation for the English translation (1984, 1992) of *Der Untertan (1918),* Mann's devastating satire of the German bourgeois as the obsequious but opportunistic loyal subject of Kaiser Wilhelm II in the 1890s. The English title, *Man of Straw,* which satirically identifies the representative main character as a straw image of the Kaiser, actually first appeared in 1947 (see copyright page),[3] but neither in the 1947 nor in the Penguin edition is any reference made to the translator, Ernest Boyd (1887-1946), an Irish-American critic who associated with both H.L. Mencken and Lewis in the 1920s, or to the original publication of the translation in late 1921, when it appeared under the title *The Patrioteer* in the new "European Library" series of Harcourt, Brace and Company.[4]

Inside the back cover, *The Patrioteer* is characterized as "A German *Main Street,* describing the career of a typical product of militarism, in school, university, business, patriotism and love." While still in preparation, Boyd's translation was advertised simply as *The Patriot,* with the same summary of the main character's career, but "told with biting incisiveness and irony."[5] With the change of title, it was no longer necessary to refer explicitly to the "biting incisiveness and irony" of the novel, for the -eer suffix of the recently coined word

'patrioteer' clearly gave the new title negative or pejorative meaning (cf. profiteer);[6] the characterization of the Patrioteer as "A German *Main Street*" was an obvious reference to Lewis's novel, which had also been published by Harcourt, Brace in late 1920 and become a phenomenal best seller (with 180,000 copies sold) in the first half of 1921.[7]

No doubt this characterization was added for marketing purposes, but there are also remarkable similarities in the long genesis, commercial success, public reaction, and critical reception of these two novels. *Der Untertan* had appeared in serial publication from January to August 1914, when, at the outbreak of the war, editor and author, anticipating censorship, agreed to abruptly terminate publication without any explanation to readers that approximately the last 50 pages of the 453-page novel were being suppressed. Shortly after the defeat of Germany in November 1918 *Der Untertan* was published in a first edition of 100,000 copies, which were sold in only a few weeks; in the numerous reviews that appeared throughout central Europe Mann's controversial novel was either praised as a brilliant satire and prophetic work (prophesying German chauvinism culminating in World War I) or criticized as literary pamphleteering inspired by the author's alleged hatred of Germany. Mann himself received not only open letters of condemnation, but also death threats from reactionary circles.[8] *Main Street* provoked a similar range of reactions, from praise for its "satiric realism" to alarm at its "social criticism" and rejection of the novel as a mere "study" or as an "unfair, incomplete, and profane" satire; in Sauk Centre itself— "now the butt of Hicksville jokes"— citizens "talked about lynching" Lewis "if he ever returned."[9]

Both Mann and Lewis had spent years planning, researching, and writing their novels. While Mann conceived his satire of the representative loyal subject of the Kaiser in 1904, Lewis noted in his diary in 1905 that he would write a novel about "the village virus," the "germ" that, as Guy Pollack explains to Carol Kennicott, "infects" even "ambitious people who stay too long in the provinces" (Ch. 13). Both the author of *Der Untertan* and the author of *Main Street* (but even more so of *Babbitt* and subsequent novels) also made detailed studies of their characters, scenes of action , and the contemporary background, as documented in extant notebooks, plans and drafts, which contain copious lists of symbolic or ironic names and characteristic phrases, sayings, or quotations, as well as sketches of characters, scenes, and episodes.[10]

The finished novels display remarkably similar techniques of satirical portrayal, for example, ironic parallels, discrepancies, or contrasts between speech and action, actions and thoughts, utterances and responses, names and personalities or physiques, all to expose especially the insincerity of dishonesty, hypocrisy or false sentimentality, pretension or arrogance, ignorance, intolerance, prejudice and bigotry of individuals or groups in the community. In both novels there is an ironic polarity between "good," "loyal," "patriotic" and "bad," "disloyal," "unpatriotic" citizens, between Americans or Germans and foreigners or immigrants, business and labor, capitalists and socialists, conservatives and liberals, practical doers and intellectual loafers or cranks. And in both novels (but more so in *Der Untertan*) animal imagery, physical features of hated or feared races, or associations with disease are used to demonize or stigmatize individuals, groups, or other nationalities.[11]

It is all the more surprising, then, that the reviews of *The Patrioteer* in early 1922 do not elaborate on the comparison with *Main Street*. *The Dial* (March 22), for example, merely notes that "Mann has exposed Imperial Germany as neatly as Lewis exposed Main Street." The *Baltimore Evening Sun* (January 14) considers *The Patrioteer* not only "an excellent novel—far better than *Main Street*, to which it has been ineptly compared," but also "a trenchant study of a national state of mind." And after observing in both novels "the same unsparing chronicle of provincial baseness and moral cowardice and servile trucking to authority and convention, relieved by many episodes of broad and uproarious humor," the *New York Tribune* (January 22) criticizes the "parlor radicalism" of the "well-meaning but feeble-willed" Carol Kennicott's return to her husband Will in Gopher Prairie and her declaration that while she "may not have fought the good fight," she has "kept the faith," to which, however, her husband ironically reacts with a perfunctory, absent-minded response (Ch. 39). Although Lewis portrays Carol's idealism and attempts at reform with some irony (which the *New York Tribune* overlooks), Lewis clearly sympathizes, even identifies, with his main character.

Mann shows no such sympathy with his main character, Diederich Hessling, whose very name suggests a hateful (Hass) and repulsive (hässlich) person. Mann develops his "Untertan" (i.e. obsequious, but also oppressive) character through childhood (with an authoritarian father, whom he fears, but admires, and a doting, sentimental mother, whom he scorns), school (fearing his teacher, but bullying a Jewish classmate), and university (drinking with his Neo-Teuton fraternity brothers and learning to shout praises of the Kaiser and quote his denunciations of such 'subversive enemies' as socialists, liberals, and Jews). When Hessling returns home to Netzig (the related word 'Nest' has the figurative meaning of 'hick-town') to take over his deceased father's paper factory, he also proceeds to "conquer" the community for the Kaiser by opportunistically and ruthlessly ruining leaders of the liberal establishment in court cases involving *lèse-majesté* and libel over a fraudulent land deal and by conspiring with the (equally unscrupulous) Social Democratic foreman in his factory (with the ironic name, Napoleon Fischer) to defeat the liberals in the local elections and gain a seat on the town council, while sending the foreman to the Reichstag in Berlin.

In his rise to local power, Hessling is satirically portrayed as a mini-Kaiser, with, for example, the same threatening mustache turned up a right angles, the same eyes flashing with cat-like ferocity, and above all, the same pontifical manner of speaking. Whether admonishing his factory workers, testifying in court against liberal defendants, accepting admission to the Veteran's Association (even though he never served in the military), or exhorting followers at a rally of the Kaiser's (political) Party, Hessling's speeches are replete with quotations from the Kaiser's own public pronouncements, especially chauvinistic statements concerning the virtues of the Germans and threats from domestic and foreign subversives or enemies of the State.[13] This relentless satire culminates in Hessling's speech at the end of the novel dedicating a statue in honor of the Kaiser's grandfather, Wilhelm I (1797-1888). However, his speech, which contains Kaiser-quotations in almost every sentence, is ironically drowned out and cut short by a sudden and violent thunderstorm, which forces Hessling and his audience to scatter and seek shelter. On the way home, Hessling checks the house he has rented to Herr Buck, the veteran of the failed 1848 Revolution and grand old man of Netzig, whom he has ruined politically and financially. Old Buck, who is on his deathbed, expires at the sight of Hessling standing in the shadow of the doorway, and a daughter-in-law in attendance cries out: "He has seen something! He has seen the Devil!" With Old Buck liberalism dies in Netzig, just as its last chance in the Kaiserreich had been lost with the premature death of the liberal Kaiser Friedrich III, and the ascension of his son, Wilhelm II, to the throne in 1888.

Although Mann's novel can be regarded in its satirical portrayal of Netzig as "A German *Main Street*," it is evident that Diederich

Hessling and Carol Kennicott are not comparable main characters in their relationship to the community. However, Lewis created a Hessling-like figure in the title character of his next novel, *Babbitt* (1922). Both Diederich Hessling (born 1870) and George F. Babbitt (born 1874) are of the same generation, both enjoy "college life" over higher learning, and both become "good"family and "respectable" business men in their communities. Both are club members and boosters, ruthless with employees, and dishonest in real estate deals. Both are soft and flabby, and cowardly when challenged or threatened, but both boast constantly of their manliness. Hessling is "a German man," a member of the pure German race, while Babbitt is "an American He-man," who extols 100% Americanism. Both are anti-foreigner, anti-immigrant, anti-socialist, and anti-intellectual, even though both hypocritically and repeatedly claim to be liberal or liberal-minded. Above all, both are highly nervous and excitable, talk incessantly, give speeches boosting patriotism and commercialism, and shout their opinions and denunciations.

Babbitt seems in some ways to be a weak copy or an ironic imitation of Theodore Roosevelt (1858-191), the former president (1901-1909), legendary leader of the "Rough Riders" in the Spanish-American War (1898), advocate of the "Strenuous Life" (hiking, hunting, horseback riding) to overcome physical weakness and nervousness,[14] and indefatigable orator on the virtues of American Civilization , but who was debunked in 1920 by Mencken, whose views Lewis valued,[15] as an opportunistic, mean-spirited charlatan, very much like the Kaiser, who, however, had given far fewer speeches.[16] To be sure, Lewis does not relate Babbitt to Roosevelt as obviously or insistently as Mann identifies Hessling with Wilhelm II. Explicit comparisons are made rather with other characters, such as the Rev. Dr. Drew, whom "someone had once told [...] that he talked like the late President Roosevelt", (Ch. 17), or Dr Pickerbaugh in *Arrowsmith* (1925), who "looked somewhat like President Roosevelt, with the same squareness and the same bristly mustache," and who "cultivated the resemblance" and "never merely talked," but "either bubbled or made orations" (Ch. 19). However, Babbitt names his son after Roosevelt, who was president when Ted was born in 1903 (Ch. 2), belongs to the inner circle of the Zenith Athletic Club called "The Roughnecks" (Ch. 5), seeks to relieve his nervousness by camping and hiking in the mountains of Maine (Chs. 11, 25), and

develops a reputation for oratory on the standardized, middle-class American way of life. (Ch. 14).

Like Hessling, Babbitt also turns out to be "an excellent campaigner" in the local election in the fall of 1920, when Warren G. Harding (1865-1923) wins the national election for President of the United States. Just as Hessling contrasts the "good," "loyal"citizens (die Gutgesinnten) of the Kaiser's Party with the "unpatriotic elements" (die Schlechtgesinnten) of the People's Party in the campaign for control of Netzig, Babbitt, too, does not, as Lewis puts it, "confuse audiences by silly subtleties": Lucas Prout, the business candidate for mayor "represented honest industry," while Seneca Doane, the labor candidate, "represented whining laziness, and you could take your choice" (Ch. 14). And just as Hessling speaks like the Kaiser, Babbitt sounds like Harding, whose stump speech style, bad English ('Gamalielese'), and platitudes about Americanism, 'Normalcy', and "a good, sound business administration" Mencken repeatedly ridiculed in 1920-1921.[17]

Unlike Hessling, however, Babbitt later rebels against the community, questions the views of religious and business leaders, tries to understand striking workers (Ch. 27), and refuses to join the good Citizens' League against the strikers and their supporters (Ch. 29). but Babbitt cannot stand the strain of his rebellion and finds a face-saving way to "flee back to the security of conformity" (Ch. 32). In the end, he assumes an active role in the good Citizens' League, but privately confesses to his son Ted that he has never accomplished anything more than just get along and advises him to live his own life as he thinks best (Ch. 34).

Babbitt is a weak conformist, but he struggles with his conscience and, like Carol Kennicott, hopes for a better future for his offspring; therefore, in the end, he, too, arouses some sympathy or pity. Hessling has no conscience, only moments of self-pity when facing temporary setbacks in his rise to power. He is indeed, a repulsive character, like Babbitt's friend and fellow "Roughneck," Vergil Gunch, Zenith's largest coal dealer, who is also President of the Boosters' Club and local leader of the Good Citizens' League. Gunch, whose name begins with the hard 'g' typical of some of the most odious characters in Lewis's fiction (e.g. Elmer Gantry or Adelaide Tarr Gimmitch),[18] comes to warn the reluctant Babbitt that in the struggle against "Undesirable Elements," such as labor unions, socialists, and liberal "cranks" like Seneca Doane, the League considers any-

one who does not join to be an enemy (Ch. 29). Quoting the Bible, "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke 11,23), Gunch sounds like Hessling quoting the Kaiser, who warned that he recognized only two kinds of political parties, those for or against him; just as Hessling intimidates others with his Kaiser-like speech, stony face, and flashing eyes, Gunch disconcerts Babbitt with "the grimness of [his] voice" and "the hardness of his jaw" (Ch. 29).

Another repulsive, Hessling-like figure in Lewis's fiction of the 1920s is Lowell Schmaltz, the "Babbitt Redivivus" (Mencken) in *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* (1928).[19] Schmaltz, whose name suggests sentimentality or banality, simply talks and talks, in ironic contrast to President Coolidge (1923-1929), who had a reputation as a man of few words,but again very much like Theodore Roosevelt, whose "sacred name" Schmaltz invokes, "with those undying words of his about Race Suicide" (Part II), or like Warren G. Harding, whom Schmaltz defends against recent books that "have dared to hint that our Martyr President [...]was a dumb-bell surrounded by crooks" (Part IV). [20] Schmaltz, self-proclaimed patriot and "modern, up-to-date liberal" business man (Part I), never finishes a story or an argument, but rather blithely criticizes whatever comes to mind, mangling the English language and exposing relentlessly in the process his own bigotries and prejudices, his ignorance and hypocrisy. Both *Man of Straw* and *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* end with public speeches which summarize the views of the representative main characters. After celebrating "the unparalleled development of commerce and nationalism" in the Kaiserreich, Hessling accuses the arch-enemy French of "chauvinism," "crass materialism," and "a questionable business sense,"which ironically underscores the patrioteering and profiteering he himself so blatantly practices. In his speech on "the Basic and Fundamental Ideals of Christian American Citizenship" (Part VI), "Constructive and Nordic Citizen" (sub-title) Schmaltz celebrates "Service" and "Practicalness" as peculiarly American virtues, and concludes with his motto: "Read widely, think scientifically, speak briefly, and sell the goods!" Schmaltz does none of these things, of course, except try to "sell the goods."

Whereas Vergil Gunch is only a secondary character and Lowell Schmaltz simply talks in a series of monologues which have replaced the plot of a traditional novel, Elmer Gantry is a repulsive, Hessling-like main character, a hypocritical and ruthless opportunist, who uses his extraordinary oratorical skills to rise to power as "a Man of God"

(Ch. 9)[21] or rather as "the Professional Good Man" (Chs. 20, 27). Just as Hessling constantly quotes or paraphrases the Kaiser, Gantry plagiarizes "that rotten old atheist" Robert J. Ingersoll (1833-1899) on the question of "What is Love?" (Ch. 3) and uses Ingersoll's poetic answer ("Love is the Morning Star") to great effect in sermons throughout his career in the Baptist and Methodist Churches (e.g., Chs. 7, 10, 11, 20, 27). And just as the Kaiser and his loyal subject are characterized as "actors" (Künstler) and interpreted as the representative types of the time,[22] Gantry regards preaching as a "spiel" (Ch. 3), "rehearse[s] in his role of candidate for righteousness" (Ch. 4), fakes his "Call" from God (Ch. 4), discusses with the evangelist Sharon Falconer his sermon as a saved business man as an act (Ch. 11), advertises himself as a "renowned Psychologist," with unearned doctor degrees (Ch. 16), "dresse[s] as calculatingly as an actor" (Ch. 23), and plans his personal crusading against vice as a "stunt" (Ch. 26); even though many of his rival preachers in Zenith call him a "clown" or "Charlatan" or "Sensationalist," Gantry convinces most folks with his hell-fire and damnation sermons that he is really a "great moral leader" (Ch. 27).

In their rise to power, both Hessling and Gantry use and abuse other people, whether friends or associates, lovers or wives, or leaders of the community or church. While Hessling seduces his boyhood friend Wolfgang Buck's fiancée (Guste Daimchen), Gantry distorts Jim Leffert's life in his sermons and helps to ruin Frank Shallard's life altogether. While Hessling conspires to succeed Old Buck as the most powerful man in Netzig, Gantry aspires to succeed the vice-slayer, J.E. North, as executive secretary of the National Association for Purification of Art and the Press (Ch. 30) and to become "the chief moral director of the country (Ch. 31). Both get their lovers (Agnes Göppel and Lulu Bains) pregnant, but then refuse to marry them; ostensibly because they are now fallen women, but actually because they would not be suitable wives for their careers. Gantry outdoes Hessling, however, when he has an affair with Lulu Bains Naylor fourteen years later, while married to Cleo Benham (Ch. 25), "the sort of wife" he thought "would help him capture a bishopric" (Ch. 19). Hessling marries Wolfgang Bick's fiancée for her considerable inheritance, so that he can modernize and expand his business. Both play the role of strict paterfamilias, but both continue to cheat on their wives, Hessling with the pastor's daughter (Käthchen Zillich), who

is a town prostitute, Gantry with Hettie Dowler, who, however, has schemed with her husband to blackmail him. In an ending that is just as melodramatic as that in *Der Untertan*, Gantry survives the potential scandal, however, to become pastor of the Yorkville Methodist Church in New York, and while he solemnly pledges to "yet make these United States a moral nation," he incorrigibly notices the "charming ankles and lively eyes" of a new singer in the choir (Ch. 33). In Elmer Gantry we do, indeed, find Lewis's repulsive main character counterpart to Mann's Hessling.

There is no evidence that Lewis actually ever read Mann's novel, but he did meet the Mann brothers in Berlin in 1927,[23] and he included them among 'unwanted' authors whose works are burned publicly in cities around the country in his satirical best seller of 1935, *It Can't Happen Here* (Ch. 22), warning of a fascist takeover of the United States; most likely Lewis had in mind Thomas Mann's novella of Italian Fascism, *Mario und der Zauberer* (1930); *Mario and the Magician*, 1931)[24] and Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan (The Patrioteer)*, which, when reissued in 1945, was interpreted again in retrospect as a prophetic work, this time anticipating Nazism: The new title, *Little Superman*,[25] a translation of Nietzsch's "uebermensch',[26] which perhaps inadvertently reminded American readers more of the comic-strip hero created in the late 1930s,[27] ironically characterizes the "little" or "typical" German who enthusiastically supported Hitler.[28]

Although the three different English titles may be instructive for the critical reception of *Der Untertan* in America after the two world wars, they are not only inaccurate translations, but also mistaken "attempts to provide" Mann's novel with "a spurious relevance," for it is, as Michael Kowal observed only a few years after the 'Imperial Presidency' of Richard Nixon,[29] "the inherent incompatibility of the subject-ruler relationship with a democratic attitude that the work is designed to expose." Kowal considered *Der Untertan* to be one of the great political novels of the 20th century, and therefore he found it all "the more surprising" that "it is also nearly forgotten," "as it treats a crucial issue of our time, the conflict between authority and democratic principles, from a perspective which anticipates in many respects that scrutiny of established power undertaken in American over the past decade."[30]

Unfortunately, Mann's novel appears to have never had many, even intellectual or academic, readers in America. The translator,

Ernest Boyd, complained about this already in 1922;[31] indeed, Lewis Mumford, who had associated with Boyd in 1921, confessed years later in his fictional letter of 1945, "To a German Writer," in which he recommended *Little Superman* as the modern German novel comparable to *Main Street*, that he had not read *The Patrioteer* at the time.[32] Perhaps *Der Untertan* would find more readers in this country, if Penguin were to advertise Mann's novel once again as "A German *Main Street,*" but now also compare Diederich Hessling to the well-known characters George F. Babbitt and Elmer Gantry. Penguin should also replace Boyd's somewhat outdated and abridged translation with a new and improved one, and publish it with an introduction and annotations, following the example of Penguin's fine editions of *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.[33]

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NOTES

1. See, e.g., Gordon A. Craig, "The Other Mann," *The New York Review of Books* (9 April 1998): 21-24.
2. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street. The Story of Carol Kennicott*, With an Introduction and Notes by Martin Bucco (New York/London: Penguin Books, 1995); *Babbitt,* With an Introduction and Notes by James M. Hutchisson (Penguin, 1996).
3. Heinrich Mann, *Man of Straw* (Penguin Books, 1984 [Penguin Modern Classics], 1992); first published in 1947 (London/New York: Hutchinson International Authors).
4. Heinrich Mann, *The Patrioteer*, Authorized Translation by Ernest Boyd (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921. - Hence some scholars think *Man of Straw* (1947) is the original publication of the English translation; see, e.g., Nigel Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann. The Lives of Heinrich and Thomas Mann. 1871-1950 and 1875-1955* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978) and Thomas Kohut, *Wilhelm II and the Germans. A Study in Leadership* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
5. See advertisement inside the back cover of the translation of Walther Rathenau's *The New Society*, which had appeared earlier in 1921 in the "European Library."
6. See Frederick Betz, "Mencken and the 'Patrioteers': On the History of a Word," *Menckeniana* 121, 122, 123 (Spring, Summer, Fall, 1992): 1-6, 12-15. 11-15.
7. See Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis. An American Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961): 264.
8. See F. Betz, *Erläterungen und Dokumente zu Heinrich Mann: Der Untertan* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993): 85-86, 104, 127, 130.
9. See Bucco xvi-xviii.
10. See Betz, *Erläuterungen*; also Peter Sprengel, "Kaiser and Untertan. Zur Genese von Heinrich Mann's Roman," *Heinrich Mann Jahrbuch* 10 (1992): 57-71; Bucco and Hutchisson; also Hutchisson, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis, 1920-1930* (University Park: the Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), Ch. 1. As Hutchisson demonstrates (Ch. 2), Lewis fully developed his working methods in his next novel, *Babbitt* (1922).
11. In *Main Street*, for example, Mrs. Bogart is compared to "old and indignant hens" (Ch. 6), while Mr. James Balusser rears up "like an elephant with a camel's neck" to give a speech at the Commercial Club (Ch. 35). The Swedish farmers are "Svenskas" or "Scandahoofian

clodhoppers" (Ch. 7), and Miles Bjornstam is "The Red Swede" (Cg. 10). Cy Bogart hates "every dirty Hun" and beats a German farm boy for being a "damn hyphenated German," but while Cy remains in Gopher Prairie, the German farm boy is killed fighting in the war in Europe (Ch. 23). In *Der Untertan*, the Social Democratic foreman in the paper factory is "ape-like" (Ch. IV), the President of the Court looks "like a worm-eaten vulture" (Ch. IV), the Governor has a "black paw" (Ch. V), and the owner of the rival paper factory is a "spider, back there in his web, which covered the whole province" (Ch. IV). The liberal Dr. Heuteufel has a "yellow Chinaman's face" (Ch.IV), the Jewish Assessor Jadassohn had "huge, red, prominent ears" (Ch. III), Governor von Wulckow has: "high Slavic cheekbones" and "Mongolian eyes" (Ch. V), and the Italians are "small, dark people" and "degenerate Latins" (Ch. VI). The arch-enemy French are "a decadent people" (Ch. VI), liberals and socialists are treacherous, like an insidious disease (tückisch), and the Kaiser and his followers constantly warn against the "plague of revolution."

12. See *The Dial* (New York) 22 Mar. 1922: 324; *Baltimore Evening Sun* 14 Jan. 1922: 4; *New York Tribune* 22 Jan. 1922: 8.
13. See Betz, *Erläuterungen.* Mann also has Hessling occasionally make up quotes that sound like the Kaiser's pronouncements.
14. See Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903. An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1991), Ch. 2.
15. See, e.g., *Babbitt*, Ch. 23; also Hutchisson, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis*, Ch. 2; note 21 below.
16. See. H.L. Mencken, "Roosevelt: An Autopsy," *Prejudices: Second Series* (New York: Knopf, 1920): 102-135. - Whereas *Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelms II.* (Leipzig: Reclam) appeared in 4 vols. (1897-1907, 1911), *Theodore Roosevelt's Presidential Addresses and State Papers; European Addresses* (New York: Homeward Bound Edition, n.d.) appeared in 8 vols.
17. See Mencken, *A Carnival of Buncombe*, ed. Malcolm Moos (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1956), Part One (Normalcy). In his *Star-Spangled Men. America's Ten Worst Presidents* (New York: Scribner, 1998), Nathan Miller notes that "Harding bore a striking resemblance to Sinclair Lewis's fictional real estate salesman, George F. Babbitt" (196).
18. See Robert L. Coard, "Names in the Fiction of Sinclair Lewis," *Georgia Review* 16 (1962): 321.
19. See Mencken's review under this title in *American Mercury* 14 (June 1928): 253-254.
20. See also Mencken, "Roosevelt: An Autopsy"; Robert H. Ferrell, *The Strange Deaths of President Harding* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996).
21. See also Mencken's review, "Man of God: American Style," in *American Mercury* 10 (April 1927): 506-508. Lewis dedicated *Elmer Gantry* to Mencken, "with profound admiration."
22. Old Buck's lawyer-son, Wolfgang, who also functions as a mouthpiece for Mann, asks Hessling "whom history will designate as the representative type of this era." Hessling answers without hesitation: "The Emperor," but Buck replies: "No, the actor" (Ch. 4).
23. See Schorer 491. Lewis also used the word 'patrioteer' in his novel, *Ann Vickers* (1933), where he has his main character say in June 1917 that she is "not a lady patrioteer" (Ch. 14).
24. Thomas Mann's novella was banned in Italy; both Mann brothers left Germany after Hitler came to power in 1933 and eventually emigrated to the United States.
25. Heinrich Mann, *Little Superman* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1945).
26. See Man's correspondence with his literary agent in America, *Heinrich Mann. Briefwechsel mit Barthold Fles,* ed. Madeleine Rietra (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1993): 136. This correspondence does not reveal the origin of the title *Man of Straw*, however. Fles had suggested the ironic title *The Good Citizen* (133).
27. See Richard Watts, Jr.'s review, "German Insect Patriot," in *The New York Times Book Review* (16 Dec. 1945): 11.
28. See esp. F.C. Weiskopf's review, "Making of Nazis," in the *Saturday Review of LIterature* 28 (20 Oct. 1945): 30.
29. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).
30. See Michael Kowal, "Heinrich Mann and *Der Untertan,*" *Nation* 225 (8 Oct. 1977): 346-348.

31. See Ernest Boyd, "The Way of the Translator," *The Literary Review* (16 Dec. 1922): 313.
32. See Lewis Mumford, "Letter to a German Writer," *Saturday Review of Literature* 28 (8 Dec. 1945): 8.
33. Boyd's translation has recently been adapted, with new portions translated by Daniel Theisen, and edited by Helmut Peitsch, under the more accurate title, *The Loyal Subject* (New York: Continuum, 1998). This new edition appears in "The German Library" series, which was established in the 1980s to give American readers greater exposure to German literature. However, this edition is considerably more expensive that the Penguin edition, and "The German Library" has a much smaller readership than Penguin's Twentieth Century Classics. Moreover, in his introduction to *the Loyal Subject*, Peitsch makes no mention of Sinclair Lewis or comparisons with his satirical novels of the 1920s.

THE ALLURE AND ILLUSION OF THE EAST IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S BASIL STORIES

KAVITA S. HATWALKAR

For a writer who went to Europe "seeking tranquility for his work," F. Scott Fitzgerald was quite interested in the cultural geography of the United States and especially with the binary oppositions he constructed between the North and South and the East and the Midwest (Bruccoli 332). Fitzgerald focuses on the distinction between the East and the Midwest in his short stories centered on the adolescent character Basil Duke Lee. This is not a new focus because Fitzgerald brings up these notions of geography in his earlier work, especially in *The Great Gatsby*. Despite its importance, this theme has not been focused on in the Basil stories and deserves further examination.

In the Basil stories, Fitzgerald perpetuates the idea of the upper-class, culturally-vibrant, enlightened East and juxtaposes it with the middle-class, bucolic, banal Midwest, allowing Basil to be thoroughly entrenched in the rhetoric of the myth of the eastern United States's superior allure. This rhetoric includes the nostalgia Basil gains from constant reference to life in the East and the seemingly necessary conversion to the eastern mentality required for success. Basil's attitude towards the East seems to suggest that everything there will become as wonderful as the dreams he has, but this is not true. The illusive nature of the East becomes apparent when Basil's experiences are not as dream-like and successful as he imagines. There are also a few scenes where Basil defies the rhetoric and seems to prefer the Midwest sensibility and realizes that some of his nostalgia does center on his hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota.

The East, in terms of these short stories, is more specifically defined as anything east of Pennsylvania, the New England states. The critic James M. Cox discusses the disparity between the East and the Midwest and says " If New England at the turn of the century was

culturally and morally rich yet politically poor, the Midwest was politically and morally rich yet culturally poor" (772). Basil Duke Lee, from St. Paul, Minnesota is trying to distance himself from this cultural poverty and is trying to help others do the same.

In "He Thinks He's Wonderful," Basil tries to convert his friend from St. Paul, Joe Gorman, from a "little more than a Midwestern bumpkin to an Easterner bursting with *savoir-faire* and irresistible to girls" (118). One of the ways Basil does this is by persuading Joe not to wear white ties because it is something not done in the East (119). Basil also says to Joe"...if a boy doesn't get it taken out of him at school, he gets it taken out of him at college" (119). This "it" that Basil thinks unnecessary is Joe's Midwestern middle-class sensibility. For Basil, there's no need for this sort of naiveté and he believes those who go East will inevitably lose it. By saying that Easterners burst with *savoir-faire*, Fitzgerald is implying that Midwesterners do not have these redeeming qualities of culture and sophistication nor do they possess the ability to impress girls, which Basil sees as quite important. Basil develops an intimacy for others, especially girls, who idolize and glamorize the East the way he does. In "A Night at the Fair," Basil speaks adoringly about Gladys Van Schellinger who was "brought up to marry in the East" and "was not allowed the casual freedom of children in a Midwestern city" (78). Basil sees Gladys as a contrast to the "common girls" in his town and thus tries to woo her (79). Their impending enrollment in schools in the East brings them closer together in Basil's mind "as if they had been selected for the glamorous adventure of the East, chosen together for a high destiny that transcended the fact that she was rich and he was only comfortable" (79). Basil sees the East not only as a place of culture, but also of "glamorous adventure" that the Midwest does not hold for him.

Besides cultural poverty, Basil is also looking to transcend economic poverty by escaping his middle-class existence for one of riches, sophistication and knowledge in the East. Basil sees Gladys as more prepared for the East because of her upper-class status and her being raised to "marry in the East" (78). Fitzgerald embodies his own middle-class emotion, through Basil's "estrangement from the flat landscapes, towns and society on which they looked" as well as his "hunger for art and knowledge of art..." (Cox 774). According to Cox, the above descriptions reflect the "true emotion of middle-class, Middle Western writers," which includes Fitzgerald.

Basil's hunger leads to his dreaming of the East and the hope for fulfillment of his wishes and desires, as in this passage for "The Scandal Detectives,"

> ...Basil was terribly happy. This summer he and his mother and sister were going to the lakes and next fall he was starting away to school. Then he would go to Yale and be a great athlete, and after that—if his two dreams had fitted onto each other chronologically instead of existing independently side by side—he was due to become a gentleman burglar. Everything was fine. He had so many alluring things to think about that it was hard to fall asleep at night (53).

Both Basil's schooling and college involve traveling east to St. Regis School, in Eastchester, Connecticut and then on to Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Basil does not dream about staying in the Midwest and living a middle-class lifestyle. He wants to become a great athlete and then become a gentleman burglar, concepts he has read thoroughly about while still living in the Midwest. Fitzgerald even uses the word "alluring" to describe the things that keep Basil awake at night.

Through Basil's constant inundation with the rhetoric of the East, he finds familiarity within this idea. While his train-riding companion Lewis Crum from "The Freshest Boy" is feeling homesick for St. Paul, "Basil, on the other hand, had lived with such intensity on so many stories of boarding school life that, far from being homesick, he had a glad feeling of recognition and familiarity," (88). The stories of the East, which seem to have been a constant in the growing up of Basil come to his aid as he goes east into the "fabled world" to St. Regis. and eventually to Yale (90).

Basil's journey to attend Yale is not without its ups and downs. After Basil's' mother announces to him, in "Forging Ahead" that she thinks she has lost $22,000, it seems unlikely that Basil will be able to attend Yale (183). This news affects Basil greatly and makes him feel that "his friendly and familiar dreams had been swept away," (184). The East has always been a part of Basil's consciousness, so the loss of it could be seen as Basil losing a part of himself.

This idea of going East for fortune and success is not new for Fitzgerald—it can be seen in *The Great Gatsby*, as Jackson Bryer and John Kuehl point out: "As with Nick and Gatsby, Basil is Fitzgerald's 'Young Man from the provinces' come East, in his case to begin his conquest of 'successive worlds of school, college and New York'"

(19). Fitzgerald reveals Basil's idealized notions of Yale and the East in "Forging Ahead."

> Yale was the far-away East, that he had loved with a vast nostalgia since he had first read books about great cities. Beyond the dreary railroad stations of Chicago and the night fires of Pittsburgh, back in the old states, something went on that made his heart beat fast with excitement. He was attuned to the fast, breathless bustle of New York, to the metropolitan days and nights that were tense as singing wires. Nothing needed to be imagined there, for it was all the very stuff of romance—life was as vivid and satisfactory as in books and dreams (184).

The above passage marks Fitzgerald's clearest explanation of Basil's reasoning for loving and longing for the East. The books Basil reads influence and heighten his determination for leaving the Midwest to go East.

At this point, Basil's being "attuned" to the commotion of New York comes from his infrequent visits during his tenure at St. Regis school and from the literature he has read; his nostalgia is not his own. Mentioning specific cities in the Midwest such as Chicago and Pittsburgh concretizes the middle-class and working-class ethic from which Basil wants to remove himself. Basil yearns for the spirited activity of the East, which he finds more appealing that the insipid dullness of the Midwest where he had to create and imagine his own adventures rather than exist within the seemingly innate nature of excitement in the East.

Throughout the Basil stories the East is set up to represent the fulfillment of wishful thinking and the places where dreams can come true. And for Basil this seems accurate, to a point. In "The Freshest Boy" while on the journey to St. Regis, Basil is already causing his companion on the train, Lewis Crum, to dislike him (89). After Basil suggests that Lewis join the football team in order to become popular, Lewis, in anger, brings up the fact that Basil was considered "the freshest boy in Country Day," (89) Lewis continues and reminds Basil that he was not highly regarded in his old school because of a personal ad in the school newspaper which read "If someone will poison young Basil, or find some other way to stop his mouth, the school at large and myself will be much obliged" (89-90). Basil retreats into the "fabled world" in order to escape the truths uttered by Lewis (90).

The beginning of Basil's first year at St. Regis, documented in "The Freshest Boy", is not pleasant, to say the least. He is not well-liked by his peers and is constantly teased. His nickname is "Bossy" (91). Basil is not having as wonderful a time as expected at St. Regis. Fitzgerald describes in detail the the extent of Basil's persecution,

> He had indeed, become the scapegoat, the immediate villain, the sponge which absorbed all malice and irritability abroad—just as the most frightened person in a party seems to absorb all the others' fear, seem to be afraid for them all. His situation was not helped by the fact, obvious to all, that the supreme self-confidence with which he had come to St. Regis in September was thoroughly broken. Boys taunted him with impunity who would not have dared raise their voices to him several months before (94).

Basil's belief in himself is squelched as he realizes the extent to which his arrogance is despised. After losing a roommate, not having any friends, and going to New York by himself without the companionship of classmates, Basil did manage to salvage his first year at St. Regis. His dreams of his years at boarding were nothing like the real experience and, even though this occurs, it does not leave him disillusioned.

Basil's return to St. Paul in "He Thinks He's Wonderful" is a welcome respite from St. Regis. For Basil, "It was the first time in his life that he had ever felt the need of tranquility, but now he took long breaths of it; for, though things had gone better toward the end, he had had an unhappy year at school" (111). Returning to the Midwest is a familiar place for Basil too. This is an idea rarely acknowledged in the stories. Basil talks often about the familiarity of the East because of his reading, but does not mention the comfort of home in St. Paul until the aforementioned passage, and then only obliquely.

Although Basil expresses his happiness and sense of achievement at being away in school in the East, there is something to be missed about the goings-on in St. Paul. In "He Thinks He's Wonderful" Basil relates the juggling he and others who attend school in the East must contend with, "Those who had been East at school felt a certain superiority, which, however, was more that counterbalanced by the fact that romantic pairings and quarrels and jealousies and adventures, of which they were lamentably ignorant, had gone on while they had been away" (114). Basil misses the social atmosphere of St. Paul and all of the boy-girl dynamics that take place. He does not have this sort of interaction in St. Regis, but does once he attends Yale. Basil discusses the East as though there is no alternative, yet at the same time, he misses a major component of what he associates with his hometown, the social element.

The allure of the East is expansive in the Basil stories. Fitzgerald constructs Basil to believe in books and dreams, which tell Basil wonderful stories about the East and its traditions, boarding school being one of them. Basil is immersed in the rhetoric of the East and does not interact with anyone who will contradict him. All the people that surround Basil are firm believers in the prophecy of the East just as Basil is, himself. Even Tom Gorman from "He Thinks He's Wonderful" at first is resistant to Basil's idea of changing his appearance, only to end up complying with the suggestion in order to appear more sophisticated to the girls in St. Paul. Basil adores the erudition and East-coast upbringing of Gladys Van Schellinger in "A Night at the Fair" and seeks to become her companion for the evening. His dreams advance from attending school in the East to entering Yale University.

Basil's dreams are not without their hardship. Fitzgerald places obstacles in the way of Basil's happiness in the East. Lewis Crum and his other classmates in St. Regis in "The Freshest Boy" quickly notice Basil's personality flaws. For a time, Basil was forced to work on the railroad in order to earn some money for attending Yale University. Fitzgerald sets Basil up for disappointment. which in fact, does not disappoint. Although things don't go very smoothly for Basil at St. Regis he is not jaded in regards to the East; in fact, his desire and esteem for the lifestyle increases, especially as he is faced with the possibility of not being able to go to Yale, in "Forging Ahead." The illusive nature of the East does not deter young Basil Duke Lee from pursuing his dreams and believing in "the very stuff of romance," but it also allows Basil to remember the nostalgia of his youth in St. Paul and relive those times fondly in his memory.

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S *HOME TOWN*

DAVID D. ANDERSON

When Sherwood Anderson published *Home Town* in 1940, he was nearly at the end of his long creative career; the only work he was yet to write was some of the material incorporated in his *Memoirs,* unfinished at his death. Thus, for all practical purposes *Home Town* stands as Anderson's final complete statement of what he had found meaningful in a life marked by the rejection of many of the values of his time and the reaffirmation of others.

Two versions of Anderson's *Home Town* exist, that in the volume entitled *Home Town*, published in 1940, and a somewhat longer version, published as "The American Small Town" in *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*, edited after his death by his friend Paul Rosenfeld. Differences exist that are technical and detailed rather than substantive, but both versions are alike in their insistence upon the closeness of the relationship between Anderson and the reality as well as the ideal of the small town, as he celebrates both. In the prefatory statement of the longer version, Anderson makes clear the nature of the small-town man as he has known it:

> Perhaps only a passionate traveler like myself can realize how lucky he is to be able to call a small town his home. My work is constantly calling me away from Marion, but I always hunger to get back. There is in the life of the small town a possibility of intimacy, a chance to know others—an intimacy oftentimes frightening, but which can be healing. Day after day, under all sorts of circumstances, in sickness and health, in good fortune and bad, we small-towners are close to one another and know each other in ways the city man can never experience. A man goes away and comes back. Certain people have died. Babies have been born. Children of yesterday have suddenly become young men and women. Life has been going on. Still nothing has really changed. On the streets, day after day, mostly the same faces. There is this narrow but fascinating panorama. In a way it is too intimate. Life can never be intimate enough.

Anderson has described the passage of time and the essential timelessness of the small town elsewhere in more detail, but here, in these few words and the long essay that *Home Town* essentially is, he has described it more eloquently and with more deeply-felt emotion that ever before.

However, neither the eloquent definition nor the deep feeling had come easy for Anderson, who, nearly forty-five years before, had been one of the countless young men from Midwestern small towns who sought their fortunes and their fulfillment in the metropolis of Chicago. With an insight that carries with it the power of poetry and the depth of myth he described that departure symbolically if not factually at the end of *Winesburg, Ohio*, when he wrote:

> The young man's mind was carried away by his growing passion for dreams. One looking at him would not have thought him particularly sharp. With the recollection of little things occupying his mind he closed his eyes and leaned back in the car seat. He stayed that way for a long time and when he aroused himself and again looked out of the car window the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood.

The finality of this fictional departure was no less so than Anderson's departure from Clyde, Ohio, for Chicago in the Fall of 1896, returning only briefly to leave for the Spanish-American War with the local National Guard infantry company in 1898, and then to be mustered out and to work briefly on a farm a year later. Anderson's break with Clyde and with what it represented in 1896 was to him permanent; the success that he sought could be found only in a city, and nearly thirty years were to pass until, his life and his career gone nearly full circle, he found acceptance and closeness in Marion, Virginia.

The history of that circle is too long to recount here, but in essence it is in microcosm the search for permanence and values that has marked the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries for many Americans. When Anderson, like his fictional counterpart George Willard, left the small town behind, he was also leaving behind America's nineteenth-century past, a past compounded largely for Anderson, his family , and many Americans, of hardship and innocence. His path paralleled those of Theodore Dreiser, from Terre Haute, Indiana, Carl Sandburg from Galesburg, Illinois, Edgar Lee Masters from Lewistown, Illinois, and a variety of others, all of

whom, without knowing they were doing so, were following paths laid out a decade or more earlier by George Ade, Opie Read, Ben King, Finley Peter Dunne, and others. Post-Civil War, post-fire Chicago was not only "Hog butcher to the world" and center of the mail-order business, but it was also a modest but ambitious cultural and literary center.

Anderson's path to literary greatness and ultimately back to his symbolic origins was neither direct nor easy; it was marked by an apprenticeship in advertising writing, a brief stint as president of a mail-order firm, and a longer period as president of his own mail-order paint company. Finally it was marked by a rejection of commercial values that, transmuted into myth, was to become the point of departure for his writing career, the subject of much of his early fiction, a constant source of wonder to himself, and the point at which he began his long symbolic and literal search for his beginnings, his purpose, and the ultimate meaning of his life.

As he moved toward literary greatness and ultimately toward his most affirmative statement in *Home Town*, Anderson left behind him numerous literary landmarks, among them some of the most significant and influential works in modern American literary history. His first two novels, *Windy McPherson's Son (1916)* and *Marching Men* (1917), both of them remnants of the more or less secret writing he had done in Elyria, Ohio, were powerful statements of rejection—rejection of the materialistic promises of modern business and industrialism, promises that had been propagated in his youth hundreds of times by Horatio Alger Jr., Russell Conwell, and countless others—and of affirmation of the human values by which man might give meaning and direction to his life. But both novels are flawed by the ambiguity with which Anderson attempted to define those human values. Convinced that they existed and that they were attainable by those who had rejected the new American industrial society, nevertheless at that point Anderson had no idea of where or how they might be found.

However, Anderson followed these first two novels with a volume dominated by unabashed celebration, *Mid-American Chants* (1918). Anderson's first volume of poetry, *Mid-American Chants* is not only Anderson's attempt to fulfill the letter of his contract for three books with his publisher, as some critics have dismissed it; it is a work that celebrates rejection, both symbolic and literal, and that proclaims his faith in the durability of both the Midwestern countryside and the human spirit. The product of the years that saw *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) become a reality, not only does it proclaim a faith without the ambiguity of his earlier novels, but it is tangible evidence of the direction in which his search for permanence and meaning was taking him.

At the same time this volume of verse, for all its naivete, points out the direction that Anderson's future work was to take, particularly in his next two publications, both of them new, both original, both major works in his career and in the literature of his time. These were *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Poor White* (1921).

The collection of interrelated short stories and sketches that is *Winesburg, Ohio* is the product of the same years in which Anderson celebrated his origins and his faith in the *Chants,* but it is not a work of celebration; rather, it is a work of exploration, a work whose logical culmination is the affirmation of *Home Town* a generation later. Anderson's most substantial and justly celebrated work, *Winesburg, Ohio* is a return to origins, not only in his boyhood home of Clyde, Ohio, but also in the boarding house of his early years of return to Chicago and later in the thriving town of Elyria, Ohio. All three places were curiously alike, microcosms of human experience, and in each he found it possible to examine closely those whose spirits had been deformed by confused values, not only those of material fulfillment but also of the dehumanized spiritual denial of the necessity of human love.

But at this time Anderson was still convinced that the people of Winesburg were buried in the past of America's innocence, an innocence impossible to resurrect in the twentieth century, and in *Poor White* he determined to explore the process by which values had become distorted and people twisted as the past of their innocence was destroyed. *Poor White* is not indignant, as were Anderson's early novels; instead it explores the promise, the potential, and the failure of modern American technology. Anderson taps the roots of human experience in America: the preoccupation with movement; the mystic memory of the river and its rejection; the rise of the railroads and the attempt to replace drudgery with leisure; the images of Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain as they contributed to and were absorbed by the growing myth of America; the rise and fall of craftsmanship and of simple human pride.

Again in *Poor White* Anderson symbolically rejected the new America as his central character began his search for closeness and

love in a new uncomplicated relationship with his wife. However, Anderson's uncertainty flaws the novel as he ends on a note of ambiguity. Clearly, Anderson knew that human values and industrial domination were incompatible, but he still had no idea whether or not a spiritual reality might overcome and replace values manufactured by machinery.

With the publication of *Poor White* Anderson had completed the philosophical foundations of *Home Town*, but he had yet to re-identify its reality in twentieth century America. The fame and notoriety of a prominent literary career began to affect him adversely—praise was phony and denunciation was demoralizing—and he began tentatively to break the ties that he had made in the literary world just as he had broken those that had held him to his business. In the 1920s he alternately wandered America, to New York, to Reno, to California, to New Orleans, to the rural South, and he wrote—two volumes of stories, many of them major, and a weak and repetitious but symbolically important novel, *Many Marriages* (1923). "How many marriages among people!" Anderson cried out as he sought meaningful relationships after the fact of rejection, and he did so again in *Dark Laughter* (1925), another story of rejection and the search. Close to a best-seller, *Dark Laughter* is unfortunately underestimated by many critics as it returns in subject matter to the tap roots of Anderson's and America's youth: the river, the small town, the craftsmen's bench, the innocent, simple people who are intuitively wise, the wandering sophisticate, convinced that "...he, in common with almost all American men, had got out of touch with things—stones lying in fields, the fields themselves, houses, trees, rivers, factory walls, tools, women's bodies..." Again Anderson ended on a note of ambiguity, however, as fulfillment seemed just beyond reach.

During these years of wandering Anderson turned, too, to autobiography, to the attempt to re-explore and re-interpret the facts of his origins, his family, his experience, and, alternately affirming and despairing, he reiterated the values he had found permanent and fulfilling: the touch of a mother's hand, the pride inherent in craftsmanship, an understanding of his father as storyteller as he exorcised the ghost of Windy McPherson; a conviction, in spite of the evidence, that human closeness is not impossible or absurd. In these autobiographies, *A Story Teller's Story* (1924), *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook* (1926) , and *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926), Anderson

admitted that he was not concerned with facts but with feelings as he attempted to define not only values but a way of life that was possible only after the rejection of material values and the affirmation of human honesty, sincerity, closeness, and love.

In essence these values are those defined in terms of human experience in *Home Town,* but for Anderson they were values ignored or denied by the America of which he had been part for almost all of his adult life—the America of Chicago, Cleveland, and Elyria; of cold-storage warehouses, advertising offices, and sales rooms; of the army of late nineteenth century imperialism; of sophisticated literary and artistic circles who had declared that their "revolt from the village" had been successful and permanent. The values of this phase of Anderson's life were those of his and America's innocence and childhood; the products of the past, these values, Anderson believed, had no reality except in his memory, his feeling, even his nostalgic recreation of the past.

Nevertheless, just as this introspection permitted Anderson to redefine those values, his wandering taught him that they still existed in an America as yet untouched by either materialism or sophistication: in the hills of Western Virginia, where in 1925, he established himself at Ripshin Farm near Troutdale and two years later purchased and edited two weekly newspapers, *The Smyth County News,* Republican, and the *Marion Democrat,* Democratic, in nearby Marion. From the mid-1920's to the end of his life fifteen years later, he maintained a close personal relationship with the farm, the papers, and the town.

The record of Anderson's literary accomplishment during these years is substantial; it represents some considerable departures from his past work; and it makes clear the new commitment to old values that his discovery of the Virginia hill country had made possible for him. His re-discovery of humanized reality is celebrated in his second volume of verse, *A New Testament* (1927); in two novels *Beyond Desire* (1932) and *Kit Brandon* (1936), the former an exploration of the uncertainties, the confused loyalties, and the bewilderment inherent in the search for meaning and identity in the labor strife of the Southern mill towns, and then later, the rise of the new, free woman who exploits the machine and the weaknesses of men as she finds her own human identity. A volume of short stories, *Death in the Woods* (1933), contains some of his best short fiction, including both the title story and "Brother Death," written as a capstone for the volume.

Hello Towns! (1929), the result of his venture into journalism, directly anticipates *Home Town* as it draws on the columns of his papers for its substance and emulates the cycle of time and human life in its structure. Indicative of what journalism can be at its best, it was followed by the journalistic record of ventures into the world in *Perhaps Women* (1931), *No Swank* (1934), and *Puzzled America* (1935), all of them indicative of his concern with the growing leadership potential of women, the permanence of human relations, and the economic failure and human triumph of the Depression.

In a series of short, limited works, *Nearer the Grass Roots* (1929), *Alice and the Lost Novel* (1929), and *The American County Fair* (1939), he began his affirmation of human durability, and in the last years of his life, perhaps recognizing that his life had indeed emulated the natural cycle with which he had become concerned, he began work on his *Memoirs*, incomplete at his death and published in edited versions in 1942 and in 1969. During his last year he completed the manuscript of *Home Town.*

Of all the range of Anderson's work, none is more suitable as a final statement of his understanding of life than *Home Town.* In its profundity it is simple as it indicates that he had indeed re-discovered what he had left behind him years before in Clyde, Ohio, when he went off to Chicago to seek his fortune or, in *Poor White*, when Bidwell, Ohio, became a major industrial city.

During his last years, as Hitler moved into Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, as the Depression eased while America moved closer to participation in wars in Europe and Asia, Anderson wrote in the room he called his "Rogue's Gallery" in the big stone and log house of Ripshin. The room was lined with photographs of friends out of his past, and in his writing he evoked the permanence he found possible in intimate human relations. *Home Town* is an eloquent testimony to the depth of feeling that he explored.

Home Town is Anderson's tribute to the source of all that he had found meaningful in his long creative career, and it is his final definition of the values which America might use as the foundation for a new, humanized post-Depression society. Not only a tribute to America's past, it is at the same time a testimony to his hope for the future.

At the heart of Anderson's faith is an acceptance of nature itself, the foundation and the wellspring from which all human life comes. The small town, "...halfway between the cities whence we get the

ideas and the soil whence we get the strength," is America in microcosm and in reality, and Anderson asserts, to be a townsman is tso live in harmony with both nature and the nation.

Thus *Home Town* uses as its foundation the cycle of nature that activates and directs the life of the town at the same time that it makes possible the intimacies of its life. Spring is the time when life quickens, trees bloom, grass grows green, and the town ball team begins to practice and to seek financial support. While the kids start to think about fields and creeks and the town iconoclast has his annual bath and shave, the pace of life quickens as blood and sap run faster.

Spring becomes summer, a time of growth, of restlessness, and of hard work that leads to harvest and fulfillment. During the long days and evenings, while parents look on, kids learn about life and about nature, sometimes to the town's disapproval. "Hot, dusty days, long days, summer rains—the summer days are the best of all the year's days for the American small-towner," Anderson writes, as summer becomes fall "...the checking-up time, the harvesting of the year's efforts of the American man to survive, getting a little forward in life." Winter approaches, evocative of nostalgia, fear, and promise as the cycle moves on, always the same yet different.

Upon this framework of the natural cycle, Anderson constructs in microcosm the essence of American life, a kaleidoscopic montage of the town's people. The gossip, the politician, the chicken thief, the boy whose nerve fails him as he approaches the small house on the back street, the moralist, the merchant, the editor, all mingle on the main street, in the churches, the schools, and new ideas filter in to adapt subtlety to change, as the larger world beyond threatens the life of the town.

In spite of the threats sensed from without, Anderson suggests that the town and its values are permanent and immutable. As the seasons change, the town reflects in turn nature's hope, its fulfillment, its need. And in the midst of that natural cycle Anderson makes clear the search for the intimacy that makes human life possible and worthwhile. Man *is* his brother's keeper, Anderson proclaims, but only in the towns is he willing to accept that responsibility, a responsibility that makes human life endurable.

Not only has Anderson written his most deeply-felt prose in this essay, but he has also done some of his best writing. His prose is smooth and rhythmical as it reflects the essence of American speech. His vignettes of life are sharply etched, and they are true, as Anderson had always insisted upon truth in his work. "It must be that I am an

incurable small town man," he had confessed a year earlier in a talk at Olivet College in Michigan, and in *Home Town* he makes clear what he had learned in leaving and in rediscovering the American town. In the process he makes clear the ultimate value of life in all of America as he had known it.

Anderson's vision and prose provide the substance of this volume, but the included photographs give it a depth and a presence impossible for words alone. The product of the decade that produced the photo essay, photo journalism, and the photo record, the selected pictures are the work of men and women whose names are synonymous with photography at its mature best. Under the sponsorship of the Farm Security Administration, one of the New Deal's many attempts to overcome the Depression, and coordinated by Roy E. Stryker, photographers—Ben Shahn, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, Marion Post, Dorothea Lange, and dozens of others—roamed rural America, just as Sherwood Anderson had done for much of his life. The photographers attempted to record photographically and permanently a nation in flux, a way of life threatened by the forces of change, and yet, in the simple dignity of its people, a nation firmly rooted in the American tradition. Anderson's prose and these first-rate photographs combine to provide a statement about the nature of America that endures in spite of changing fashions, restless movement, scandal, or war. Technology, Anderson concludes and these photographs reiterate, can only provide a further dimension of life and nature to the people, those who are the essence of the towns and of America as well.

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DAVID MAMET'S TRIVIALIZATION OF FEMINISM AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN *OLEANNA*

JANET RUTH HELLER

For literary critics, David Mamet's *Oleanna* has become a Rorschach test because the drama raises so many different issues. Is the focus of the play sexual harassment, criticism of American colleges, self-esteem, the power dynamics between men and women, political correctness, the use and abuse of language, or all of the above? In this essay, I will analyze *Oleanna*, first produced in 1992, as part of a backlash against the feminist movement. The play presents itself as a objective analysis of sexual harassment, but in fact, Mamet takes sides: he indicts feminism as mindless, inherently manipulative, and hostile to men.

Sexual harassment has been a hot news item ever since the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas in 1991 when Anita Hill's testimony riveted public attention on her alleged sexual harassment by Thomas. Since then, many companies and schools have instituted regulations to discourage and punish people who harass their co-workers. For example, some colleges have banned affairs between professors and students. These regulations are controversial, as any examination of a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* will reveal.[1] The debate over sexual harassment and politically correct ways of dealing with harassment are an important historical context for *Oleanna* and its reception by the public. Despite new rules and sensitivity training, many incidents of sexual harassment go unreported, due to women's discomfort with making such acts public knowledge and the power differential between women and men in academia and in the workplace.

Current law defines two types of sexual harassment: 1) "quid pro quo" cases in which the plaintiff must show that refusing to submit to sexual demands resulted in the denial of some "tangible benefit" and 2) "hostile environment"cases in which the plaintiff must prove man-

ifest "conduct [which] has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex, Policy Guidance, N-915.010, 19 March 1980, cited by Dzeich and Hawkins 6-7). Since 1980, federal courts have allowed students to claim that campus sexual harassment is analogous to workplace harassment. However, concern about academic freedom complicates many claims about sexual harassment, especially those concerning speech. Professors require academic freedom to challenge students' preconceptions and to teach controversial material. But higher education also needs regulations to distinguish between valid pedagogical experimentation and behavior or speech that is offensive, demeaning, or hostile. Such boundaries are difficult to draw. Dzeich and Hawkins explain, "Because of the Supreme Court's deference to pedagogical issues, a very high standard thus exists when harassing conduct is presented in the context of education" (18-19). Furthermore, many colleges avoid publicizing episodes of harassment because administrators fear that such complaints will damage a campus's image (24-25). Such institutional secrecy discourages victims of harassment from reporting their experiences.

Since the confirmation hearings for Judge Thomas, the frequency of complaints about sexual harassment has increased in the United States and Canada. In Canada, nearly twenty-five percent of women over the age of eighteen have experienced sexual harassment on the job ("Power and Control" 26). American women have turned to the courts for help. "...By 1994, the number of sexual-harassment suits filed each year had doubled to more than 14,400. But in more recent years, the number of suits filed each year have [sic] remained relatively constant between 15,300 and 15,800." A 1998 Supreme Court decision required companies "to create and implement workplace policies to eliminate sexual harassment" (Warren Richey 3). Despite the prevalence of sexual harassment, few workplace offenders are seriously punished. According to 1996 statistics gathered by the American Management Association, the offender was reprimanded 35.1% of cases, and only in 3% of cases was the offended transferred. In 35% of cases, both parties received mediation. Accusers took great risks: 16% of allegations were dismissed, 15% of accusers were transferred, and 16% of accusers were dismissed (cited by Gray 24). There is evidence that employers have improved working conditions;

however, the above statistics indicate that sexual harassment remains a serious problem in North American workplaces.

Research indicates that harassment is also a major threat on college campuses. According to Lynn D. Gordon and Anne T. Truax, roughly forty percent of undergraduate women have experienced some form of sexual harassment (Gordon 23; Truax 70). Using a different survey designed to measure harassment more objectively, Louise F. Fitzgerald discovered that much higher percentages of women students report harassment: "Approximately 50% of the women at one university, and nearly 76% at the other...had experienced some form of harassing behavior during their college careers" (57).[2] Graduate students may be even more vulnerable "because advisers often have almost complete power over their academic careers. One Canadian study showed that up to 75% of all female graduate students have been sexually harassed in university" ("Power and Control" 26). However, very few sexually harassed women workers or students report the incidents (only one to eleven percent), and even fewer file formal grievances. Although critics of college policies designed to protect women from sexual harassment have claimed that false allegations abound, research proves the contrary. Examining formal campus complaints, C. Robertson, C. E. Dyer, and D. Campbell found that only one percent of sexual harassment grievances were classified as false by college administrators (studies cited by Dziech and Hawkins 23-24; see also Truax 77 and Fitzgerald 58). Despite the evidence that sexual harassment is widespread but under-reported on college campuses, *Oleanna* presents such harassment as the figment of a co-ed's imagination.

In Mamet's play, Carol is a college student who is taking a course in the Department of Education with John, who expects to get tenure soon. Carol has come to John's office to discuss a recent paper of hers that has received a failing grade. When John reads a ridiculously vague thesis statement from her paper, Carol confesses that she feels "stupid" and can't understand anything that goes on during his classes (1. 8-15, 35-37). John tries to comfort her and explain his ideas about education. In the process, he puts his arm around her (1.36) and talks about his own problems with college and his family.

Although the play's dialogue emphasizes that John acts this way to develop some rapport with Carol so that she can relax and do better in his classroom, Carol files a sexual harassment complaint against him. Her allegations jeopardize his receiving tenure, his pur-

chase of a new home for his family, and his relationship with his wife. The play's title refers to a folksong in which Norwegian immigrants exaggerate the perfection of life in the United States. Clearly, America is no paradise for either Carol or John.[3]

Defending *Oleanna* from critics who find the play sexist and hostile to women, British commentator Christine MacLeod blames wrong-headed male directors and an over-reactive American public for the play's reputation (201-02). She argues that the play concerns more general issues of "power, hierarchy and the control of language" (202). MacLeod examines the language of *Oleanna* to show how it reflects the characters' relative power. She faults John for interrupting Carol so frequently in Act One that he is guilty of "the violation of Carol's linguistic space" (202-23). However, Deborah Tannen's research demonstrates that people who interrupt others often have "high involvement" speaking styles that reflect genuine interest in the topic and genuine concern for the other person in the conversation (196, 202, 215). Thus, one cannot assume that every interruption is as "violation of...linguistic space." The context of the dialogue is as important as the number of interruptions. John devotes a lot of time to making Carol feel more comfortable with him and with his course.

MacLeod denies that gender is very important in Mamet's play. According to MacLeod, *Oleanna* emphasizes problems with class conflict when individuals compete in a capitalistic society. She insists, "In *Oleanna*, the gender difference between student and teacher is not the crux of the matter....Carol's place in the transaction could as easily be taken by a male. The power of the lecturer and the weakness of the student derive from their respective and relative status, not from their sex" (204). In fact, MacLeod concludes, "...The sexual politics of *Oleanna* needs to be understood in a wider context, as part of the writer's overall critique of a capitalist system based on competitive individualism.... Carol's struggle for supremacy...owes more to the competitive compulsions of Social Darwinism than to any specifically sexual hostility" (206-07). But if this is true, why didn't Mamet write Carol's part as a male role? And why are the false accusations of sexual harassment and rape such an important part of this play? I find Carol's gender a crucial aspect of the drama's conflicts. For example, John's violence at the end of the play would be far less shocking if he attacked a male student.

Thomas H. Goggans tries to read between the lines of *Oleanna* and concludes that Carol's secret is that she is the victim of "incest and child

sexual abuse" (435). He believes that this explains her low self-esteem, her shame, and her reaction to John's ambiguous words and behavior. If Goggan's reading is accurate, Carol becomes a much more sympathetic character. However, the drama contains no direct reference to childhood abuse, and Carol's secret could be almost anything that would embarrass a self-conscious young woman. Also, Carol is highly unlikely to trust John with a secret like incest on such short acquaintance. And if she truly fears sexual abuse from him, why does Carol keep coming back alone to John's office? Furthermore, many women students feel insecure in college, not just the victims of abuse. The authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* concluded in-depth interviews with 135 women about their experiences in college and with human service agencies (11-13). Mary Field Belenky and the other researchers concluded that a typical woman student "lacked confidence in herself as a thinker" (193). In fact, "Most of the women reported that they had often been treated as if they were stupid" (194). Surprisingly, "highly competent girls and women are especially likely to underestimate their abilities. Most of the women who attended the more prestigious colleges in the sample had a history of privilege and achievement, but most felt uncertain about their abilities. Several suspected that they had been admitted through a fluke" (196). Belenky *et al* argue that most women students need clear expressions of approval and praise from their professors and fellow students to feel comfortable as part of the college community (194-97). Thus, Carol's low self-esteem and insecurity are not unique enough to make Goggan's analysis convincing.

Other commentators insist that *Oleanna* is really a critique of the educational system. Verna Foster contends, "Mamet's play is less an antifeminist statement than it is an indictment of an educational culture in which...power-roles and power-games played by both professors and students make teaching destructive and learning impossible." (37). She compares *Oleanna* to Ionesco's *The Lesson*. The latter play does portray the professor, who indoctrinates, rapes, and murders his female student, as a power-hungry fascist and as a Nazi. However, I'm not sure that this comparison illuminates *Oleanna*, which presents John as the victim and Carol as the power-hungry villain who ruins her professor's life by telling lies about him. One could compare Carol to Iago in *Othello*, who also lies to gain power over the protagonist. Neither has particularly good reasons for lying. Foster points out that Carol gets carried away in her campaign: "By demanding the right to censor her professor's reading list, she is

attempting to take control of the whole educational process" (46). Foster also admits that the conclusion of *Oleanna* is one-sided: "Mamet in the closing moments of the play has stacked the deck in favor of John by making Carol a caricature of politically correct feminism intruding upon the sanctities of academic freedom and private life" (47). The original conclusion for *Oleanna* had John reading a public recantation and agreeing to censorship of his reading list by Carol and her anonymous "Group." By ending the drama in this way, Mamet reflects his fear of women's power and their ability to threaten the male-dominated *status quo*.

Richard Badenhausen argues that John is a bad teacher: "...*Oleanna* ultimately explores the perils of inferior teaching and the subsequent misreadings that necessarily follow in a pedagogical environment that tacitly reinforces...hierarchical differences amongst its participants" (2). He believes the play is not about gender conflict but rather about "the inability of a teacher and student to communicate successfully" (4). In John's office, "the actual teaching...consists of little more than John asking Carol to parrot his own ideas and perform for him in the process" (6). Badenhausen insists that the interaction further degenerates from John's lecturing Carol to his telling her "inappropriate and rambling stories about his own experiences" (6). Again, Tannen's research provides a helpful commentary here. She argues that women often engage in "rapport talk," which includes telling personal stories, to make connections with other people (77, 80-81, 91-92). John's use of personal examples is simply his adaptation of a style of speaking that often works well when a teacher wishes to connect to an alienated student. Badenhausen also faults John for not teaching Carol how to write better. However, an examination of the dialogue reveals that he asks her a useful question about her vague thesis: "What can that mean?" Carol's response is "I, the best that I ..." (1.8). John gives up trying to teach Carol how to write more cogently because she ignores his question and denies that she could do better. Also, if the play is really about the value of John's teaching, why doesn't Carol simply accuse him of being a bad professor? An audience could take such a charge seriously, unlike sexual assault charges that often provoke laughter when this play is staged. Even if John is not a perfect teacher, he does not deserve Carol's lies about his conduct with her. In Act One, he spends nearly an hour with Carol, despite pressing personal commitments. Also, he is skillful enough to calm her fears and establish rapport with her: toward the end of the first act, Carol says that she will tell John a secret that she has"never told anyone else" (38). The ringing phone and the resultant conversation distract both Carol and John, and he leaves for the "surprise party" (40) thrown by family and friends in his honor. So we never discover what Carol's secret is. But John's genuine interest in Carol is clear during their long conversation. How many busy professors would spend an hour with a student who had not made an appointment?

According to Marc Silverstein, *Oleanna* "inscribes a cultural politics of misogyny that lends itself to articulation in terms of neoconservative ideology" (104). Proponents of the New Right's educational theory view "difference as a condition that can and must be transcended through declared allegiance to a 'common culture' that marginalizes, if not demonizes, those who emphasize the specificity of sex, race, and class" (106). Thus, feminism and multiculturalism threaten the Right's monolithic stance. Silverstein perceives *Oleanna* as ignoring the serious political, economic, and social issues raised by feminism. Instead, Mamet reduces feminism "to a psychological obsession with achieving power as an end in itself" (110-11).

The primary reason for this drama's failure is Mamet's partial, confusing, and inconsistent portrayal of Carol. In Act One, he never develops her character or explains why she is having so much trouble in her class with John. She claims that she is from a disadvantaged background (1.8, 3. 69), but no details of her upbringing are revealed. Social class is notoriously difficult to define precisely, and most Americans have an inaccurate view of their socioeconomic position.[4] Furthermore, why is Carol struggling so much in John's class? Is she really stupid, does she have learning disabilities, or is she just too nervous and lacking in self-esteem to concentrate on her studies? These questions are never answered in the subsequent acts either.

The dialogue in Act One consists primarily of sentence fragments because John and Carol often interrupt one another. This technique captures the nervousness of Carol well, but she comes across as inarticulate. The constant interruptions are clever and true-to-life; however, they make the conversation hard to follow and limit the character development.

As the play proceeds, the power shifts from John to Carol. In Act One, he is the knowledgeable professor, trying to help a confused and dependent student who has come to his office. Carol keeps repeating, "I don't understand" (1.11, 12, 14, 17, 22, 27, 35, 36, 37). when John uses an unfamiliar word, she asks for a definition and takes notes on

his answer. Carol keeps insisting that she needs his help (1.10, 11, 12) and will do anything to pass the course. In fact, she repeats "I'm doing what I'm told" (1.6, 9) so often that John exclaims, "I'm not your *father*" (1.9; all italics in quotations are Mamet's).

However, by Act Two, Carol's complaint to the tenure committee has endangered John's career and given her power over him. He has asked her to come to his office to try to convince her that she has misinterpreted his words and actions. Now, instead of asking him to define words, she tells him to stop using words that she does not know (2.45). This anti-intellectual stance reflects badly on Carol, I think. When she refuses to listen to his explanation of his actions, she comes across as pigheaded and insolent (2.46). She declares, "I don't *care* what you feel...I don't *care* what you think" (2.50). Unlike her attitude in Act One, Carol's demeanor in Act Two no longer reflects dependency on John: she tells him insolently, "I don't think I need your help. I don't think I need anything you have" (2.49).

Carol tries to control John during this second conversation, especially his word choice. When he calls the tenure committee somewhat flippantly "Good Men and True," she makes a federal case of his remark. Because there is one woman on the committee, Carol perceives John's comment as "demeaning" and "sexist" (2.50-51). Many commentators who would sympathize with a truly oppressed woman student find Carol obnoxious. For example, John Lahr writes, "Naming is claiming, and since Carol won't work to master a world that she can't comprehend, she changes the frame of reference to a world that she can" (124). According to Jill Gidmark, Carol "advocates a kind of linguistic fascism" (185). Lenke Németh argues that the dialogue in Act One foreshadows the dynamics of Acts Two and Three: John "is losing his linguistic power over the student as she constantly contradicts him, opposes him and operates her communicative strategies more effectively than he does" (173).[5] As the drama progresses, Carol's hazy thinking and fascination with power become more and more pronounced.

In Act One, John had frequently interrupted Carol's sentences. But in Act Two, Carol frequently interrupts John's statements. John is patronizing when he begins, "I'm trying to *save* you, " but Carol interrupts him before he can finish his sentence (2.57). In general, John comes across in Act Two as increasingly vulnerable. Ironically, he repeats Carol's "I didn't understand" (2.45) in regards to her complaint to the tenure committee (see also 3.70). While Carol was nervous, insecure, and curious about John's life in Act One, by Act Two she comes across as a self-centered robot detached from other people's feelings.

By Act Three, Carol has even more power. The tenure committee has ruled against John, and Carol is taking him to court. Now she swears at John when he uses an unfamiliar word (3.66). She tells him that she "came here to instruct you" (3.67), as if she were the knowledgeable professor. However, instead of educating John about the complex lives of women students, Carol catechizes him, verbally harassing him when he answer anything except "yes" to her questions (3.67-69). As in Act Two, she tries to control the very wording of John's sentences, as if she were a fascist dictator. Her final insults/power trips are her false accusations of attempted rape (3.77-78) and her advice to John, "Don't call your wife 'baby'" (3.79). At this point, John loses control and *"begins to beat her"* (3.79, stage directions) and calls her a "little *cunt*" (3.79). While his reaction is shocking, the audience has seen him patiently try to reason with Carol for two hours. His exasperation is understandable, even though it is grotesque and violent.[6]

Carol's transformation from a shy, nervous kid who lacks self-esteem and can barely talk to a confident feminist firebrand by Act Three is not believable. Carol keeps referring to her militant women's group and spouting politically correct ideas that she has borrowed from her new friends. Even Carol's vocabulary has expanded by Act Three. In Act One, she kept asking John to define words. However, in Act Three, she uses "exploitativeness" (3.71), and "capricious" (3.70). Certainly, women can gain strength from participation in feminist organizations, but a women's group can't completely re-make an individual. By Act Three, Carol becomes a caricature of feminists.

Mamet even satirizes the feminist movement's emphasis on women's need to express themselves with their own "voice." Carol gains a voice, but it is neither original nor hers. While in Act One she simply repeated John's words and quoted his book, in Acts Two and Three she repeats and quotes pseudo-feminist propaganda and tries to get John to sign an anti-intellectual petition banning his book and others that Carol's group considers politically incorrect.[7] She becomes a mouthpiece for a group of militant women who view all men as oppressors. In the process, her own mental powers are not enhanced, nor is her self-understanding broadened. No college and no professor can reach students like Carol who wall themselves off from new ideas. Mamet conveys the false impression that Carol's

monomania is characteristic of feminists in general. He also implies, as does the movie *Fatal Attraction*, that single women are inherently dangerous to the *status quo*. *Oleanna* would be a more psychologically coherent play if Mamet gave Carol better reasons for accusing John of sexual harassment. When I saw this drama performed in 1993 at the Wellington Theater in Chicago, the audience laughed when Carol accused John of "rape" in Act Three.[8] One could even conclude that her charges are the result of her own repressed sexual desire. Carol admits that this may be the case (3.68). Alain Piette argues, "So much abuse is piled up by the playwright on the young woman all along the play, that she could not possibly elicit the audience's sympathy." He points out that many audiences cheer when John assaults Carol at the end of *Oleanna* (185; see also Silverstein 103). It is highly unlikely that school administrators or courts would take Carol's accusations seriously either, since she cannot prove that John has asked for any sexual "quid pro quo" or that he has created a "hostile environment" for her. Mamet creates the impression that Carol can easily cause John to lose his job. However, the 1996 data gathered by the American Management Association indicate that very few men accused of harassment actually get fired (see statistics above and Gray 24). The image of hordes of avenging women lying to get former lovers into trouble is a paranoic male fantasy.

Mamet's portrayal of Carol as simple-minded and sexually obsessed trivializes both the women's movement and the complex topic of sexual harassment. He reduces feminist issues to mindless, selfish manipulation of the system. He implies that women, rather than seeking truly egalitarian changes, are simply substituting a fascist women-centered agenda for a benign male-dominated agenda. Of course, Mamet ignores the facts that male-dominated systems are often not benign and that feminist agendas often benefit both sexes. For example, laws against sexual harassment at work have recently benefitted men as well as women. Joseph Oncale sued Sundowner Offshore Services over harassment from other males, and the Supreme Court in 1998 supported his right to sue for same-sex abuse (Cloud 55). Mamet's *reductio ad absurdum* of issues like gender bias and sexual harassment leaves audiences with a counterproductive hostility toward Carol and toward feminism.

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NOTES

1. For example, see Billie Wright Dzeich, "The Abuse of Power in Intimate Relationships," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 20 March 1998: B4; Letters to the Editor, *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 24 April 1998: B3; Letters to the Editor, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 6 February 1998: B11.
2. Lilia M. Cortina summarizes research indicating that 50 percent of women college students have experienced "some form of sexually harassing behavior" and that roughly 33 percent are sexually assaulted (420-21). Cortina's own research at a Midwestern university revealed similar statistics: "49% of undergraduate and 53% of graduate women had experienced at least one sexually harassing behavior at least 'once or twice' from an instructor or professor." The longer students remained at the university, the more likely they were to be harassed (426). Nine percent of the women graduate students surveyed by Cortina "described offers of rewards in return for sexual favors" (435). Sexual harassment left women students feeling "less respected, less accepted, and treated less fairly on campus than other women," and graduate students felt less competent academically (436).

   Fitzgerald developed a survey called the "Sexual Experiences Questionnaire," which assesses the five types of campus harassment identified by F. J. Till (1980). In Fitzgerald's survey, "All questions are written in behavioral terms, and the words *sexual harassment* do not appear until the end of the questionnaire. It thus avoids the necessity for the respondent to make a subjective judgment as to whether or not she has been harassed before she can respond" (57). Fitzgerald and co-workers collected data on over 2,000 students at a major Midwestern university and a Western university. Although responses to the survey indicate widespread sexual harassment, "less that eight percent of the total female sample indicated—in answer to a separate question—that they had been sexually harassed, a result testifying to the importance of using neutral behavioral terminology when attempting to collect data on this problem" (57-58).
3. Jill B. Gidmark has pointed out that Mamet's plays "deconstruct the American dream" (184).
4. Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes argue that it is extremely difficult to determine an individual's social class. While status and power are important factors, social scientists have trouble when trying "to reduce these abstract notions to objective, measurable units" (152). Social class is particularly difficult to define for women, who have traditionally been lumped into the same category as their husbands or fathers (153). Members of a society may differ in their analysis of who falls into which class. "Ideally, a valid assessment of social class differences should combine both objective and subjective measurements of many types of behavioral roles and values, but this is often easier said than done: (154).

   Most Americans view themselves as working-class or middle-class, but this is often not the case. According to Charles Visconage, who does financial planning for Merrill, Lynch, many clients come to him believing that they are the typical "man in the street." However, when Visconage analyzes their assets, they are millionaires (cited by Samuelson 67).
5. Németh believes that Carol and John's conversation "discloses a struggle for dominance as they contradict and ignore each other's utterances and also pursue their own topics.... They both harass each other. In other words sexual harassment is displaced by linguistic harassment.
6. Marc Silverstein argues that Carol's attempt to control how John talks to his wife "threatens what is often regarded as the most fundamental form of community: the family" (112). From the New Right's perspective, Carol's interference with John's tie to his wife represents feminism's threat to destroy "the American way of life" and "the nuclear family." Thus when John beats Carol, his violence symbolizes "a defense of the institutions (the family and the university)" that conservatives view as under barbaric attack (113). *Oleanna* "equates difference with distortion and divisiveness" and "offers misogyny as a 'solution' to our unconscious confusion.'" As a result, "*Oleanna* can only perpetuate the very crisis of cultural fragmentation it seeks to address" (118-19).

7. Alain Piette observes that *Oleanna* portrays the potentially damaging effects of political correctness. Mamet's play depicts a "nightmarish world" in which tensions among different groups in our society "have been exacerbated because of a too fanatic application of the precepts of political correctness." The result is "an anti-utopian terrorism of the mind, a censorship of sorts, intent on imposing on all individuals an intellectual conformity and propriety that is the negation of any freedom of thought and of expression. It posits a frightening universe in which the newly defined moral norm is seen as absolute and all deviating behaviors implacably sanctioned, preferably by a court of law" (178). Although political correctness was designed to reduce confrontations in a multicultural and differently gendered society, in fact, P.C. increases the number of confrontations because "it posits that no act or word can ever be innocent. It accordingly proceeds to scrutinize our every saying and doing, thus installing a tyranny of the mind, a mental inquisition, which leads to a paralysis of sorts..." (183).
8. Steven Ryan contends, "The professor may be patronizing and less effective as an educator than he had ever dreamed, but a rapist? Carol's feckless charge denigrates the plight of true rape victims and cheapens many of her earlier, excellent points about sexism and abuses of power in academia" (401).

    Canadian critic Sandra Tomc points out that Mamet leaves no doubt about John's innocence. "But regardless of Mamet's production choices, the play text alone does its best to secure, not only Carol's moral culpability, but the larger moral certainties her uncontested wrongness implies. To this end, Mamet in his stage directions carefully delimits the extent and nature of the physical interaction between his two protagonists; and here, too, there is no room for ambiguity" (164, 166). Current audiences become frustrated by *Oleanna* because Mamet has selected "a particularly delimiting 'story' that inhibits the proliferation of 'texts' that his audience has come to desire" (172).

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THE ISSUE OF LITERACY IN AMERICA: SLAVE NARRATIVES AND TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

MARILYN J. ATLAS

Slave narratives, a popular genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, taught readers about the importance of literacy. The ability to read and write helped individuals such as Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs escape from slavery. Being educated in their oppressors' culture gave them tools with which to control their environment, pride in their intelligence, and a desire to pass on these abilities to others. They equated literacy with power and used their skills to challenge the conscience of a nation as well as to lay the foundation for an African-American literacy tradition which included a rich discussion of the importance of education and literacy. In *The Bluest Eye*, (1970) Toni Morrison continues that tradition, but with a twist. She examines the problems of having attained literacy, but not being able to accurately "read" or interpret the oppressors' culture, not being able to take what is useful and discard the rest. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison's characters are educated out of loving and respecting themselves.

When Olaudah Equiano, an African stolen from his homeland, published his narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself*, in 1789, he had already purchased his freedom from a reluctant slave owner, and the Northwest Ordinance banning slavery in the Northwest Territory was law. In 1845, when Frederick Douglass, a man born in slavery, published his slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, the first abolitionist party, the Liberty Party, had been formed but Douglass was still an outlaw, a fugitive slave. In 1861, before Lincoln emancipated African-Americans, Harriet Jacobs published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* and edited by L. Maria Child. She documents

how for seven years she lay in a space between the roof and ceiling of her "free" Grandmother's small shack with hardly room to stretch her legs, watching her family and waiting for a chance to escape with her son and daughter to the North. The United States was then on the brink of the Civil War and Jacobs added her narrative to the others, documenting her dilemma as a female slave. Jacobs felt doubly powerless as both woman and slave, but she was literate and actively at work trying to understand her culture enough to control the fate of herself and her children. Unlike Pecola Breedlove, the main character in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Jacobs did not want to be beautiful like white people—she suffered for her beauty at the hands of powerful, white men. She wanted to read and write like white people, to protect and educate her children like white people, and to be free like white people, but she did not want to be a white person.

These slave narratives are remarkable testaments of individuals refusing to be passive victims, refusing to devalue themselves. Part of what gave these writers the sense that they deserved better than slavery was their ability to read and write, skills that fostered their self-respect.

Olaudah Equiano was born into the Ibo tribe in the Nigerian village of Isseke. At the age of eleven he was kidnapped by slave traders and spent ten years as a slave in the West Indies, in America, and in the British navy before becoming a free man in 1766, twenty-three years before his narrative was published. He learned to read and write as a slave on Captain Pascal's ship bound for England where he met Richard Baker, a white Virginian just a few years older than he, who explained the alphabet to him. Equiano pursued knowledge using every opportunity to improve his skills in reading and writing even if it meant being in danger of burning down the ship (9, 140; 146), documenting with pride how hard he worked to attain literacy. Because he could read, write, and calculate, he was valuable in business and he eventually bought his freedom. He continued to work as a slave trader after he became free and in 1776 he helped Charles Irving buy slaves for a Central American plantation. He writes his text not so much against slavery as against slavery's cruelty in America, documenting the power of education. Slavery is something done to him; education is something that helps to set him free. Equiano sold nearly two thousand copies of his narrative on a trip to Ireland in 1791.

Equiano's narrative is the first great African American slave narrative. His struggle for literacy is as important as his struggle to

escape. He kept a journal as was common for religious people during "The Great Awakening." Robert Allison, a contemporary editor of his text, in his introduction of the text, summarizes the role of education in Equiano's life: "by mastering economics, Equiano managed to free himself from slavery. by mastering language, he was able to tell his story."

As a young boy, Equiano watched his friend, Dick Baker, and his "owner," Captain Pascal, read books: Equiano writes: "I had a great curiosity to talk to the books as I thought they did, and so to learn how all things had a beginning. For that purpose I have often taken up a book, and so have talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me" (58). Henry Louis Gates, Jr., sees this figure of the talking book as the first tradition of the slave narrative. While the Dick and Jane primer harms Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, books take on magical import for Equiano. First he tries to listen to them, then he learns to read them and ultimately to write them.

During part of Equinao's tenure as a slave, Miss Guerins taught him to read and sent him to school (73). By the time he wrote his autobiography, he demonstrates his learning by misquoting Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's *Illiad* (75) as well as quoting from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (81; 97) in order to stress his own traumatic experiences of being sold from one master to another.

Equiano's mastery of the language and literacy form does more than merely allow him to write a book—it allows him to remain free. On a visit to Savannah some men tried to claim him as a runaway slave. Equiano told them "'o be still and keep off, for I had seen those kind of tricks played upon other free blacks, and they must not think to serve me so.' The men realized that 'I talked too good English' for them to trick" (135).

But Equiano knows literacy is not all. In chapter 11 of his 12 chapter autobiography, someone asks him" "'How come it is that all the white men on board who can read and write, and observe the sun, and know all things, yet swear, lie, and get drunk, only excepting yourself?" (170). Equiano is more than someone with skills—he can analyze and he has a strong sense of self preservation. He uses what he knows: "I had read in the life of Columbus when he was amongst the Indians in Mexico or Peru, where on some occasion, he frightened them by telling them of certain events in the Heavens" (173). Equiano learns his tricks from books as well as life.

David W. Blight, the editor of the Bedford edition of Frederick Douglass' first of three autobiographies, *Narrative*, notes that the text "is a classic illustration of the will to power as the will to write, of physical and psychological liberation through language" (vii). He also notes that a recurring message in this work is that to Douglass slavery meant bondage of the mind as much as of the body. After a period of especially harsh treatment under a brutal overseer to whom he was hired out, Douglass describes himself as "broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark light of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!" (74). His is a search for self love as well as freedom. The power of literacy is very important to Douglass. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., writes that "Douglass became an American Representative Man because he was Rhetorical Man, black master of the verbal arts. Douglass is our clearest example of the will to power as parallel to the will to write." Gates continues, "the act of writing for the slave constituted the act of creating a public, historical self" (*Figures* 108). Douglass's narrative is a text of regeneration. Much anticipated among abolitionists, it sold five thousand copies in the first four months of publication. By the eve of the Civil War approximately thirty thousand copies had been sold on two continents. And it had been translated into French and German.

Between the 1850s and 1960, Douglass's narrative went out of print. Since *The Bluest Eye* takes place in 1941, one can see some of the problematics of losing one's history, a problem Morrison is examining in this wonderful first novel.

A plantation slave at first, sensitive to the songs of the plantation, Douglass gets his first taste of reading and writing when he is sent to a city, Baltimore, and taught to read by a woman, Mrs. Auld. She does not know it is illegal to teach a slave to read and write. Her husband, finding out what she is doing, informs her: "Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world...if you teach that nigger how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master..." (57).

Douglass learns from this: he will learn to read because he does not want to be kept; he does not want to be fit for slavery; he does not want to be manageable. He befriended little white boys who taught him to read. Douglass explains that at twelve he picked up *The*

Columbian Orator by Caleb Bingham, 1797, which contains a dialogue between a master and his slave. The dialogue resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave by the master (61). This inspires Douglass both in terms of its logic and its learning. He too wants to write. He is motivated to get the master's tools in order to dismantle the master's house.

Douglass learns to write with chalk as he works in the shipyards. Before he runs away, he sets up classes with fellow slaves (87). Douglass values writing and wishes to pass on the skill he has worked so hard to acquire. It is this community, a community of individuals who value literacy, which he hates so much to leave when he decides it is time for him to flee from slavery. He has learned to read, to read his culture, to pass on his skills, to emancipate himself, to go beyond the laws of his land when he finds them destructive.

Harriet Jacobs demonstrates in her narrative that she is from a supportive family, but not supportive enough to keep the "owner" from lusting after her. Harriet Jacobs writes about her privileges as a house slave as well as its problems: for instance, she learns to read and write from her first mistress. Her community cannot protect her from making bad decisions and allowing a white, upper middle class man who is not her master to be her lover. She sees herself as beautiful, but finds this beauty troublesome because rather than giving her power, it makes her sexual prey to men in power. She can read but learns to be silent, spending years in hiding, trying to keep her children from being separated from her. She is proud of her education and attempts to educate her children. Her brother, William, also teaches himself to read and write, but as a man, does not have difficulty maintaining control over his body. In Jacobs's text, neither sexuality nor progeny are a problem for him. Jacobs makes it plain that being a female slave is vastly different from being a male slave.

Jacobs knows it is illegal to teach a slave to read, yet takes a chance (819) when an old black male slave asks for her help. She, more than Equiano or Douglass, suffers from internal oppression, guilt for her sexuality, self-hatred for her desire to be loved (911; 918). Jacobs writes out her inner turmoil, and in spite of it, she makes it to freedom with her self-respect, her children intact. She is a literate woman educator, writing out her story, exploring how being a woman affected her experience as a slave.

Toni Morrison, in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, demonstrates a great deal more ambivalence toward literacy and education, than do

Equiano, Douglass, or Jacobs. Morrison sets her story in 1941. Her main characters, young girls between nine and thirteen, are attending school in Lorain, Ohio and being taught to read; they are simultaneously being poisoned into hating themselves and their lives by reading texts such as the Dick and Jane primer and the Alice-and-Jerry storybooks, which leave girls such as Pecola Breedlove self-hating and self-destructive. Morrison is stressing that one needs to be able to read, but even more importantly, one must be able to read one's culture, discarding messages dangerous to a viable sense of self. No black family portrayed in *The Bluest Eye*, not even the MacTeers, the narrator's parents, the most loving of the families created, lives in the world portrayed in the Dick and Jane primer, the primer which frames Morrison's novel and which Morrison replays throughout it, sometimes without punctuation, sometimes without spacing, and sometimes in fragments, forcing the reader to experience its ironic and sinister implications no matter how the text is sliced.

Claudia MacTeer, the younger of the two MacTeer daughters, narrates the story of a young girl with whom she grew up, Pecola Breedlove, only eleven when the story takes place. Pecola goes to school, but sits alone. She can read, but she cannot love or protect herself. Pecola is a victim of a racist culture and a family ruined by the false promises of popular culture. Impregnated by her father and given destructive messages from a movie industry that idealizes Shirley Temple, Pecola has no one in the novel with enough cultural understanding to guide her. No one is teaching her anything that will help her to love herself, that will help her to survive being a poor black girl in a very dysfunctional 1940s family. Pecola reaches out to another victim of racism, a West Indian mullato, Soaphead Church, not accidentally the most literate man in the novel as well as one of the most destructive, a man who advertises himself as a "Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams." Soaphead Church is a pedophile who tricks Pecola into poisoning his land-lady's dog and in return promises her blue eyes, a promise which functions as the straw that breaks Pecola's uneasy relationship with the community and with her own sanity. Convinced she has blue eyes, Pecola stops dealing with anyone other than her alter ego. Soaphead Church grants her blue eyes, grants her what the movies and primers are teaching her to want, but what she desperately needs is an adult to help her cherish her brown ones. By the end of the novel, Pecola is the bird that is eternally grounded. Her reading has not helped her toward freedom, but

has made her feel ugly and unworthy. She has learned to read, and it has helped her trade her brown eyes that can see if used properly, for blue ones that are blind, that belong to another race. She has been made mad by a literacy that leaves her out.

Morrison is pointing us toward slave narratives, but with a twist. The twentieth century is even more dangerous to African Americans than was the nineteenth because racism has been internalized. Harriet Jacobs feels like a victim because she is beautiful, not because she is ugly. Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglass feel, at the very least, the equal of any man they meet.

Toni Morrison, ironically, has the narrator relate to us the dangers of a "free man." Pecola's father, Cholly, has been too brutalized himself to care about anything more than his own immediate pleasure. African Americans have had one set of chains, literal ones, replaced with psychological chains, so thick and heavy that they don't have any idea how to escape from them. While the slave narratives end with freedom and hope, *The Bluest Eye* ends with depression. Claudia, the novel's perceptive narrator, sees sacrifice without redemption as the end of Pecola Breedlove's story. The reader is hopeful because Claudia is so bright, so potential in our eyes, but she can only see Pecola's tragedy, the tragedy of being a black girl caught in the world of white texts.

Right from the beginning, following the model of the slave narrative, Morrison makes this Midwestern novel one concerning reading. The Dick and Jane primer which Morrison keeps reformulating for the reader from the very first page of *The Bluest Eye* becomes an ironic outline of the novel's structure, a parody of education gone wrong:

> Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, Look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play.

Frieda and Claudia MacTeer's house is green, but it is often unpleasant. The girls are sometimes unhappy, and sexuality, a red dress, is never acceptable or safe. Pecola sits alone at school and the cat she attempts to befriend is murdered by a jealous and perverse boy with whom it resides. Pecola's mother is only kind at the Fisher's house where she works, and Frieda's and Claudia's mother is too often worried about finances, or her children's survival, to laugh much. Their father is mostly unsmiling, afraid of the winter, the furnace, the future. He is the Vulcan, the guard, not someone with whom to play. Pecola's father is broken, hurt and cruel, dangerous, and the dog that Pecola sees she unwittingly poisons in an attempt to get herself blue eyes so that she can conform to the culture's standard of beauty and be lovable. At the end of the novel Pecola's only friend is herself, mad and desperately denying reality, split at the root, insane. The life of Dick and Jane is not accessible to the black children of Lorain, Ohio, in 1941 or in 1970 when Morrison publishes this novel.

Slave narratives are written by individuals attempting to demonstrate the reality and horror of slavery. Morrison subtly uses echoes of this form to describe the reality and horror of being a poor, black child living in a small Midwestern city during the 1940s, decades after African Americans have allegedly been emancipated. Morrison is subtle about her use of the slave narrative form. Claudia, the first person narrator, is more or less free. She is quite conscious, even at nine years old, of hating white baby dolls, and she works hard to understand why they are so special to others. Even as a young child, she knows that blacks cannot control their income, but they can control their values. More than any other character, Claudia has a sense of what she wants, to feel something on Christmas, and she can examine what she does not want, to idealize Shirley Temple. She is not yet ready to "adjust without improvement."

The film *Imitation of Life* takes on much meaning in *The Bluest Eye*. Like the Dick and Jane primer, it colors the female characters' values in self-destructive ways. Maureen, Pecola's pretty, wealthy, light skinned schoolmate, points the film out to Pecola because she thinks the mulatto girl's name in the film is Pecola when in fact it is Piola, and because she wants to lord it over Pecola that it is reasonable, if sad, for a mulatto girl to hate her black mother (56). Pauline, Pecola's mother, Pecola, and even Frieda are as imprisoned by the images of popular culture, the Betty Grables, Hedy Lamarrs, Claudette Colberts, Greta Garbos and Ginger Rogerses, as their

ancestors were by slave owners. Pauline, Cholly, and Pecola have less of a functional community that Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Olaudah Equiano, and they have less self-respect. Only Claudia will find a way to analyze herself out of the self-destructive messages her culture keeps giving her. Her family is relatively stable, able to find its way through the messages of white America, and while Frieda, Claudia's slightly older sister, may love Shirley Temple, she does not scorn herself.

It is not accidental that Junior, the cat-killer, is crazed and angry. The reader is told that his middle class mother, Geraldine, has gone to a land grant college, a normal school, and has learned how to do the white man's work with refinement: "home economics to prepare his food; teacher education to instruct black children in obedience; music to soothe the weary master and entertain his blunted soul" (68). Geraldine's hatred of Pecola is self-hatred, and the funkiness she fights is her own blackness and humanity. Education may have helped free the slave of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but in this novel it functions to keep twentieth century children in a maddening, destructive, space.

Schools are everywhere in this novel, which begins in the fall after the school year has begun. We know the level of education of Pauline Williams, Pecola's mother; we know her brother left school at ten to work. Morrison is thinking about the ironies of emancipation as she examines what made the community of Lorain, Ohio, so much less than it could have been. She reminds the reader of the underground railroad station, of liberal Oberlin college, physically close to Lorain, yet tragically out of the Breedlove's reach, and thus indirectly of the slave narratives that offered the promise of a better world where literacy and education led to self love and the promise of a better future.

> In that young and growing Ohio town whose side streets, even, were paved with concrete, which sat on the edge of a calm blue lake, which boasted an affinity with Oberlin, the underground railroad station, just thirteen miles away, this melting pot on the lip of America facing the cold but receptive Canada—What could go wrong?" (93)

What goes wrong is internalized oppression. No master is needed; Pauline and Cholly have internalized the hatred of their culture and they have passed it along, with little else, to poor Pecola.

Pauline is ruined by her culture. She wants material goods to help make her worthy in her own eyes. She loves clothes because she desires the admiration of others. Pauline dreams of romantic love (97) and believes, like her daughter, like her culture, that physical beauty would make her loveable. Romantic love and physical beauty, the narrator tells us, are probably the two most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Romantic love and physical beauty both "originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion. In equating physical beauty with virtue, she stripped her mind, bound it, and collected self-contempt by the heap" (97). Pauline is educated at the movies, and it causes her to judge rather than love. Pecola becomes her victim. Not loving herself, Pauline cannot love her daughter. In Pauline's internal monologue she reveals her belief that her daughter is ugly.

> *"But Pecola look like she knowed right off what to do. A right smart baby she was. I used to like to watch her. You know they makes them greedy sounds. Eyes all soft and wet. A cross between a puppy and a dying man. But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly."* (99-100)

Like Pauline, Cholly Breedlove, her husband, is also carefully educated to believe he is without value. Fatherless, abandoned by his mother at four days old in a junk heap, Cholly is raised by his aunt Jimmy and has four years of school before he gets courage enough to ask his aunt who and where his father is. Blue Jack tells him stories and these stories are wonderful, but cannot sustain him. They share fruit, but culture overpowers nature. Cholly's first sexual encounter is at his aunt Jimmy's funeral. He is humiliated by some white men who catch him in the act of having sex in the woods with a young, innocent woman, Darlene. They force him to continue at least pretending to have sex with her while they watch and laugh. His humiliation leads him to hating her, an emotion that allows him to function, but at a high price. Following this horrifying sexual encounter with Darlene, he decides to search for his biological father, who rejects him for a crap game. Again he suffers deep humiliation. His father's rejection makes him lose control of his body: he is covered with his own feces. Cholly's lack of control over his own body—neither his phallus or his bowels function under pressure— humiliate and further isolate him. His isolation is more than he can bear: Cholly winds up in a place where he is incapable of seeing himself as some-

one with something else to lose: "He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him" (126). He is a "burned-out black man" with little to give and he hurts his powerless daughter, raping her twice, making her pregnant, because he can. The narrator is forgiving: "The pieces of Cholly's life could become coherent only in the head of a musician" (125). But the author points her finger at a white culture that educates a man to be so lost that he has no self left to lose.

Education has ruined Pecola's mother's life, her father's life, and her own. She drops out of school and seeks out Soaphead Church. She believes only blue eyes can save her now. Soaphead Church helps her toward total disintegration by granting her blue eyes for poisoning a neighbor's dog. The educated, literate Soaphead summarizes in a letter to God what made his people in the West Indies so much less than they were before they were colonized by the British, again replaying the legacy of oppression in a different key. He writes the letter, but he cannot "read" it. What he values, what his family values, European schools and education, have led him to the place where he resides, poisoning dogs, fearing "dirt" and destroying little girls. Soaphead Church, after completing the letter, slips into an "ivory sleep." His dream is that of his oppressors. The ivory they sought led to his miseducation, to his destruction and destructiveness. Now, the ivory is his, internalized, and it poisons him, poisons him before he ever considered poisoning dogs or hurting little girls.

Claudia, too, is in danger at the end of the story. She is depressed, not in touch with her talent as a writer of stories or her power as a perceptive moral person. She can only see her failure to protect Pecola. Pecola is insane, and in her madness reveals to her alter ego that her father raped her a second time when she was reading on the couch (154). Morrison is not accidentally adding this detail: her father rapes her, but so do her teachers, so do her texts. This is not how literacy functions in eighteenth and nineteenth century slave narratives—there, it gives hope and a sense of pride.

Claudia ends the novel very differently than slave narratives. They end with strength; she with a guilty we. "We are wrong, of course but it doesn't matter. It's too late. At least on the edge of my town, among the garbage and the sunflowers of my town, it's much, much too late" (160).

At the end of Claudia's narrative she has proven that from ugliness can grow beauty and from darkness light, but she does not see it. She narrates a powerful, if tragic, story, a text of healing and hope

and possibility, as much as any slave narrative does. We read the text and hear something beyond Claudia's depression.

Olaudah Equiano tells us at the end of his narrative:

> After all, what makes any event important, unless by its observation we become better and wiser, and learn "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God"? To those who are possessed of this spirit, there is scarcely any book or incident so trifling that does not afford some profit, while to others the experience of ages seems of no use; and even to pour out to them the treasures of wisdom is throwing the jewels of instruction away. (196)

So even Claudia is in danger. She needs to be instructed by her own book. She needs to learn from the stories of her life, as we, the readers of Toni Morrison's brilliant novel, do.

As the slave narrative instructs us, so does *The Bluest Eye*. The novel is more fearful of education and literacy than are slave narratives. Morrison is letting us know that for twentieth century African Americans to be free in a positive sense, they must realign their values with healthy self-love. They must get Frederick Douglass reprinted and the Dick and Jane primers out of the classrooms. We have much to learn from the issue of literacy in slave narratives as well as the issue of literacy in *The Bluest Eye*.

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CRITIQUING THE CULTURE AND SUBVERTING THE AGRARIAN MYTH IN MIDWESTERN AMERICA: JANE HAMILTON'S *A MAP OF THE WORLD*

MICHAEL LASLEY

Because Jane Hamilton focuses on a family that farms in her 1994 novel *A Map of the World*, it is tempting to label it a farm novel. According to Roy Meyer in *The Middle Western Farm Novel in the Twentieth Century*, a farm novel may be distinguished by the "distinctiveness of its subject and its handling of that subject" (7). Although *A Map of the World* focuses on a farm family, when using the criteria established by Meyer, the novel fails to fulfill the requirements for a farm novel. Hamilton's novel does fulfill several of the requirements. Hamilton provides "an accurate handling of the physical details of farm life;" she shows the hostility between farmers and townspeople; she portrays the Goodwins as having "a kind of primitivism;" and she shows the individualism that is a characteristic of farmers.

However, *A Map of the World* violates many of the requirements necessary for a farm novel. According to Meyer, "the first and most essential condition that a novel must meet in order to qualify as farm fiction is that it deal with farm life. Its setting must be the farm..., and most of its important characters must be farm people" (7). Only two of Hamilton's major characters are farmers, and the farm is only the setting for the first part of the novel. Farm novels also share several other distinguishing characteristics: a "resistance to technological change", clinging to rural churches and schools, "reticence in regard to sex," a "division of labor based on sex," "economic conservation," and "anti-intellectualism." Hamilton's farm family violates each of these characteristics typically associated with farmers in farm novels. Despite its failure to meet the guidelines for a farm novel, Hamilton's novel accomplishes several things: it provides a cultural critique; it destroys the agrarian myth in Midwest America; and it demonstrates the perseverance of the human spirit.

A Map of the World continually critiques the culture of modern America. Suzanne MacLachlan states that Hamilton "takes on some of the toughest issues of modern life" (13). Hamilton's story is set in a community that reflects issues prevalent in America in the late 1980s: a woman's role is no longer exclusively in the home, sexual crimes are no longer kept secret, and rural communities are becoming urbanized. These three issues are important to American society in the late 1980s, and they are important aspects of this novel.

Alice and Theresa, the two main women in the novel, are both women who work outside of the home. Besides her duties around the home, Alice is the nurse at the school in Prairie Center. Alice becomes a nurse because the family needs a second income. Because of her job, the Goodwin children must stay with a baby-sitter throughout the school year. Her absence from the home causes Alice to question how good a mother and wife she is. She believes that "farmers need wives who like to cook bacon and make stupendous lunches with at least two starches" (Hamilton 64). Alice is an example of the typical American woman in a society where women often work away from home. Through Alice, Hamilton shows the stress many women feel when that are required to help provide an income and continue their duties as wife and mother.

A second area in which Hamilton provides a cultural critique is seen by the presence of a sexual crime. Amy Levine reports that the 1980s is a time when "sex crimes...come into public discourse instead of remaining hidden" (27). In fact, Jean Korelitz writes that one of Hamilton's inspirations for *A Map of the World* is a "long-running sex-abuse case in a North Carolina day-care centre...[where] the ultimate, outrageous conviction and imprisonment of several teachers was traceable to one slap, delivered by a teacher to a misbehaving child" (20). However, Hamilton doesn't merely present the story of the sex crime; she questions the methods that are used to bring such accusations.

Several students bring false charges against Alice. Robbie MacKessy claims that Alice touched him inappropriately in her office at school. Hamilton questions the methods used to detect sexual abuse in this case. Paul Rafferty, Alice's lawyer, hints that current methods allow child psychologists to use children "like a ventriloquist's dummy" (Hamilton 346). Hamilton shows that these charges are often frivolous, the product of a time when "there is a heightened awareness about sexual abuse" (353). It is important to note that Hamilton never

questions the seriousness of sexual abuse, just a system that allows an innocent person to be accused of such a crime. Hamilton shows that this is a cultural trend that needs to be addressed.

A third important aspect of American culture that Hamilton portrays is the urbanization of rural America. Korelitz describes Prairie Center as a "farming centre...slouching towards suburbia, its farms being carved up into residential subdivisions" (20). Prairie Junction is a former farming community that has "brought in so many businesses and goods and services to the area the governing body voted to change the name of the new, improved...town to Prairie Center" (Hamilton 4). Hamilton's Prairie Junction exemplifies a society where rural farm communities are becoming a thing of the past. This farm community, like many others, "[falls] prey to what has long been heralded as progress" (Hamilton 10).

One of the reasons for the decline of farm communities is attributed to government farm policies and social attitudes towards farmers in the late 1980s. Levine reports that the middle of the decade saw "increasingly conservative social and fiscal policies that had negative ramifications for small farms" (22). Although these policies aren't directly mentioned in *a Map of the World*, the effects are evident. Howard knows that "there's no future in the family farm" (Hamilton 255). Alice and Howard are able to buy a farm that has been in a family for three generations. The reason they are able to buy it is because no one in the Earl family is "willing to carry on the dairy tradition" (Hamilton 11). Although no specific reason is given why no family members want to take over the farm, this is indicative of the movement away from rural farms that is common in the late 1980s.

Howard laments the fact that small farms are being taken over by corporations. Much like the other farms in Prairie Center, the Goodwin farm ultimately disappears. Howard eventually sells his farm to a family that donates the land to the Boy Scouts of America. Howard thinks that his failure, in part, is due to the lack of other farmers in the area. This former farming community turns against the Goodwins, the last dairy farmers in the area. Howard knows that "a person needs community" (Hamilton 254). The absence of other farming families, as well as the negative social attitudes towards farmers, makes life increasingly difficult for small farmers like the Goodwins. Hamilton's *A Map of the World* reflects the passing of an era in America, an era when family farms can easily be found and are well respected.

Hamilton's second accomplishment in this novel is the subversion of the agrarian myth in Midwest America. Many Americans

share an idealized vision of the Midwest. For many, Levine states, the Midwest is "a metonym for rural living, and farms [have] metaphorical associations with a prelapsarian America, where families enjoy...prosperity, togetherness, and a certain moral certitude" (22). Hamilton dispels this image in this book. Bill Kent comments that in *A Map of the World* "this dream of a Midwestern Arcadia is destroyed" (17). The Goodwins move from the city to a small farm in rural Wisconsin to live this dream, and they establish what they believe is an ideal life. Through the destruction of their ideal life, Hamilton destroys the idea of a Midwestern Arcadia.

Hamilton establishes a pattern of creating and destroying ideals early in the novel As a young girl, Alice copes with the loss of her mother by creating her own map of the world. In this created world, Alice escapes from the problems of her life...she escapes into "ideal solitude" (Hamilton 17). This fantasy world, however, does not last. When Alice matures, this map of her ideal world is lost. This theoretical world that Alice creates and dreams of living in is eventually forgotten about in a drawer, in a "chaos of old shoes, pens and bolts, masking tape, and moth-eaten sweaters" (Hamilton 17).

A second place with a mythical image is the pond on the Goodwin farm. The Goodwins love the pond on their farm; it is the perk that makes the farm worthwhile. The pond is where they go to escape from the heat, the pressure, and the work on the farm. However, all of this changes when "Lizzie Collins disappears, finds the glorious bucolic pond of the Goodwin farm, and is lost" (Korelitz 20). Lizzie's drowning destroys Howard and Alice's belief that the pond is their ideal escape. The pond is no longer a place where the Goodwins can escape from their problems; rather, it is a place that haunts them.

Slowly, Hamilton destroys the idealized vision of the Midwest that is so prevalent in America. Howard and Alice bought the farm in Wisconsin because living on a farm in the Midwest "is the American dream" (Hamilton 263). This myth encourages the Goodwins to work constantly in order to build a home and a business. Howard and Alice escape into this ideal world. Alice loves this life and proclaims that the farm "is the first place [she] ever felt safe and alive" (Hamilton 264). Howard and Alice work to maintain this American dream; however, they discover that this dream no longer exists.

Hamilton doesn't portray the nostalgic view of life on a Midwestern farm. In fact, Levine states that Hamilton "reveal[s] the flawed nature of such visions and question[s] their public acceptance" (21). This can be seen throughout *A Map of the World*. Alice says that Howard "tries to trick himself into believing that Prairie Center [is] an impossible and foolish fancy" (Hamilton 39). In fact, Howard is able to trick himself for six years. Howard and Alice believe that they live in paradise even though they are never accepted into the community in which they live. They believe they live in an ideal world even though they realize that the era of family farms is quickly coming to an end.

Even the Goodwin's lawyer believes in the myth. Rafferty repeatedly tells Howard that owning a farm qualifies him as an upstanding American. Rafferty persuades Howard to keep the farm in order "to prove to the judge the quality of [his] citizenship" (Hamilton 239). Rafferty even uses some "words synonymously: upstanding, moral, hardworking, four hundred acres, sixty head of cattle" (Hamilton 239). It is quite obvious that Rafferty believes in the myth. Rafferty, in essence, says that as long as the Goodwins hold on to their farm, everything will be okay. He advises Howard that the farm, the myth, will save them.

Ultimately, this world comes crashing down. The Goodwins are forced to give up the farm that is so dear to them. They are forced to return to the real world in the city. Through the destruction of the Goodwins' dreams, Hamilton shows that the myth of a modern Arcadia in the American Midwest is exactly that, a myth. As MacLachlan says, "Hamilton draws us her own map of the world, one devoid of safe havens" (13).Despite the fact that the Goodwins love their life on the farm, their idea of the American dream is shattered.

Hamilton's third accomplishment in the novel is her demonstration of the perseverance of the human spirit. This is a major theme throughout the story. Suzanne MacLachlan believes that Hamilton leaves the reader with a "better understanding of the strength of the human heart and the power to rise above calamity" (13). Hamilton accomplishes this by showing the ability of Howard, Alice and Theresa to overcome major calamities in their lives. The characters cope with their problems differently, but, regardless of the method, the human spirit is able to overcome.

Theresa suffers the loss of her youngest daughter, Lizzy. Theresa can't turn to her best friend, Alice, because Alice is somewhat responsible for Lizzy's drowning. Theresa's husband, Dan, spends all of his time working, leaving Theresa to cope with the problem alone. Trudy Bush points out that for Theresa, "the answer is religious faith" (569).

Because she doesn't know what else to do, Theresa begins "praying half the day" (Hamilton 78). Eventually the pain becomes so great that Theresa turns to her childhood priest, Albert. Albert helps Theresa focus on the good points in Lizzy's life instead of focusing on Lizzy's death. Through her religious faith, Theresa perseveres and overcomes her trial.

The problem that almost destroys Alice is guilt. Moureen Coulter claims that it is guilt that "isolates her by erasing the familiar patterns of communication with Howard and Theresa" (25). Alice doesn't feel as though she can talk to either Howard or Theresa about her problems. With all the normal avenues of communication cut off, Alice is left searching for a way to deal with her pain. Ironically, it is when Alice loses her personal freedom that she is set free from her emotional pain. Alice's time in prison is a time of healing. She suffers physically, yet grows emotionally. In prison, Alice learns "to be quiet and wait" (Hamilton 271). Kent points out that when Howard pays Alice's bail, she "is both metaphorically and literally set free" (17).

It is interesting to note that Hamilton also uses this theme of perseverance to help undermine the agrarian myth. Hamilton accomplishes this through Howard. Howard simultaneously faces the death of a friend's daughter and his wife's depression. This is compounded with a temporarily broken home and extreme financial difficulties. In order to cope with his problems, Howard turns to his farm. Howard hopes that his farm will save him. The farm is Howard's escape, and he is "thankful...for the numbing tasks" (Hamilton 52). By continuing his routine on the farm and keeping in motion, Howard does not allow his problems to overwhelm him. Howard continually seeks comfort in his farm and, day after day, he escapes to his land. However, Howard ultimately realizes that his farm will not, in fact, be able to save him. His family is united and begins to heal only after the farm is sold and they move to a city. This is another subtle example of Hamilton's subversion of the agrarian myth.

A Map of the World is more than just the tragic story of a young farm family in Wisconsin. Hamilton provides a critique of modern culture because she refuses to shy away from tough issues that our society deals with. Hamilton also subverts the popular agrarian myth that many Americans share about the Midwest. Even Hamilton's characters believe this myth, but the myth is destroyed for them as well. Finally, Hamilton's' characters show the ability of the human spirit to overcome even the worst tragedies. Even though *A Map of the World* fails to qualify as a farm novel, Hamilton uses the farm as an avenue to accomplish these other goals.

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MARY SWANDER'S MIDWEST

MARY OBUCHOWSKI

Mary Swander's Midwest has many qualities of the author herself—vulnerable and tough at the same time. She, like other residents of rural Iowa where she lives, are subject to threats and disasters which cause them to bend but not break. She portrays herself, her family, her neighbors, and their common landscape in poetry and a variety of nonfiction, including autobiography, interviews, and essays. She has co-edited books on gardening, recovery, and the Loess Hills of western Iowa.

The title of the latter, *Land of the Fragile Giants: Landscapes, Environments, and Peoples of the Loess Hills* (1994), may be taken as a touchstone, because it summarizes the thesis of my study and captures Swander's grounding in Iowa, her concern for the environment, and her involvement with the people on this particular part of the earth. The loess, a windblown fine silt that makes up these "crinkled" hills (5-6), also by its nature causes the hills to be particularly susceptible to change by wind and water, and renders the unique ecosystem the loess nurtures similarly vulnerable. Swander posits a case for the Hills as a landmark for those who live in the region, not of changelessness, like the rock landscapes in the Southwest, but of the mutability that characterizes the Midwest. She says, "...because ours is a moist climate, we are constantly in flux.... We, perhaps more than those of most other regions, have a chance to grasp the real impermanence of natural landmarks and so, at once, the transiencies and preciousness of the whole of nature" (8).

From there, she takes the next step into environmental consciousness and notes that we need to come to terms with the fact that "in our ecological system, once one bead is lost, the whole string will unravel. A tiny creek overflows, a bank erodes, and a natural habitat for small animals and birds is lost" (9).

The people who inhabit the place she describes are always poised on the brink of transition. They include farmers, not those of Jane

Smiley's books who have moved into agribusiness, but ones who maintain small family farms, particularly Swander's Amish neighbors. The organic gardeners in *Parsnips in the Snow* (1990) — the women who are returning their dead mother home for burial in *Driving the Body Back* (1984), and the elderly Henry in "If You Can Talk to a Guy," who is trying to figure out how to pass on his dairy herd and property intact to someone who will cherish it as he has — exhibit qualities of toughness and flexibility that they need to live on this land (in Michael Martone, ed., *A Place of Sense: Essays in Search of the Midwest*, 1988, 96-100).

Swander's choice of organic gardeners and Amish farmers who resist using manufactured fertilizers and pesticides as well as gas-powered equipment is not accidental. In her autobiographical *Out of This World: A Journey of Healing* (1994), she explains that she has extraordinary physical sensitivities caused by a massive overdose of allergy vaccine. She said that her condition made her "become hyper-allergic to every food and chemical." She tells us, "One day I was fine and the next day I literally couldn't eat anything or be exposed to cigarette smoke, perfume, or cleaning materials. I couldn't fill up my gas tank" (James Grove and Steven Horowitz, "Mary Swander," *Iowa Woman*, 13, Winter 1993, 14). She found and remodeled an old country schoolhouse in an Amish region of Iowa and made it her home.

She struggled to develop a lifestyle that would allow some degree of normality. She learned to try one food at a time to see if her body could tolerate it. Her first was yucca root, which she came to savor. Eventually she was able to add wild-born meat to her diet. She could eat legs from wild frogs, which for a while she tried unsuccessfully to catch for herself, and to her surprise, found a gift of bear meat delicious beyond her dreams. After eight years of carefully adding to her diet, she was able to eat a meal combining enough foods that we would consider a full meal. (*World*, 28). Inspired by the memory of a farming grandmother, she tentatively began gardening organically and attempted to preserve her produce for winter. Ironically, both her home freezer and the commercial food locker failed, and she had to turn to expensive imports to survive. Experimenting further, she found that canning and drying worked for her, but then fire, drought, a plague of grasshoppers, and floods destroyed her crops. However, adversity strengthened her, neighbors helped neighbors, and community members fortified each other, enabling her to survive.

She explains, "I built a greenhouse and cold frames. I built raised beds and trellises. I talked to old-timers about their successes and failures. I received gifts of deer-tongue lettuce from my Amish neighbors, tips on how to plant by the moon, samples of fish emulsion and kelp fertilizers" (27). To combat the devastation by insects, her friends advised her to try traps consisting of buckets of molasses water (164), a spray made of chili peppers and garlic (165), and finally, successfully, a mixture of ground bug parts. But by then the garden was nearly gone, and she was making her salads from the weeds that remained (167).

This experience led her to read prairie women's journals, in which she learned that "the prairie grasses were the only thing the grasshoppers left untouched." She muses, "Foraging, like root-cellaring and dehydrating, which I ultimately found the cheapest and most satisfactory forms of food preservation, was our most ancient form of food production" (167). Since agriculture has displaced the native plants and animals, she reasons, why not merge the wild with the domestic and integrate "some of the common weeds—dandelions, lamb's quarters, plantain, and purslane" into her spring garden for salads, and set aside a portion of her garden "to become a patch of perennial edibles—[like] sunflowers, milkweed, and mullien" (170).

Such economy—to use what is present, as well as to use the minimum in seed and energy as well as in language—characterizes the organic gardeners she interviewed for her book *Parsnips in the Snow* (1990) and the farmers she reports on in "If You Can Talk to a Guy." She says that the farmers

> communicate important things with few words. They act in the same way.... Their economy of gesture, paradoxically, conforms to the way they make their living.... Harold and Henry don't broadcast their seed by the fistful. Instead, in the old days walking along the rows with a horse and drill, or today mounted atop twenty-four-row planters, they deposit at the most three kernels to a hill. And if later in the season the weather turns against them, bringing in enough lasting rain and wind to knock over the entire sections of adolescent corn, they don't ... throw on their boots and slickers and dash through the fields hammering in stakes and tying up the stalks. they sit by their radios and listen...waiting. Any other response—hurried calls to neighbors, graphic descriptions of the storm or the state of the fields to family—would be an excess....
>
> By necessity, then, farmers are conservers; they save everything—seeds, old crates, junk cars down by the creek, string, buckets, work shoes. Words are no exception (100).

Elsewhere, Swander links this scarcity of words to the region, saying, "it's definitely a midwestern characteristic not to acknowledge your emotional currents up front" (Grove and Horowitz, 16).

This taciturn stoicism comes to the forefront during crises such as the tornados and floods which periodically ravage the plains states. She describes the preparation for such occurrences in this way:

> A hint of disaster brings out a calmness in midwesterners that matches the weather. Psychologists say we're in denial when we wander out into the yard... the skies darkening into a purple bruise, and chat with our neighbors, pulling a dandelion or two before heading back into the house to the cellar. Psychologists say we're in dissociation when we sit right on the river in the local tavern during floods and toast the rising tides, the water lapping through the door. I say we've merely grown used to the situation and in a region that the rest of the nation views as a flyover zone, we don't expect every day to be "beautiful" (*World*, 88).

Later in the same chapter of *Out of This World*, she adds, "These people knew how to handle stress, big stress, and go on with their lives," and links the weather to the strength of the people who live with it:

> Whether they come by day or by night, whether in stillness or turbulence, whether as an invisible but steadfast force or a twisted-up concentration of quick destructive energy, the midwestern winds are a key character in our landscape, and a key to our character. They are "strange," irritating, comforting in their predictability, and eerie in their maverick behavior. We stand up to them, we blow and bend with them, our cats tucked into the folds of our laps in fear. They teach us to blow and bend with whatever else comes our way. In the folds of our minds, we know they keep us in check, keep us closer to death, and so closer to the preciousness of life with their constant threat of lifting us up—not so gently—to the heavens (90-91).

The determination to persist typifies the growing things as well as the folk who populate her books. Not by accident does she use the title "Succession," both for a chapter in *Parsnips in the Snow* that describes a kind of gardening in which one crop succeeds another so that space is always being used productively, and for a book of poetry in which she emphasizes the impulse of nature, and through it human beings, to sustain and reproduce themselves. The poem "November" in *Succession* (1979) encapsulates the determination of her Irish forebears to move through life and death on new soil. She writes,

A combine moves across
the field, rocking,
steaming, full of
immigrants. The woman
stands at the rail,
her skirt blowing upwards.
Her face is gone.
It is the land.
It is the ground
under her feet
where she drops her
children one by one (43).

Death, planting, and rebirth also come together in *Driving the Body Back*, a series of poems which are reminiscences about dead (and often highly eccentric) relatives. Burial, resurrection, references to recurring family peculiarities, and common memories suggest an endurance of spirit as a source of strength in the face of hardship.

The juxtaposition of isolation, whether voluntary or otherwise, in the midst of community or family, appears as a related theme throughout her works. The complications of Swander's life with allergies led her to give up the idea of marrying or of ever even living with another person. When she spoke with her attorney about filing a lawsuit over her illness, he could pinpoint no specific financial losses, but simply said, "You're condemned to a life of loneliness." Characteristically, she took a positive view. She wrote, "Loneliness became solitude, with time to sort through the chain of events that had led me to Fairview School.... I probed and poked at my soul to try to better understand the strengths and weakness of my character, the intricacies of my relationships to others, and my connection with my spirituality" (105). She learned more about the causes and implications of environmental illness, conquered her shyness, and became an activist on behalf of health and a cleaner environment. This is not to say that all was well. Illness recurred in the form of viral myelitis, and she had to call on friends to help her with the most basic activities. The physical pain combined with the psychological pain when neighbors she counted on the most did not come through when she needed them. In "The Fifth Chair," an essay in *Healing Circle: Authors Writing of Recovery* (1998), she traces stages, which she calls "chairs," of her disability and recovery, and of her awareness of both her dependence on others and her alienation from them. At first, she records, "A

Midwesterner to the core, I masked my daily discomfort, bullying my way through the days, trying to focus on other things, trying not to complain" (108). Confronting the double burden of needing people and at the same time being isolated by her illness, she traces the stages from excruciating pain and loneliness through anger, frustration, shame, and grief over her helpless condition and the inability of her friends to be what she had hoped, and finally to tentative health again. She compares her recovery to that from "the devastation of a flood, for you don't know exactly when the crisis begins and when it ends. The only certainty is that it will surely flood again" (128).

The maverick family members she describes or quotes in *Driving the Body Back* display the same tightrope-walking ability to isolate themselves and interact with the community that Swander does herself. For example, Uncle George brewed liquor, and the narrator herself helped to hand out mason jars full of "dark amber brew: when "cars from all / over the country pulled into [his] lane, / headlights dim" ("George," 14), until the still blew up and all of the farm buildings burned (13-15). Aunt Nell, "who hated to cook," spent her life first cooking at her bachelor brothers' farms, then nursing them through their last years, and finally raising a family of her own. (29-34). At last, elderly and alone on her own place, she responds to people who urge her to travel and enjoy herself by asserting,

But I wouldn't want to miss
Putting up my tomatoes and corn.
Besides, I drove to Coon Rapids
This spring to buy fence,
And to Cherokee this summer
for May Burke's funeral.
but don't you see, they want me
to take a train, see the desert
in bloom, see Europe, Africa, the Far East.
I say I've seen scenery (36).

When the 1993 floods inundated Iowa, the disasters were both widespread and individual. Members of the communities came together ecumenically when rural Mennonite teen-agers volunteered in St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the small town of Chelsea (*World*, 231). In the country, she reports, "cleanup efforts told a tale of agricultural and horticultural destruction. We lost much of that year's crop, and a portion of the previous year's in storage" (174). Swander

points to collective responsibility, saying she "did find a bit of truth in the biblical adage that the sins of the fathers would be paid for by the sons. The almost complete destruction of the prairie contributed to the severity of flooding in Iowa. Prairie plant roots grow deep and strong, holding and filtering rainwater. Corn and soybean roots are not half as efficient" (175). As she sees the connection between herself and her homesteading ancestors in sharing blame for this event, she also comes to look at the flood as a part of a larger picture. "Pressures and losses," she muses, "seemed less crisis ridden and more a part of a natural whole." A friend reinforces this, saying, "When I was flooded two years ago, I thought the world had come to an end. I dug all sorts of ditches, replanted everything, and looked upon the whole event as a huge man-versus nature challenge. This time, I learned to accept and go with it" (175).

This acceptance and will to continue in spite of recurrent difficulties characterizes, for Swander, the land as well as the people in it, herself included. She knows that her problems with illness will recur, as tornados do. She will cope, as her Midwestern neighbors will. They exercise stoicism when crops fail or drought strikes, they take measures of economy to shore up against future threats, and they exercise renewed concern for an environment that is at once fragile and persistent. When they can, they help each other; when they need to, they bear their grief silently and alone. These qualities reappear in her life and her writing as regularly as new growth does on the Iowa landscape.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE: 1998

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