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In Honor of
Mary Ellen Caldwell
and
Mary Jean DeMarr

PREFACE

With its twenty-sixth annual appearance, *MidAmerica* begins its second quarter century of publishing insightful essays that contribute to an ultimate definition and exploration of the literature of the Midwest. With its companion publication, *Midwestern Miscellany*, now in its twenty-eighth year, and the forthcoming *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature,* it continues to mark out the path that Midwestern literary study takes and will continue to take as we enter the third millennium, the twenty-first century, and the third century of an identifiable Midwestern literature. The authors of the essays in *MidAmerica XXVI*, names both familiar and new in *MidAmerica's* table of contents and its mission, carry that mission further along its ever-widening and lengthening path that clearly has no foreseeable end.

The dedication of this issue to Mary Ellen Caldwell and Mary Jean DeMarr, both recipients of the MidAmerica Award, recognizes two scholars who have done much to carry on our mission and to further our understanding of our Midwestern literature.

July, 1999 DAVID D. ANDERSON

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Recipients of the MidAmerica Award — Back Cover

RAVENS

JIM GORMAN

At dusk I flap my two-foot wings
from locust to oak
and glide to the rim of the iron box
that gives me supper.

How I get here is stink,
and how I hop from bundle to bag, stink,
or the almost stink
of warm meat.

Still the shrieking girl in the flapping sheet surprises me.
My flap and caw surprise her,
and she gives up her armload
into the stinking stew before she's maybe sure.

It's still tied to her,
and her next shriek is both egg and girl,
both wanting to be,
and wanting to be rid.

She stretches the rope, breaks it on iron.
She has hands not wings so she can do this,
though hands cannot help her fly away.
Instead she stumbles back,

drops down in her doorway, stares:
there is no rustling between us,
no cry down inside the box,
only a warmth soon to be something else.

Otterbein College

A GRAVEYARD OF THE MIDWEST: UNEARTHING THE INFLUENCE OF SÖREN KIERKEGAARD ON MIDWESTERN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

THOMAS WETZEL

In a recent interview, the then 83-year-old Howard V. Hong recalled "an earlier time when [he] first heard the name Kierkegaard." Hong, the general editor of Princeton University's twenty-six volume *Kierkegaard's Writings*, comments, "My father had borrowed a book from a farmer in Norway Lake [Minnesota]. When I asked him about the book, he said, 'It's by a Dane named Kierkegaard.' I remembered that later, that name...That was the beginning." This brief comment confounds the traditional academic reading of Kierkegaard as the father of intellectual existentialism, a relic of the nineteenth century only resurrected in the World War II era by the likes of Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger. Hong's comment verifies that, far from first appearing in America through the post-war university communities, the thought of Kierkegaard decades earlier was wandering the highways and byways of the immigrant Midwest.[1]

Although born in 1912, Hong remembers farmers exchanging copies of Kierkegaard's works in his youth. This was not an isolated incident: historical research shows Midwestern universities teaching selections of the Dane's texts before the turn of the century and seminaries in the Midwestern states equipping their future ministers with Kierkegaardian perspectives long before existentialism reached the shores of Massachusetts and New York. In fact, the first serious American article on Kierkegaard appeared already in 1916. The author, David Swenson (himself a Minnesotan like Hong), discovered Kierkegaard's works around the turn of the century, and by 1914 he was lecturing regularly on Kierkegaard at the University of Minnesota (Elbrønd-Bek 77; *Presence* ix).

The question, of course, is why? What does the Midwest offer that would make it a special home for Kierkegaard? There is much

circumstantial evidence that, when taken together, suggests the immigrant population of the American Middle West both knew and propagated Kierkegaardian ideas through early native-language churches and seminaries. Crucially, much of this Kierkegaardian perspective was communicated, not through the intellectuals, but through the workers, ministers[2] and common folk of these small-town communities. Needless to say, the views of these groups create a picture of Kierkegaard very different from those associated with Kierkegaard's thought in present-day American academic circles. By tracing the expression of religious impulses among many Midwestern immigrants, one discovers a Kierkegaardian influence in their approaches to faith and to life, and from these influences, one discovers that Kierkegaardian ideas entered into the literary milieu of America's turn-of-the-century Midwestern writers. In fact, one might suggest that from these supposed historical "footnotes," a Midwestern Kierkegaard emerges.

Historian Oscar Handlin, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Uprooted*, discusses the mindset and experiences he found common in the European immigrants who came to America in the nineteenth century.[3] Drawing on diaries, archives and immigrant journalism of the time, Handlin sums up the role of religion in the European immigrant's mind quite simply: "Man holds dear what little is left. When much is lost, there is no risking the remainder." The immigrant, in the crossing of the Atlantic, had lost so much of what made his or her life meaningful that he or she would become almost violently conservative in the preservation of those customs and beliefs which could be kept; and for many, if not most immigrants, what was kept was the Christian faith (Handlin 7-17, 331, 105, 85-88, 86, 108).

Emigration posed a serious crisis, particularly for the European peasant. What Handlin suggests in fact seems the logical outcome:

> The whole American universe was different. Strangers, the immigrants could not locate themselves; they had lost the polestar that gave them their bearings. They would not regain an awareness of direction until they could visualize themselves in their new context, see a picture of the world as it appeared from this perspective.... When the natural world, the former context of the peasant ideas, faded behind the transatlantic horizon, the newcomers found themselves stripped to those religious institutions they could bring along with them. Well, the trolls and fairies would stay behind, but the church and priest at least will come. (84, 105)

In other words, to the degree the New World seemed removed from the old ways of life, Handlin contends, to that same degree Christianity exerted a greater hold on the immigrants' lives: "the immigrants directed into their faith the whole weight of their longing to be connected with the past." The practice of faith became a passionate remembrance of the old life, an active attempt to recreate what once had been (Handlin 105-106).

Further, language barriers and cultural prejudices forced these immigrants—peasant and active religious dissenter alike—into a religious world outside that of the established churches of both America and the homeland. In addition to the huge financial burden of building a community's own church was the "weight of glory"—settling the matters of belief and faith. Forced by the circumstances of immigration and the state of America's already hyper-individualistic religious practices, the immigrant churches became churches of tightly-knit communities and individuals without strong hierarchical centers, instead constructed locally around the theology of an early minister's views or based on a shared faith experience unique to the given congregation. Not surprisingly, Handlin notes that many institutional churches found it very difficult, if not impossible, to reassert authority over these churches once denominations began to condense during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century. If anything, many of the immigrant churches rejected the American denominations and formed their own native-language congregations. The Lutheran Church in America at one point had Norwegian, Danish, Irish, Finnish and German synods all operating independently of the English-speaking American Lutheran Church. It is into such a milieu that Kierkegaardian views on faith first entered the American Midwest (Handlin 115-128; 125).

Recently, Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup edited *The Legacy and Interpretation of Kierkegaard* (1981) as a volume of the respected *Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana* published in Copenhagen. This volume offers a new perspective on the history of Kierkegaard's influence throughout Europe and the United States. Most valuable to us is Lewis A. Lawson's article, "Small Talk on the 'Melancholy Dane' in America." Expanding on research he began in 1970, Lawson here discusses both possible and definite connections between Kierkegaard's thought and the ideas of Americans, particularly Midwestern Americans. Lawson works from the esteem in which Kierkegaard's writing style was held by Danes in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and he contends, "No doubt there were Danes who brought Kierkegaard's works with them when they settled in Wisconsin or Minnesota or Iowa...("Small Talk" 178-179).

Lawson offers some generalizations about the Danish immigrant experience that would have made them "responsive to Kierkegaard's way of looking at things." To begin with, Lawson contends that early Danish immigrants were at odds with the established state church of the time, so Kierkegaard's "attacks upon Christendom"—his critique of the rabid power of the state-sponsored church wandering from the true Christian message—would have found a clear echo in the immigrant's views. In fact, Kierkegaard's critiques of the Danish state church were among his most widely-read and notorious works—even and perhaps especially outside his homeland—during his lifetime and for decades after his death in 1855 ("Small Talk" 179; Hale 164).[4]

Historical evidence bears out Lawson's connection. Dorothy Burton Skårdal points out, for instance, that already in their Scandinavian homelands, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish parishioners were organizing local pietist movements that criticized the clergy of the state Lutheran churches. Once these immigrants began founding Scandinavian Lutheran churches in America, though, another Kierkegaardian element emerged: as Lawson puts it, "their activity was characterized by frequent factionalism," again suggesting a strong break with traditional state Lutheranism. Nineteenth century demographer John H. Bille pointed out that even relatively small issues of argument between ministers and congregations led to large theological quarrels. Norwegian church members "were, as a rule, willing to split up their congregations and go to the expense of building a separate church and of employing a separate minister" during such conflicts[5]. Even Carl Sandburg notes such an extreme response in his descriptions of his childhood church in Galesburg. In his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers*, Sandburg describes just the sort of factionalism that suggests to Lawson an emerging sense of Kierkegaardian dissatisfaction with the concept of Christendom, state churches, and authoritarian religious practices that seemed emptied of faith (Skårdal 166-167; Bille 5-7, 14; "Small Talk" 179; Bille 15; Sandburg 67-70; "Small Talk" 180-181).

Lawson's claim that this break with the state church mentality arose from a specifically Kierkegaardian mindset also is borne out by historians. Skårdal points out that many reform-minded Danish-

Americans acknowledged the influence of Kierkegaard on their thought and work. Another historian, Kenneth O. Bjork, argues that the Norwegian-American dissenters of the latter nineteenth century were at least in part pietists influenced by Kierkegaard. And schisms were occurring in the Scandinavian homelands that would have contributed to such responses as well. These movements created views that were anathema to both the political status quo of the Scandinavian states and the security of the state churches, and Kierkegaard's views were quickly connected to these movements. In fact, Kierkegaard was so closely associated with such views at the time that Dr. Georg Brandes was forbidden to lecture on Kierkegaard at Christiana University in 1876. Brandes' lectures were moved to the Students' Union and an audience of 300-400 dissenters attended, hailing Brandes as a champion of freedom of thought. Some of these dissenters would stay on in Europe to agitate for change in both state and church; others took the opportunity to carry Kierkegaardian and other similar ideas to the settlements of the New World (Skårdal 174; Hale 164; Bjork 525; Svendsen 21-22).

Other specifics further reinforce this view. Lawson and historian Frederick Hale describe the life of Mogens Abraham Sommer, a Danish Jew converted to Lutheranism. After becoming an itinerant minister and agitator, Sommer was imprisoned several times in Denmark for his criticisms of the clergy and the state-run church. He immigrated to America in 1861, but he returned to Copenhagen in 1864 to open an immigration office. Through this work, Sommer conducted to America "parties of immigrants that ultimately numbered into the tens of thousands." When he wrote his autobiography—significantly, published in Chicago in 1891—he entitled it (in Danish, of course) *Stages on Life's Way*, the name of one of Kierkegaard's best-known works. Lawson draws two inferences from the book:

> 1) "that Sommer knew of Kierkegaard's life and work and thought that his own career was sufficiently like that of Kierkegaard...to warrant using a Kierkegaard title;
>
> 2) "that Sommer knew that his Danish-American audience would recognize the Kierkegaard reference and thus be drawn to his book." (180)

Frederick Hale adds that Sommer's views were further institutionalized when several congregations under his leadership were founded in Denmark in the 1850s. These churches exerted substantial influence in American immigrant settlements as well ("Small Talk" 179-180; Hale 165).

Sommer, however, was not the only immigrant minister to settle numerous churches. Frontier ministry frequently offered the possibility that a single pastor could found numerous churches throughout the Midwest, thus developing congregations of likeminded people who would perpetuate his views. Carl Sandburg describes the wide-ranging influence of a similar immigrant minister,[6] and still other telling literary evidence adds to this conclusion. In his *Prairies Within: The Tragic Trilogy of Ole Rölvaag*, Harold P. Simonson notes that the respected immigrant novelist Ole Rölvaag learned English from an Elk Point, South Dakota, minister named P.J. Reinertsen. The minister offered the then twenty-year-old immigrant his library of Kierkegaardian works as part of Rölvaag's study in 1896. According to Simonson, "young Rölvaag devoured" the minister's library. Because Rölvaag had read Kierkegaard in Danish as a child in Norway,[7] it is reasonable to assume that the Kierkegaardian study was part of Rölvaag's introduction to English translation. Rölvaag later developed an admiration for frontier ministers like Rienertsen who were familiar with Kierkegaard. Rölvaag even suggested in letters later in life that frontier ministers should be familiar with Kierkegaard to best equip them for their ministries (Sandburg 365-366; Simonson 34).

To summarize: not only was it likely that many Scandinavian immigrants were familiar with Kierkegaardian views on faith and religious practices, but many early immigrant ministers were steeped in either Kierkegaardian theology or at least theologies sympathetic to Kierkegaard's views. Given the mobility of both settlers and frontier ministers during this period, it would not have been hard for even a relatively small group of "Kierkegaardians" to have a wide-ranging and deep impact on Scandinavian Midwestern immigrant communities. The initial insularity of the immigrant community would have reinforced this as well—and, interestingly enough, offered ways in which these ideas could have moved beyond the immediate immigrant group and into the culture of the small Midwestern town as a whole (Skårdal 166-170).

At first, the native languages created a sort of protective barrier around the immigrant community. If a group did not learn English, they were effectively cut off from the influence of American ideas and practices and could retain the older traditions. But as the immigrant community and church became dominated by English and "Americanism," communication could expand among ethnic groups. Skårdal points out that as the larger classifications of ethnicity declined, religious affiliations became increasingly important and even transgressed ethnic boundaries. Bille observed that Danes in particular quickly began to choose affiliations with Swedish or Norwegian churches, rather than Danish churches, because they sought congregations with similar theological commitments. With the change in language came a break, to some degree at least, with the focus of the religious service. Not only did the nostalgic element weaken, but also the church could begin to explore ideas and practices discovered through the new exchanges among different ethnic groups. Thus, the relatively rapid process of assimilation could offer the possibility of both preservation and dissemination of theological beliefs occurring at roughly the same time (Skårdal 184, 180-182; Bille 13-15).[9]

Perhaps the strongest evidence in Lawson's argument is his discovery of the "first known institutional response to Kierkegaard in the United States." Two professors, Nels Simonsen and Carl W. Schevenius, were teaching Kierkegaard as both literary figure and social theorist at least as early as 1885 at the Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois. The school, also known as "The Norwegian-Danish Theological School" after 1891, was only one of many native-language seminaries in the Midwest created as a "response in higher education to the Scandinavian immigration to the United States," according to Lawson. Other schools included Luther College in Wisconsin (founded in 1858); Augsburg Seminary, first of Wisconsin and later moved to Minnesota (1869); Red Wing Seminary, also in Minnesota (1850s); and the Swedish Methodist divinity school in Sandburg's own Galesburg (1868), which moved to Evanston in 1882), among at least a score of others arising during the same period throughout the upper Midwest. Further, at least two state schools in the Midwest were offering curricula in Scandinavian languages and literature in the latter nineteenth century. The University of Wisconsin started a program in 1869, while the University of Nebraska began its course offerings in 1887. The possibility of these schools teaching Kierkegaard's works to at least some extent seems quite strong. Taking all this into account, Lawson feels safe in asserting that "[t]here was, then, by the 1890s a gradual introduction of Kierkegaard's thought into the education of the ministry serving Scandinavian churches in the Middle West" ("Small Talk" 181-182; Nelson, I, 317-335; II, 75-83, 129-135).

Another crucial means of disseminating Kierkegaard's thought was the popularity of the works of Henrik Ibsen. Connection was made between Kierkegaard and Ibsen in the English-speaking world at least as early as 1899.[10] However, among Scandinavians—both at home and in America—the connection between the Norwegian playwright and the Danish philosopher had been realized much earlier. The same Georg Brandes who was denied the chance to lecture on Kierkegaard in Copenhagen was also mentor to Ibsen during his most formative years. Brandes saw early the influence of Kierkegaard on Ibsen, noting in an 1888 letter to Friedrich Nietzsche that "[i]ntellectually, [Ibsen] has been very dependent on Kierkegaard." Brandes and Ibsen remained in close contact for many years. Along with this, Brande's towering influence as a Scandinavian critic made his views almost commonplace in the European reading of Ibsen (Downs 134, 136-145; Kaufmann xv).

Ibsen was popular, both in Scandinavia and in America, from nearly the beginning of his career. Immigrant letters reveal that Ibsen's work was both well-known and popular enough among immigrants not only to warrant requests for expensive mailings of the author's works from the homelands, but the books themselves even received notice in American immigrant newspapers. This also suggests that his popularity—indirectly, at least—would have created in Ibsen's readers sympathy for Kierkegaardian perspectives. Howard V. Hong makes this connection even more overt in his own life. In the same interview where he discussed his first encounter with Kierkegaard's name, he reflects too on his first intellectual encounter with the Dane. In 1932, after re-reading two of Ibsen's earliest plays—*Peer Gynt* and *Brand*—Hong realized, "...I thought there might be some substance related to Kierkegaard, maybe no historical connection whatsoever, perhaps a kind of cultural dualism, that the same thing can appear independently in different places... (Zempel 62; Elbrønd-Bek 77).

Historian Harald Beyer went even further in 1952, claiming such a connection not only with Ibsen but also with the Norwegian people as a whole. In his *History of Norwegian Literature* (1952), Beyer claims Kierkegaard had an even greater influence on Norwegians than he did on his own Danish people. In the same article, author Paulus Svendsen notes that as early as 1918, Norwegian philosophers considered Kierkegaard and Ibsen as two of the most important—and most closely related—of Scandinavian thinkers (11).

Svendsen's study adds yet another element to the Norwegian connection between Ibsen and Kierkegaard. Norwegian classicist Henning Junghans was one of "seven critics from the floor" present at Kierkegaard's thesis defense on September 29, 1841. By 1846, Junghans had returned to Norway and published a reader of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish literature for the general reading public which contained an extract from *Stages on Life's Way*, even though it had been published only a few months earlier. Given the Norwegian reading public's knowledge of Kierkegaard, it is clear many would have seen through Ibsen's plays to the Kierkegaardian center of consciousness at work in them. Even a play as late as *An Enemy of the People* (1882) "could almost be subtitled 'Variations on a Theme by Kierkegaard,'" as philosopher Walter Kaufmann later noted (Svendsen 12; Kaufmann xv).

The great Ibsen scholar Halvdan Koht believed firmly in Kierkegaard's influence on the dramatist and argued his points persuasively in his biography of Ibsen (*Henrik Ibsen* [1928]). Koht went so far as to claim that Ibsen's *Brand* (1866) bears such striking resemblance to Kierkegaard's works (both philosophically and stylistically) that the dramatic poem actually contains "expressions which correspond exactly to Kierkegaard's.... Kierkegaard could well have put his signature to, and even written, what Ibsen has *Brand* say" Koht even suggested that *Brand* was "Kierkegaard put to verse" (cited in Svendsen 36). Some readers took this conjunction so seriously before Koht's time that they actually thought the character Brand was a portrait of Kierkegaard himself (Svendsen 34-37; Downs 83).

But elements of the historical moment of the turn-of-the-century American Midwest also offer ways in which these Kierkegaardian impulses could have moved into the "native" English-speaking groups of Midwestern towns. First, and perhaps most convincing, is Ibsen's popularity throughout America at this time. H.L. Mencken was pivotal in introducing to America the works of many European authors, including Ibsen, during his reign as co-editor of the *Smart Set* from 1914-1923. Midwestern writers like Floyd Dell, Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson (themselves children of Midwestern small towns) refer to Ibsen in their own fiction from the 'teens, using characters' interest in his works to signify intellectual searching and maturity. Further, some of Ibsen's works were performed in America for the first time in downtown Chicago under the direction of Anna Morgan and her literary group known as the Little Room. Much of this occurred during what Sherwood Anderson called the "Robin's Egg Renaissance" of Midwestern literature centered in Chicago in the late 'teens' and early 'twenties.' But this was only a late high-water mark of Ibsen's influence in the Midwest. Earlier, Hamlin Garland presented his own manifesto on American and Midwestern art, *Crumbling Idols* (1894), in which he devoted an entire chapter to the influence of Ibsen on Midwestern writers (*Twenties* 348, 118; Williams 155).

Garland begins his chapter with an important claim: "...[T]he works of Ibsen are coming to have great significance. No doubt there is a good deal of manufactured admiration current, but there is enough of genuine enthusiasm to make his ideas and works an issue [in the discussion of regional writing]. His significance is very great." Not only was Ibsen important in his influential use and development of realism (what Garland called "veritism"), but he offered a realism uniquely suited to the regions of America beyond the Anglo-saturated East. And as Garland's comments also indicate, the fact that people of the time were "manufacturing" interest in him only further reinforces claims about Ibsen's popularity (82-83).

Further, this veritism of "common realities" made Ibsen vitally important, not only in reforming the drama as a genre, but in affecting the lives of his works' audience members as well. For encountering Ibsen's work changes people, according to Garland. His work, like that of Kierkegaard, "is astoundingly direct, and then again it is subtly indirect—as in life." Abandoning traditional ideas of plot, Ibsen's plays are driven "entirely upon the characterization and the thought. The pursuit and not the end, has become (as in the [veritist] novel) the leading motive." Communicating directly with the existential experience of audience members like this—through indirect communication—is one of the hallmarks of Kierkegaardian communication. In fact, Garland's picture of Ibsen's mind is striking in its resemblance to a description of Kierkegaardian philosophy. Garland's description of the ways in which Ibsen creates indirect communication, stresses the unfinished nature of the lived moment, refuses systemic views of life, and attempts to transform his audience through the encounter with his work, reveals that this former Wisconsin farmer turned writer himself saw a Kierkegaardian dimension to Ibsen's work. Garland indeed offers a picture so striking in its similarity to Kierkegaard's methods and beliefs that one can see the philosopher's ideas already moving beyond the immigrant communities of the Midwest (*Idols* 81-84, 84, 86, 87-89).

Beyond the cross-cultural fertilization that occurred through the works of Ibsen, however, were the further cultural encounters taking place in the small towns of the Midwest. As Skårdal, Bille, and Hale already have noted, the insular immigrant communities of the Midwest gradually gave way to communities unified by religious beliefs and sharing a common English language. The process of Americanization went further, though, in the small town than one might expect. Unlike large metropolitan areas where an ethnic neighborhood could be sufficient unto itself with its own stores, community centers, schools and so on, the immigrant communities in small Midwestern towns often were forced to trade with people of different ethnic groups, to go to English-language schools, and in general, to open lines of communication with other immigrants and with the "native" American community. Frequently, these immigrant groups did not even have the luxury of their own neighborhoods. As Carl Sandburg noted of his childhood neighborhood, small towns often required cultural integration of immigrants, if they were to survive (Sandburg 194, 195, 198).

What has all this to do with Sören Kierkegaard? Kierkegaard's ideas shaped various viewpoints during this period of Scandinavian immigration, including those of the immigrant groups who specifically espoused the education and empowerment of villagers, peasants, and farmers. Relying on themselves in their resistance to the state church and in their wariness toward American ideologies, such groups would inevitably become collectivist in their politics and yet enforce standards of social conduct and interrelation that they felt had been lost in the rationalist churches of the time. This seemingly incoherent combination of leftist and rightist perspectives remains an aspect of Midwestern populism that academics have been unable to adequately understand. Kierkegaardian thought may be helpful in understanding this supposed schism within both populism and the Midwestern mind.

Further, Kierkegaardian philosophy, as the later existentialist movement realized, is a worldview suited to a time and place of the individual in isolation and culture in upheaval. *Angst* itself is a Kierkegaardian term describing the undefined dread or anxiety felt toward existence itself, and when one explores the cultural and personal upheaval present in the turn of the century Midwest, *angst* was neither an uncommon nor an irrational emotional response to the frontier's, or the isolated farm's, social desolation. Such views fit the Midwesterners, both immigrant and "native," of this period. Such views may help, too, to unlock some of the stranger Midwestern responses to the cultural changes in America and the world today.

But as these immigrants also knew, Kierkegaard was far from the radical individualist twentieth century existentialism portrays him to be. In fact, in his shorter religious discourses and his *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard argues passionately for a collectivist or communitarian political philosophy at odds with our contemporary views of the Kierkegaardian project. And at the very heart of Kierkegaard's world view is a perspective on memory and love that requires the individual to integrate into a community and to work toward its health and welfare. It is this Kierkegaard that found expression in the Midwest. Given all this, it becomes apparent, then, that a Kierkegaardian perspective could have survived and even thriven in the Midwest at the turn of the century and beyond.

Kierkegaard, in Danish, translates roughly as "the graveyard" or "the churchyard." It will be worth investigating now in more detail how this Midwestern Kierkegaard would appear and how his thought would play out in this adoptive homeland. His name already offers us clues: in unearthing the remains of Kierkegaardís influence on the Midwest, we may better understand the religious impulses in Midwestern culture and literature, and may better understand what it is that makes the Midwest a unique cultural identity yet today.

Concordia University, River Forest

NOTES

1. Philosophical historian Lewis A. Lawson notes a fascinating point about Kierkegaard studies: "Perhaps the only place in the English-speaking world where Kierkegaard's works were seriously discussed before 1900 was the Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois [now a part of Northwestern University]. There, as early as 1887, Professor N.E. Simonsen, who had received his graduate training at the University of Oslo, had his students read Kierkegaard both for content and style. But apparently no published recogni-

tion resulted from this study" (*Presence* vii). As we shall soon see, Lawson later expanded this claim, finding evidence of the teaching of Kierkegaard even two years earlier and by yet another Garrett instructor as well.

2. As nineteenth-century demographer John H. Bille pointed out, Danish and other Scandinavian ministers were not part of the higher social classes in the early immigrant Midwest,"most of them being farmers, mechanics, and common laborers, of a pious bent of mind" (Bille 19).
3. Although Handlin tends to focus on the "peasant" immigrant—small farmers and the poor of the Old World—his views also coincide for the most part with the more intellectual and higher-class dissenters who came to America at the same time, but from different homeland experiences.
4. Historian Frederick Hale describes Kierkegaard's influence as one of "three phenomena [that] fractured the seemingly monolithic religious landscape" of Denmark in the mid-nineteenth century. Hale notes that Kierkegaard's "widely-read series of pamphlets" known as *The Moment* launched "virulent attacks" on the notion of the state church and on the clergy (164).
5. Skårdal goes further in her analysis: her research reveals that writings of the time "reflected Scandinavian-American church life not as [a] harmonious whole growing out of a shared past, but as a clamorous battlefield where Norwegian fought Norwegian and Swede strove with Swede as bitterly as either national group ever opposed outsiders" (Skårdal 173).
6. The minister, Tuve Nilsson Hasselquist, an old man in Sandburg's youth, earlier "had earned his passage across the Atlantic by serving as pastor for some sixty Swedish emigrants." Hasselquist traveled throughout the Midwest, founding churches and schools. He also founded and edited the first Swedish-language newspaper in America, the *Hemlandet* ("Homeland") and was an early president and theology professor at Augustana College—all even though he was at odds with the church authorities in Sweden. Sandburg says, "He was a strong man and he may have been domineering, riding roughshod over others to win his points," yet Sandburg sees in him a man of conviction and power who changed the world for the better. Hasselquist, like Sommer of the same period, is not the exception, but more the representative of the first Scandinavian immigrant clergy in America (Sandburg 365-366).
7. Danish was the official written language of Norway long after its 1814 independence from Denmark, even after the introduction of the "New Norwegian." Rölvaag and other Norwegians then would have had little problem reading Kierkegaard or other Danish writers, even in their youth (Zempel 7-8).
8. Kierkegaard would see in this nostalgic desire an attempt at an aesthetic repetition of the experiences of the "Old World" communities—and therefore, a less than authentic religious impulse.
9. We see this in the different places in which Kierkegaard appears in immigrant church records. Lawson notes that we do possess clear historical indications that Kierkegaard was familiar to not only Danish, but also Swedish and Norwegian immigrant clergy of the later nineteenth century. And his influence expanded beyond the Lutheran congregations as well. Kierkegaard was quoted as early as November 15, 1890, in *Vidnesbyrdet*, a church journal of the Danish-Norwegian Methodist congregations and published in Oregon. Further, at least one of Kierkegaard's books was published by 1879 in a Swedish edition in Rock Island, Illinois, by the Lutheran Augustana Book Concern. Lawson also discovered a reference to an officer of the Norwegian Synod of the American Lutheran Church: "Theodore G. Tappert, in *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America*, 1840-1880, specifically offers a reservation about U.V. Koven [the officer]...who read Kierkegaard, but did not agree with what he read" As Tappert's title implies, this occurred before 1880 (cited in "Small Talk" 180-181).

10. Mabel Annie Stobart noted that "[i]n his poem *Brand* [*sic*] Ibsen has...clothed in dramatic drapery some of the tenets propounded in the neglected works of Kirkegaard [*sic*] ...For the religious philosophy of this Danish thinker contains none of the usual narcotics of philosophy or the opiates of religion. Truth, for Kirkegaard, lies in Subjectivity alone ..." (cited in *Presence* vii-viii [ellipses and parenthetical comment Lawson]
11. Beyer states, "His paradoxical idealism appealed to one of the deepest traits of the Norwegian character, the desire to make absolute claims, to see life from the viewpoint of 'either-or', the predilection for going the whole way, for carrying ideas to their logical and ethical conclusion" (cited in Svendsen 11).

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TRAVELING COMPANIONS

Etta C. Abrahams

Kenny Blake almost didn't stop for the hitchhiker. "Serial killer" flashed through his mind like a front-page headline when he first saw the guy at the Lexington entrance to I-95, and again as he slowed the minivan on the bend and passed him. Serial Killer wore dusty black Levi's, a torn black T-shirt embellished by a faded stencil, and Wellington boots. His mid-length, light brown hair surrounded a face hardened by too many years sticking his thumb out on super-highways and being rejected. The hiker looked like someone recently released from the county jail. What Kenny called "a hard case," out of synch with this sunny August morning in Massachusetts. Hard cases had no age—they could be anywhere from thirty-five to sixty, and they were usually younger than they looked. This hard case looked to be, like Kenny, somewhere in his forties.

Then Kenny saw the dog, a beagle-terrier mutt, he guessed, and had to stop. He admitted he was a sucker for domestic animals, especially dogs. Anyone got in his good favor merely by fact of pet ownership. The hitchhiker had the dog tucked up under his arm, and the dog's tail was wagging, a sign of contentment and trust. So even as Kenny knew he should listen to the alarm that first went off in his head—first response best response—he braked and watched in his rear-view mirror with a kind of anticipation as the man trotted up to the car with his brown and white bundle.

Kenny pressed the button that lowered the passenger window. "How far you fellas going?" he asked.

The traveler stuck his head in the window. Kenny smelled sour breath and old sweat even before he spoke. "Far as you'll take me," he answered, his hand already on the door-handle. "I'm heading up to Eastport, in Maine.

"Well, get in, then," Kenny said, releasing the door latch. "I'll have to let you off before that, down near Bangor, but you and your buddy there got yourself a ride at least some of the way." The man was in the van even before Kenny finished his speech. The dog jumped right into the back seat, as if he'd been trained to be there. If it hadn't been for the mutt, Kenny thought, he would have made some excuse about why he couldn't take the hiker.

The man slammed the door and stretched out with a long grunt of contentment. "Jesus, if feels good just to set a bit. Cushy ride, too." He reached into the breast pocket of his T-shirt (which Kenny now clearly saw said 'I'm not too drive to drunk tonight'), saw the 'no-smoking' card tuck on the dash, and reluctantly moved his hand away to his knee, where he drummed his fingers. The grimy, nicked fingers made Kenny uncomfortable, and he glanced away.

"What's your buddy's name back there?" Kenny asked. The dog was sitting, cutely, his black nose pressed to the window, looking out at passing cars. Pretty soon he'd curl up and fall asleep, Kenny thought, and that would be sweet too.

"Buddy," said the man quickly. "Mine's Hilton Webb, Jr., from Tennessee, Virginia, and other parts south and west and east and north. You can call me Hil, though." He reached back into his T-shirt pocket and pulled out a pack of gum, for which Kenny was thankful. "Want a piece?" he asked, shaking out a stick. "It's fresh."

"Thanks, Hil," Kenny said, taking the offered stick. "I don't usually chew—too many fillings" he laughed. "but somehow this morning I feel daring." Kenny thought it in his best interest to be polite. The gum *was* fresh and minty, sparking up his mouth, yet soft and warm like a loaf of bread, from the heat of Hil's body. "My name's Kenny Blake." he said. "From up near Black Bear Lake. And to tell you the truth, I never could resist a man with a dog. By *himself*, yes. But that dog of yours, well, he made it your lucky day today. Mine, too, I guess. I like the company."

"Yeah, well he seems to travel nice," Hil said nonchalantly. "What's your line, Kenny Blake from Black Bear Lake?" Hil asked. He had noticed the large black democases on the floor behind the front seats, Kenny guessed.

"Ladies' stuff, slips, gowns, panties, you know..." he trailed off. He didn't much like to talk about his work, and he certainly wasn't going to ask Hil what *his* line of work was. Breaking rocks *on* the chain-gang line, most likely.

"Oh, I know," Hil winked. "It must keep you pretty busy, pretty occupied," he leered, smacking his lips. "Mmmnh, *mmmnh*! Honey with the money." He chuckled.

"I can see I've got a poet on my hands here," Kenny responded, both annoyed and keyed up by Hil's too-familiar lewdness and amused by his country wit. He looked in the rear-view mirror and saw that Buddy had curled up tightly on the seat and was asleep, oblivious to their conversation. "A Humane Society member and a poet to boot."

A quick, angry look crossed Hil's face. "I'm not no fag poet," he snarled. "I hate fags! I do like dogs, though, especially hunters, and this one," he poked his thumb towards the back seat, "may prove to be a hunter yet."

Kenny felt his face flush and his heart pound. He hated the idea of killing any animal, and that a cute little dog like Buddy could be trained to kill another creature he found particularly offensive. Except for Buddy, he wished he hadn't stopped. He wanted this guy out, out, out. Instead, he made himself stammer, "I'm sorry."

The anger disappeared and Hil flashed a brilliant smile. "Don't think about it, man," he said. "I gotta admit, I do like to do some rhyming. Just for fun, though. Nothing serious."

"I understand," Kenny said. He reached over and turned on the radio, noticing his hand tremble. "I'll try to find some country," he said, pushing the search button.

Hil reached over and punched the power off. "Naah. That's ok," he said. "I want a little snooze now." He winked at Kenny and reclined the seat and folded his arms across his chest. He closed his eyes, but lightly, Kenny thought—too lightly to be really asleep—and Kenny was no longer just uncomfortable with his rider's presence: he was scared clear to his bones. He felt a rumbling in his bowels, an intestinal flu of fear and rage. Beside him, Hil, his profile carved like cold New Hampshire granite, pretended to snore. Kenny clenched his jaw.

In silence, they crossed Newburyport and onto the New Hampshire Turnpike for the short distance to the Maine border. Kenny, cramped from driving and stiff from holding himself in, needed to stop. He cleared his throat. "Hil," he whispered softly, then remembering Hil's macho assertiveness, he raised his voice. "Hey, Hil, man," he said. "I gotta take a piss and get some gas. Buddy probably needs a walk, too."

Hil sat up and stretched, releasing more acrid body odor. "Yeah, I guess," he said.

You gotta collar and leash stowed somewhere for Buddy there?" Kenny asked as he slowed and pulled into a rest area and restaurant just outside York. " There's a lot of traffic here." Buddy was awake now and aware of the change in the van's movement. He paced the back seat and whimpered.

"Well, to tell you the honest truth," Hil said, with a grin that was meant to be winning, but was neither that nor honest, "I haven't had him long enough."

"Oh?" said Kenny, tightening his hands on the steering wheel, knowing that he should have figured this out a while back. He turned the car way to the back of the rest area away from the other cars, and parked. "How long have you had Buddy?" He shifted into park and turned off the ignition. The car was very quiet, except for Buddy's whining.

"About since the middle of the night," Hil said, and opened the car door. "I kinda rescued him." He walked into a treed area and took a long leak. "Matter of fact, I just named him 'Buddy' when you picked us up," he said over his shoulder.

Buddy, or whatever his name was, was in the front seat now, and Kenny grabbed him just as he was about to fly out. "Well, I guess we just gotta watch the little guy," he said and carried Buddy, who was struggling to get down, about fifty feet from where Hil stood. "There you go, boy," he said, as the dog ran from bush to bush lifting his leg and finally squatting. As Kenny watched the pup scamper and sniff, he tapped his fingers against his teeth, thoughtfully. Finally, Kenny chased Buddy down and put him in the back seat, cracked the window open and locked the car, pocketing the keys.

"Hey! Where you going?" Hil said, running to catch up with him. He grabbed Kenny's shoulder, and once again Kenny felt the fear, and now the rage mixed in too, and the combination was exhilarating.

"It's my turn, now," Kenny said, shrugging Hil's hand off his shoulder. "I never got used to pissing out in the open, I guess." He strode in the direction of the restaurant. "I could do with a cup of coffee, too. You?" he asked, trying to stay polite.

Hil gave Kenny a speculative look. "Yeah," he finally said. "Sure. A cup of coffee, and maybe a piece of pie. Something solid?" He pulled out a cigarette and lit it by thumbing a match from a matchbook. A Marlboro Man, Kenny thought to himself. How appropriate. Side by side, they crossed the hot asphalt to the diner.

Kenny went into the washroom and wasn't surprised when Hil followed him. He was surprised when he came out and found Hil at the sink splashing water all over himself, his T-shirt crumpled on the counter. Long red marks and bruises stood out on Hil's astonishingly white skin. Before Kenny could turn his eyes away, Hil's caught his in the mirror. "Whatcha looking at?" he asked.

"Got some nasty damage there," Kenny answered, and walked out when another patron came in. He felt his body trembling. Probably just a bar fight, he thought. He did have a tendency to exaggerate, to see trouble when there wasn't much there.

Kenny went to the counter and ordered two coffees and a piece of apple pie to go.He paid the cashier and as he did so, his eyes were drawn to a magazine rack, and two stories headlined in the Globe: "K-9 KEY TO GAY KILLER," the first read. Under it, was a subheading: "Cops Warn Gays: Stay Inside!" His stomach heaving, Kenny bent to read the text:

> Boston—The fourth victim in what now seems a series of murders of gay men in the Boston area was discovered last night outside the Cabellero Tavern, a popular spot for gay men in the city's downtown section. The victim, a white male about thirty, was found strangled with his dog's leather leash in an alley behind the tavern. Police say the unidentified male struggled with his assailant, but declined further comment. They are searching for the victim's three-year old beagle-mixed breed, a neutered male named Trix, who friends say was always at the victim's side. Anyone with informa—

A hand clamped down on Kenny's shoulder. "Whatcha reading?" Hil asked, and in a quick gesture, reached down into his Wellington's and pulled out a hunting knife. Kenny saw its blade glinting in the afternoon sunlight, but nobody else seemed to notice. "Don't say a word," Hil said, grinning nastily and nodding as if having a normal conversation. "Here, honey," he said to the cashier, and plucked a dollar from the bills Kenny still gripped. "Keep the change," he waved, with the paper clutched in his hand as he poked Kenny in the ribs with the knife. "Move," he said, through clenched teeth. Edgily, Kenny headed out the door, Hil behind him.

The walk to the car was long, like the last mile, the last walk, like a dead man walking, Kenny thought. His legs trembled, he locked his knees, and he stumbled. "Hadda get nosey, didn't you?" Hil snarled as they reached the van. "Had to get yourself an education, hunh?" He reached into Kenny's back pocket and pulled out the car keys. Inside, Buddy/Trix was jumping for joy and pawing at the window.

"I don't know what you mean," Kenny said, lamely. "I just started to read the paper and then you came."

"Aah, shut up and get in the car. You got some driving to do." Hil pushed him against the van, and opened the door and shoved Kenny inside. He went to the other side, got in, and shoved the key in the ignition. "Don't do anything stupid," he said. "You'll live longer. Not much longer, but longer nevertheless." He laughed.

Kenny turned the key and backed the van out of its slot. He glanced at the gas gauge—he still had half a tank, no opening there. He wanted to say all those things his old t.v. heroes said: "You'll never get away with this," "The police know where I am," "My wife is waiting for a call," "Look behind you," but he knew none of these would work.

Kenny eased onto the highway again. He needed time to think, and as long as he was moving at 65 miles an hour, he didn't think Hil would do anything to endanger his own life. Twenty miles passed in silence. "So tell me," he finally said, making his voice quiver, "you the one who really killed all those guys like the story says?"

He sensed Hil tense beside him "Not guys, asshole. Faggots. Faggots are maggots," he chanted.

"Oh, yeah. That's right. I forgot," Kenny said. "You hate gay men. Why you hate 'em so much?" He felt his own hatred flowing.

Hil jabbed him in the ribs with his elbow. "Don't give me psycho-bullshit," he said. "It's obvious, and anyone who doesn't hate them is a sick-o. You a sick-o?"

"Probably," Kenny said. Then he thought of the story in the paper, the part he was able to read, and the other headline next to it he hadn't gotten to. He started to laugh.

"What's so funny, Sick-o?" Hil asked. "You better watch it, you know."

"A private joke," Kenny replied. He really was beginning to feel good, like his old self. He looked at Hil. "It's just that—oh, never mind, you'd probably just get madder." He continued to snicker, though.

"Out with it—pull over somewhere," Hil snarled.

"I can't do that right now, Hil," Kenny said. "We're in Portland traffic. I will as soon as I can." He scanned the highway for rest areas. "O.K., Hil. Here's the point. Look at the headline in the paper. Look at it and think about it." Kenny jerked his head towards the paper folded up between them.

Hil looked at Kenny suspiciously. "I know what it says," he said. "I did it. I know what it's about." But he picked up the paper and unfolded it and began to read. When he was done, he looked at Kenny, who was still grinning. "All right, I read it. So what?"

"Read the headline again, Hilton," Kenny said, using Hil's full name, mockingly, for the first time. He was shaking inside as he baited him, but it was his only chance. He watched Hil read the story again. His reaction was the same. Thick, Kenny thought. Stupid.

"I don't get it," Hil said. "There's nothing wrong with this story." He threw the paper back down on the seat.

Kenny saw a rest area and coasted into it. There was no one in it but the two of them and two outhouses, one marked Men, the other marked Women. Buddy/Trix got all excited in the back seat again. "Shut up," Hil screamed at him. Kenny winced.

Kenny picked up the paper. "Well, here we are, Hil," he said. "Now I want you to look at this and tell me, Hil, are you gay? It does say that they're looking for a gay killer."

Hil read the headline, this time with Kenny's twist on it: "K-9 KEY TO GAY KILLER." Kenny watched Hil begin to flush. "Why those assholes," he screamed. "They can't even write!" He threw down the paper in a rage.

"That's what I've been saying for years," Kenny said. Just look at what they did to the story next to yours—to my story." He picked up the paper and smoothed it out for Hil.

Hil picked it up and read it through: "COPS HUNT WOMAN KILLER." He looked at Kenny. "Whaddya mean, your story?" he asked, confused. "You some kind of psycho? You kill women?"

Kenny laughed. "No, Hilton. That's precisely my point. I don't kill women, and I'm not a woman, either."

"Then what do you mean? Huh? Why is it your story?" Hil jabbed at Kenny, but Kenny was ready for him. He grabbed Hil's wrist at the same time that Hil jabbed, and twisted it until Hil yelped in pain and dropped the knife. Kenny gave Hil's wrist one last twist and heard bone snap. Hil screamed and grasped his wrist, which was beginning to swell.

"Out of the car, it's my turn now," Kenny said, opening his door and yanking Hil across the front seat with him. He grabbed Hil by the back of his shirt and marched him into the outhouse marked "Women." "This one is ours, Hilton," he said.

Hil's confusion was apparent. "Hey. I don't know what you're talking about," he said, unsuccessfully trying to twist around. "Just leave me here, and I'll leave you alone."

Kenny sighed. "I wish I could do that, Hilton. I wish I could leave everyone alone. But you see, you people won't leave us alone. You know "us," don't you, Hilton? Us faggots. Us sick-os?" He poked Hil's neck with the tip of the blade. Hil winced. A trickle of blood appeared.

"Nice of you to sharpen this for me, Hilton," Kenny said. "Let me tell you some more about my line. Remember, earlier today, you asked me about my ladies' line?" He poked Hil again, with the knife tip, to remind him.

"Yeah," Hil said, sullenly.

"Well, what I do, Hilton, is wear the line myself." Hil looked up, suspicious. "That's right, Hilton. I dress up like a woman. Wig, make-up, even panties. The whole thing. Surprised?" Kenny tickled Hil under the chin with the knife. Hil nodded, yes.

"You see, the headline said "Woman Killer.' They got it wrong with me, too. Just like they got you wrong, Hilton. I only dress like a woman. And me, when I'm all dolled up, when I'm looking like—how did you put it so quaintly?—'honey with the money,' I think. When I'm looking like that, I go up to some big bruiser, some fag-hating, gay-bashing, macho man—like yourself, for instance, Hilton—and I snuggle up to him and cuddle with him and even touch him—like this, Hilton— and then, when he's just getting all turned on, I take out a knife, similar to, but smaller than the one I'm going to use here, Hilton, and, with a slashing motion, Kenny ripped Hil open from his navel to his neck. "It's bye-bye, Hilton Webb, Junior. Or whoever you are." He watched with a smile as Hil gurgled, crumbled, glazed and expired on the outhouse floor.

Kenny thought about the final irony of getting one of his costumes out of his van, dressing up in it. That way, in case anyone saw him, there'd be another 'Woman Killer' headline. It was an amusing idea, but too dangerous. Already they'd been alone in the rest area too long—the odds of someone not stopping here, so close to suppertime were not in his favor.

He walked out to the van where Buddy/Trix was frantically yelping. "Hey, it's ok, Buddy-boy," Kenny said, getting in and letting the little mutt lick his ear and neck. "We'll stop down the road and get you a burger and some water and maybe even a collar and a leash, if they have them there. Then tonight, up at Bear Lake, we'll give you a bed and a name—a new name for your new life." He scratched the pup's ears, and the dog calmed down and curled up on the seat again. Kenny smiled and started the engine. It was good to have some company on the road.

Michigan State University

THE EFFECT OF CONSUMER CAPITALISM ON MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE IN FULLER'S *CLIFF DWELLERS* AND *WITH THE PROCESSION*

KEVIN W. JETT

By the late 19th century, rapid social change resulting from competitive capitalism, immigration, industrialization, and expanding urbanization had created an unstable and uncertain environment for a pre-Civil War middle-class accustomed to a more conservative, genteel temperament. Embracing Jeffersonian republicanism, evangelical virtues, frugality, self-sufficiency, and free labor, this business-minded bourgeoisie espoused an old-fashioned individualism. They sought respectability through the gradual accumulation of wealth and property, and public recognition through finely cultivated social codes and mannerisms.

Of the genteel class, Alexis De Tocqueville once remarked 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" (129). Nevertheless, locked into a producer-ethic mentality and the desire for material success through hard work and honest business ethics, the established middle-class found itself at a loss to understand its children, who formed the core of 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. To survive, they constructed a consumer-oriented society and reconfigured their parents' cultural value system to include excessive ambition, pecuniary consumption, pretentious socializing, as well as combative and sometimes amoral business practices. In other words, as Stuart Ewen posits, the "individualism which had been at the heart of liberal bourgeois thought throughout the preceding century and a half, had turned rancid, had become the core of uncertainty and social degeneration" (99). Alan Trachtenberg agrees and best 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. (145)

The acquisition of impractical and luxurious commodities became a means by which the new bourgeoisie could feel its self-importance. If one failed economically to reach the affluent classes, then the purchasing of luxurious goods and living beyond one's means at least gave the illusion of having 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; the money value as the predominant measure of all value in society" (3). The rise of big business, department stores, and advertising in the 1870s also contributed greatly to the new consumer culture. Rachel Bowlby notes how "people could now come and go, to look and dream, perchance to buy, and shopping became a new bourgeois leisure activity—a way of pleasantly passing the time, like going to a play or visiting a museum" (4). Furthermore, just as industry produced standardized goods, Ewen points out that 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 (84).

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. In particular, Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* demonstrates the moral degradation of the rising middle-class, criticizes those who only channel their energies into becoming wealthy and socially prominent, and more importantly, reaffirms genteel notions of morality.

Amy Kaplan, in a rather important study of American Realism, notes that consumption, especially 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 (147). Kaplan 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. But to take Kaplan's point one step further, I argue that consumerism in the late 19th century paved the way for a 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 face 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). From this, he discovers how consumption had become a means by which both the old and new bourgeois could address feelings of class inequality. 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 and upper classes to emulate one another materially as a way to satisfy superiority and egotistical concerns. In fact, one Fuller scholar, Bernard Bowron, claims that "Veblen could have taught Fuller nothing about the mechanisms of conspicuous consumption" (135).

Fuller experienced Chicago's endless energy, its industrial force, and its tremendous economic growth between 1880 and 1900. Such rapid economic growth made money a primary concern for the people of Chicago and contributed greatly to the firm divisions in that city's class structures. In short, social climbing characterized Chicago society because economic opportunity was abundant if one was willing to forego social mores.[1] 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 a 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. (83)

Fuller understood that the new middle-class could not fully shed the skin of the preceding generation and often vacillated between genteel standards of behavior and the social conventions of a new and growing industrial culture. Bowron notes that Fuller himself could not escape his parent's "Old Settler" virtues, for he "never forgot their essential humanity" and "never fully transcended the limitations of their ideas". (6) The old bourgeoisie, for Fuller, did not simply disappear; its values adapted to meet the demands of consumer capitalism. Social historian Burton Bledstein shares the same insight and 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" (55).

Fuller's first novel about Chicago, *Cliff Dwellers*, critiques middle-class social climbing and illustrates the results of 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 to climb the social ladder for the sake of his wife Jessie. 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" (50). George, like Fuller, is disgusted with the new breed of businessmen who carelessly disregard culture for pecuniary interests and self-advertising. Nonetheless, both realize that, in the Industrial Age, wealth provides an opportunity to achieve aesthetic goals—whether in music, art, or literature. As a result, we have part of the reason why George marries Jessie Bradley.

George's marriage to Jessie is an attempt to adjust to the current tide of consumerism, but his salary as a young executive at the Underground bank simply cannot support his wife's extravagant spending. Thus, he eventually resorts to 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" (47). Uncertain where his genteel upbringing and its value system fits into modern society and hoping to impress Jessie, Ogden allows himself to enter into social competition with Arthur Ingles, the president of his bank and a man whom he has little chance of matching 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 mobility around him than others, but, in the end, he ignores this insight and shuns those who might ruin his public image and spoil his chance at social prominence:

> 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" (75). Ogden's decision to disregard Abbie and marry Jessie could also be attributed to his genteel virtues since he does admire Jessie's parents for their "Old Settler" background.

After Ogden is caught stealing money from the bank and Jessie dies, he loses his fortune and what social position he has established, but he does retain enough self-awareness and self-knowledge to understand what has happened to him. 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 the Ingles family, especially Cecilia:

> 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 learns that success in the Industrial Age depends upon accepting the modern consumer society, but, more importantly, he realizes that he does not necessarily have to abide by its every convention. Despite foregoing his traditional values in his destructive marriage to Jessie, he regains his gentility in his marriage to Abbie.

Cornelia McNabb and Eugene McDowell best represent middle-class social strivings in the novel, but the difference between them lies in Cornelia's retention of some older middle-class values and McDowells' 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 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 Ingles. She has virtually memorized day-by-day accounts of the their social activities from the society section in the newspapers:

> But there's Mrs. Arthur J. Ingles, three-hundred-and 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 get a glimpse of Cornelia's motivations for seeking social mobility. She desires social prestige, materialism, and self-importance, even if it means sacrificing her individuality for the lifestyle and culture of a group of people she has never met.[2]

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 statement, Cornelia convinces herself that wearing such expensive objects is her right since she has maintained a genteel hard work ethic. Later, when Cornelia rises to the position of secretary in 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 Ewen's observation that the mass production of low-priced goods that imitated high-priced merchandise was common during the Industrial Age (94), 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, her commodified self-display is a means to feel a sense of equality with the affluent classes above her.

Moreover, Cornelia accepts advice from a minor figure, 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" (351). Looking to better herself and feel socially significant, Cornelia imitates the Ingles's 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 perseverance, frugality, and self-sufficiency that we find in Cornelia the waitress have given way to Cornelia the leisure class socialite.

Despite her desire for social mobility and her general acceptance of Cecilia's ostentatious circle of friends, she still retains a certain amount of genteel virtue. For instance, she takes pity on Abbie and her relationship with Erastus Brainard's ostracized son, Marcus. Cornelia could very easily have told Erastus of Abbie's secret meetings with Marcus to somehow advance socially, but she chooses not to.[3] She is also rather daring in her condemnation of Erastus for his cruelty to his daughter Mary, who married a poor man against his wishes. Though she succumbs to her desire for materialism and social prestige, Cornelia keeps her moral integrity and sense of loyalty intact. She negotiates successfully her old, middle-class 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 virus that is the new age of consumerism and affectation has so infected 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 thinks 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 relationship with Ogden, but her dwelling on such unimportant trivialities and her desire 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 sells her soul to the new consumer age.

Her death symbolizes a lack of substance in her character. Once one strips away the thin veneer of surface appearances and false images of wealth, 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 trembles weakly and her wrist "fluttered with a pitiful palpitation" (272), thus demonstrating how severely her allegiance to materialism and the emulation of the wealthy has damaged her vitality.

Her 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, genteel upbringing, Jessie lacks a sound moral conviction because she does. In fact, the second half of the book chronicles her irresponsibility as mother and as a wife. Her moral downfall climaxes when she crosses her own mother off of her list of guests at a dinner party; it is a gesture that reinforces her outright rejection of the older middle-class because it does not fit the pretentious standards of Cecilia's social circle. In short, Jessie Bradley expresses Fuller's warning to the new middle-class if they refuse to integrate those virtuous qualities of their genteel predecessors.

Fuller's second and most well known novel on Chicago society, *With the Procession*, also investigates the conflict between the pre-Civil War middle-class and the consumer-oriented middle-class of the Industrial Age. David Marshall and his wife Eliza represent the frugal, self-sufficient, conservative, and conventional genteel class of the past. 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' reliance on the new consumer age and the opinions of its affluent classes promotes 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 her help in promoting her sister 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. (50)

Her discussion of the library suggests her 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 neglects her genteel soul. The same can be said of her knowledge of art. She can recognize the genre from which a work originated, but outside of these surface realities, she knows very little. G. Thomas Couser in his "Art in Chicago: Fuller's *With the Procession*" assesses Sue Bates' view of art "as not so different from David Marshall's, for they both see art as the adornment or symbol of economic success" (33). Having such expensive commodities simply keeps her at the front of the procession, something she clings to at all costs and freely admits to: "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). Jane is captivated by Mrs. Bates" extravagant home, 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 on Mrs. Bates. In a cramped, dingy corner of her house is a small room containing antiquated furniture, old-time wallpaper, a shabby writing desk, a small piano littered with sheet music, and a cheaply-made book shelve containing well-worn books. Though Mrs. Bates has accepted Chicago's new social demands, it is here 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 Mrs. Bates' house enclose the small room representing her "Old Settler" roots and are thus symbolic of how the shallow public image she must maintain to stay with the procession has imprisoned her genteel ideals. 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 to govern her choice of flowers to decorate her veranda, claiming that because of her position in society it cannot be helped. As John Pilkington summarizes, "in Susan Bates, we see that Chicago has elevated external forms over the inner growth of the individual" (104). Nonetheless, Mrs. Bates survives because she never completely rejects her genteel past, as indicated by her preservation of the "Old Settler" room; instead, she learns to acclimate to the new industrial climate, something David Marshall has not learned 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 in this room and draw checks, and be told just how much to draw them for, too. (131)

Obviously, Marshall is a practical man, but here, he simply cannot accept the artificial and unproductive social conventions of the new middle-class. On the other hand, his daughters, Jane and Rosy, feel that the emulation of those members in the procession is necessary and vital to the family's survival. Out of love for Jane, he agrees to certain adjustments in his lifestyle to accommodate her. Unfortunately, in doing so, he destroys himself.

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). When the time comes to deliver his speech, Marshall elects not to be pretentious and contrived in the reading of his essay and, instead, simpy 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. Second, Fuller 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 home complete with all the latest architectural designs. The motivation to leave their old home, which, like Susan Bates' 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, Rogers' 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 Mrs. Bates. Marshall never possessed the financial stability or will to accept the new class structure and cultural changes in Chicago.

Marshall's siblings, on the other hand, have adapted to the social changes and, for the most part, can at least survive. Truesdale, Marshall's second son, has benefitted from his father's fortune and become spoiled in the process. After coming home from Europe, where he learned how to paint, he spends much of his time ducking his father's business and devoting 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 some aspects of her personality, 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 (8). Truesdale's capricious doctoring of the portrait also resembles the typical use of art in the advertisement arena, where beautiful images were manipulated to sell merchandise. Since Truesdale hopes to sell his artwork, he must conform to consumer demands—which are ostentatious and superficial. Eventually, however, Truesdale becomes so disillusioned with Chicago's elite endorsing this 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 to do 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 that that for a good six months she had bent all her own endeavors? She tried now to make triumph seem as glorious as it should, but she could not feel that she was succeeding" (623). 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 then veneer of their lowly origins. (92)

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.[4]

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 growth and urbanization of Chicago and the other hoping to solidify its new consumer-oriented values. Those who elected to abandon completely their past such as Jessie Bradley and those who remain strictly within the old middle-class stock 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. 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).
2. 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 ascendancy are dependent upon how well she displays herself publicly in dress and 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 her 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 came from views her (90).
3. 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.
4. 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.

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THE AMBIGUITIES OF THE *ESCAPE* THEME IN MIDWESTERN LITERATURE 1918-1934

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The realistic movement of new writing in the early 1920s broke with the tradition which had depicted life in the country and on the farm as idyllic and harmonious. Carl Van Doren coined the term "revolt from the village," which was soon applied to numerous books appearing in the late 1910s and in the 1920s, often with settings in the Middle West. In particular the literature dealing with this region has been described as a literature of protest and revolt. John T. Flanagan, for instance, looks upon Middle Western writers as primarily protesters and rebels, for whom the farm, the small town, and the city have in turn become the object of violent attacks. Although he is aware of similar protests elsewhere in the country, he emphasizes that

> it is significant that in the Middle West, frequently referred to as a cradle of smugness and isolationism, there has been for five decades a strong feeling of discontent, an upsurge of cynicism and scorn for the recognized values which, translated into literary terms, has resulted in outstanding fiction. (157)

The relative comfort and prosperity which characterized the 1920s also led to a growing materialistic orientation, a development resulting in the change of old values or even their collapse. in *Exile's Return* Malcolm Cowley outlines a society of people involved in the pursuit of automobiles, radios, vacuum cleaners etc, a society in which people found less and less time for books and art. This society increasingly estranged anyone who was interested in the arts and education. Writers who did not understand the nature of this society tried, in Cowley's words,

> to exorcise it by giving it names—it was the stupidity of the crowd, it was hurry and haste, it was Mass Production, Babbitry, Our Business Civilization; or perhaps it was the Machine, which had

> been developed to satisfy man's needs, but which was now controlling those needs and forcing its standardized products upon us by means of omnipresent advertising and omnipresent vulgarity—the Voice of the Machine, the Tyranny of the Mob. The same social mechanism that fed and clothed the body was starving the emotions, was closing every path towards creativeness and self-expression. (217)

Qualities usually associated with earlier pioneer communities, like helpfulness, concern for other people, and a general good will, had been superseded by insensitivity, heartlessness, and egotism. In the midst of pastoral and idyllic surroundings with their promises of beauty and personal satisfaction, there is also the experience of the fundamental human lot of loneliness, suffering, and defeat. External forces such as new-fangled ideas, the challenge of traditional religion, the movement to the city, the emergence of the new woman as well as internal characteristics, like greed, insensitivity, and lack of love, attack and weaken the stable and settled Midwestern community and its core unit: the family. All of these elements are factors that help create a need to escape a cramping environment, where the sense of belonging is lacking or at least ambiguous. Clearly enough, the Middle West had become in Frederick Hoffman's words "a metaphor of abuse" (369), signifying materialism, provincialism, spiritual poverty, and hypocrisy, a target for protest and revolt.

Looking at different literary works in the Midwest between 1918 and 1934, it is obvious that escape is a characteristic feature. However, this is an ambiguous term in the sense that an escape may be an escape of no return or it may be conclusive or inconclusive implying total or partial repudiation. There is no such thing as an easy escape since haunting and spellbinding images of the past not infrequently perturb the mind of even the most resolute escaper. I have found works by Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, Floyd Dell, Sinclair Lewis, Ruth Suckow, and Glenway Wescott relevant for my approach. Some of the works of Suckow and Wescott are particularly illustrative of the various implications of the escape theme and warrant a more detailed consideration of these two writers.

In Willa Cather's *One of Ours* (1922) Claude Wheeler is sent against his will to a denominational college, which he finds strait-laced and narrow-minded and which cannot at all satisfy his needs for culture and exchange of ideas. Certainly these needs cannot be met on the farm either, which is successfully run by his domineering father, who has never been able to sympathize with his son's cultural interests. But Claude finds an outlet for this yearning in his association with the Erlichs, who expose him to European and German culture. This relationship is terminated when his father acquires another farm and expects Claude to run the family farm.

The estrangement between father and son is heightened by what Claude perceives to be his father's unrestrained materialism and never-ending business deals. Claude's alienation from his environment is further intensified when he enters into a marriage where his wife turns out to be a religious fanatic, more interested in church and prohibition work than in her husband. Even though his father's materialistic outlook is alien to Claude, his brother Bayliss is the epitome of mindless materialism and senseless greed making him even advise Bayliss's girlfriend not to marry him. All these factors combine to drive Claude to enlist in the army and go to war. Although his experiences in the war are heart-wrenching "[n]o battlefield or shattered country he had seen was as ugly as this world would be if men like his brother Bayliss controlled it altogether. Until the war broke out, he had supposed they did control it; his boyhood and been clouded and enervated by that belief" (419).

Claude's escape is well-considered and irrevocable. On the ship taking the soldiers to France there are death, sickness, and burials but, nevertheless, "life had never seemed so tempting to him" (311). He leaves without any regret but when he leaves, he "[carries] the whole countryside in his mind, meaning more to him than it ever had before" (255). This deep attachment to the soil and the countryside of the native region is a recurring feature in most of the works of this period. Instead of a life choking him, Claude finds solidarity and freedom among his comrades in the army. His new contacts, both in the army and among the French, open up new vistas to him, which his untimely death in battle prevents him from exploring.

In Ruth Suckow's *The Odyssey of a Nice Girl* (1925) Rich Schoessel's life takes a direction similar to Claude's Here the limiting and hampering marriage that Rich enters into with Eva fits well into the pattern of personal discontent so usual in much of the period's fiction. On the surface, there is nothing wrong. Whenever Marjorie, Rich's sister, goes to visit them she is confronted with the false facade of family unity and amity upheld by Eva. But Suckow leaves the reader in no doubt about the bitterness and dissatisfaction of the relationship. Their life together is totally devoid of understanding, sympathy, and mutuality, and, on one occasion in particular, the extent of their estrangement becomes clear to Marjorie. Suckow draws a contrastive and deceptively idyllic scene in early spring. There is a tree "coming into bud," there is fresh new grass "showing under the weeds" and the hills beyond the town are covered "with soft, pale green, trees in delicate spring foliage poised lightly on the slopes" (290). But Marjorie is sensitive to the underlying tension and hopelessness of the situation. Rich's face is "thin, with his old freckles, but with the restless eyes, a bitterness in the set of the lips, sharply drawn lines of dissatisfaction" (290-91). She recognizes that Rich "made no pretense of any illusions now. It was plain that he had separated his mental life completely from Eva's, and expected nothing from her" (291). Further evidence of Rich's disillusion and alienation in marriage and in life is his refusal to claim exemption from military service. Though everyone interprets this as an act of patriotism Marjorie sees through Rich's ulterior motives:

> Was she the only one who knew that it was not "patriotism" at all—that Rich was going because it gave him the chance at last to break routine, to indulge that old adventurous youth that had been early thwarted, turned aside; conscious, like herself, of qualities that he had never used, and seizing this mad chance to bring them to some kind of fruition? (296)

The fruition of Rich's dream, however, is only very transitory and ends with his death in one of the military camps.

These escapes of no return imply total rejection of their Midwestern background, since the escapers do not live to prove otherwise. But there are also conclusive escapes where the escapers live or will live out their lives in complete condemnation of their origin and stay the course, although on occasion haunted by memories of their past. Although Glenway Wescott's writings, by and large, bear out a more final dissociation from his native region, Wisconsin, a careful study of this works of the 1920s also makes clear the hold that the past exerts. Biographical facts of Wescott's life in the 1920s also demonstrate that there is no such thing as an easy severance of ties with family and region. Moving about in America and between America and Europe makes up the first half of Wescott's 1920s and then the narrative follows his eight-year period of expatriation in Europe, mainly France. This is a long period which, however, is interspersed with a number of visits to Wisconsin and his family.

In Wescott's *The Grandmothers* (1927) the underlying theme and framework is pioneering and its consequences emerging in the story that Alwyn Tower tells about his big and sprawling family. Pioneering in itself is a concept which implies both escape and the urge to seek something new and uncharted. Inevitably, what comes of pioneering is either the realization or the shattering of hopes, dreams, and efforts. As Alwyn records the history of the Tower family, their origin seems to have bred "a composite character" that may not have been as suited for or adapted to pioneering life as most other pioneers. There is a sense of frailty, refinement, and impracticality about them that to some extent disqualifies them as pioneers. The wrong choices, the wrong decisions, aborted plans, everything predisposes them to disappointment and an obsession with a "grievance," that was their "birthright."

They view life as unjust and unfair, a kind of inheritance which only leads to failed, impoverished and frustrated lives or new departures in the hope of success and reward. Alwyn's grandfather, Henry Tower, is encouraged by his family to write the story of his life. What comes out of his pen is not the full story of one generation of pioneers but enough to tell of hardships, deprivations, and thwarted hopes. Later generations, filled with ambivalence and unfulfilled longing , were to reverse the westward trek in order to escape a hampering and defeating environment and seek for self-realization and fulfillment in places their ancestors had wished to escape. In summing up his grandfather's position, Alwyn at the same time anticipates the movement of his own generation back East:

> Meanwhile the West, that point of the compass which had glittered with hope like a star, came to resemble the East—the light went out of it. Many years of life had been allotted him, and with them had also been allotted hard work and poverty. Every hope had a rendezvous with disappointment. (46)

In describing the various members of both his paternal and maternal family Wescott manages to display a vast and variegated panoply of characters and their reactions to what constituted life in the second half of the 19th century. However, from complicated, even embittered, generational and intergenerational relations there seems to emerge one common denominator: the unrest, discontent, and itchiness, not only of the time, but also and primarily of his family. But this state also anticipates the unrest, discontent, and itchiness that will characterize the generations of the first few decades of the next century.

Most of the relatives that Alwyn grew up with are part of a pattern of movement, departures, and returns. All the divergent and conflicting forces and traits of the Tower character seem to have found their richest expression in Evan, the youngest of Henry Tower's sons and Alwyn's uncle. At odds with his father, Evan finds in his Uncle Leander an initiator who awakens in him senses he is only dimly aware of. Although Evan is young, the Tower birthright of grievance has already touched him making him envy Leander "his distress and disappointment—they were experience at least; and there was no place for them in present day Wisconsin so far as he could see" (209). What he dreams of attaining is the same chance to get away that his older brother Jim has had. Feeling a closer relationship with the figures of the past that Leander had acquainted him with than with his own brothers, Evan "felt himself drawn, as a lover to a series of rendezvous, toward the places where his own life must have been waiting for him, though he had no idea where they were and scarcely cared what it was to be" (209).

The first stage in Evan's attempt to find out what and where life is, is characterized not only by his decision to enlist in the army to fight in the Spanish war but also by his subsequent desertion making him an outlaw. Succumbing to the seduction of culture they had come to destroy, Evan opens his senses to all the beauty and the mystery that he encounters. Although Wisconsin is eclipsed by new feelings of affinity and belonging, Evan is also held back by his American background and upbringing.

> Out of the small churches came gusts of incense, mystery, and muttering—God was not worshiped like that in Wisconsin. He wanted to steal inside them and lose himself in the music which laughed and cried at the same time; but he could not overcome his timidity, and in fact was half ashamed of being a foreigner and a Protestant. (213)

Being a deserter he has to stay out of the army's way and he signs on a ship bound for London. But although Evan has come the farthest of the Tower characters in dissociating himself from roots, family, and Wisconsin, an awareness of the irreversibility of the direction his ambitions have taken him comes to the fore in painful reminiscences in which even his father assumes redeeming qualities. On the slow journey to Europe

> a sharp sadness took possession of him. Wisconsin with its crops of every color, its hickory-nut trees, its white sunrises and red sunsets —he would never see them again; no one would love him so faithfully, as even his hard father had done. But it was something more than homesickness which hurt him; it was the keenest of regrets, that of a young man who has made his choice, for the infinite possibilities he has given up, when at last it is too late to change his mind. (222)

Evan's second desertion occurs in London when he jumps a ship bound for Rio. What had motivated him so far was his quest for a place of belonging and affinity, a quest which is abandoned in London when he realizes that crossing the boundaries of Brazil would not help him attain that goal. In London he becomes aware of a new sense of solidarity and togetherness with all the masses of derelicts and outcasts on the streets. National thinking and boundaries are suspended, and Evan looks upon these vagrants as his new "countrymen," with whom he shares a new and abstract "fatherland," which he feels is a state of disgrace. But when his days of misery and suffering become too acute, even this resolution of his quest cannot stop him from being haunted by images and memories of Wisconsin, a benchmark of the extent of his comedown. "He measured his misery by the dreams which ravished him in the damp, sagging bed—dreams of baking day in Wisconsin, of oranges and apples, of trumpets which sounded like small, southern roosters and woke him up" (227).

However, Evan whose "only ambition was to escape the ambitions which others might have for him and oblige him to fulfill" (231) falls in love, marries, and lets himself be persuaded to go back, first to Mexico City and then to New Mexico where he becomes a successful rancher. What is problematic about this is that being a deserter and still an outlaw he has to take "leave of himself" and live under an assumed name, a stranger in his own country.

When after many years Evan attempts a reconciliation with his family, the outcome can hardly be termed a success. Although his mother is anxious to make his visit as nice as possible, his brother Ralph's resentment at having been let down by both brothers is apparent and his stubborn, principled father refuses to acknowledge his errant son.

In *The Folks* (1934), Ruth Suckow's crowning achievement, Suckow pursues the theme of escape, flight and quest the furthest. Here Fred and Annie Ferguson lead an ostensibly happy and successful family life with their children. the underlying framework is the contrast between the traditional stable Midwestern home and a growing sense of homelessness, between content and discontent, continuity and change. The ensuing conflicts and differences of opinion result in a split and divided family.

Margaret is the one of all Suckow's characters who is most acutely out of tune with family and environment. Even as a child she always thought that "her real home had never been this house, or anywhere in Belmond, but in some place that she had read of, or dreamed of" (32). Her relationship with her parents, in her childhood and adolescence, is characterized by an inability to communicate, by misunderstandings and mutual accusations. Margaret's traits of rebellion and independence estrange her from her family and her friends, often in deliberate actions of setting herself apart from her environment. The sense of loneliness and unfair treatment that constantly haunts her leads her to take refuge and comfort in dreams and in stories in which she is the outstanding star. Her attitude becomes increasingly uncompromising and averse towards her home and background. Unlike her brother Carl who also shares these feelings, she does not relent in her dislike for the Middle West. There is no hesitation or irresolution about her decision to leave her home behind her, because she realizes the consequences if she were to stay. "As long as she stayed with the folks in Belmond, she could be nothing but a kind of shadow, creeping resentfully about the edges of things, or staying apart in frozen agony—never able to get into the open" (332).

To Margaret the integrity of family life amounts to virtually nothing and she questions the prevalent codified and rigorous ethics of the family. What Margaret objects to in her home is not only what she perceives as the typically middle-class vices of falsity and insincerity, but also the attendant Ferguson virtues of thrift, hard work, cautiousness, and righteousness. Mostly, however, she reacts against the necessity of keeping up appearances. The outwardly united family facade which her mother insists on presenting is not a true expression of the real state within the family. It ignores the rupture between Margaret and her parents and does not acknowledge that there is " a hard transparent will" between them. The false and hypocritical image of a loving and united family creates in Margaret a sense of contempt and estrangement regarding her parents. "She used to imagine what kind of parents it seemed to her that she must really have had instead of just the folks" (306). The first part of the section about Margaret is also appropriately called "The Hidden Time." Margaret's profound maladjustment, sense of isolation and nonbelonging would have been insupportable but for her dreams, her imagination, and her belief that this is not her real life. "Her real life had always been lived inside herself, in secret. The others were the kind of children that her mother and dad really wanted. She had always been the off one" (306).

The whole relationship between Margaret and her parents revolves around misunderstanding and not wanting to understand. Typically, her parents tell her that "[Y]ou never would open up to us the way the others did" (311). It is also hurt pride and a keen sensitivity which, as a consequence, drive Margaret to constantly defend and assert herself with conflicts and arguments. Margaret "cherishes her resentment and her sense of inferiority and determines to find compensation in defiance of family mores" (Omrcanin 115). Finally, her sense of spiritual expatriation becomes so acute that her departure is unavoidable. To her, home has always symbolized imprisonment, denial of freedom and the chance of self-fulfillment. In order to make herself complete, "to find the perfect complement, the other self, who thought and felt exactly as she did" (329), she has to look for her proper place in life elsewhere.

So Margaret, at war with her parents, her home town, and Iowa, leaves for New York in quest of her place of affinity. On the train leaving Belmond for New York she reflects that

> she wanted to get away from these places that kept the sense of failure alive in her—that made her as she had always been, and yet she knew she wasn't. The country itself was shadowed over with the feeling that she could find no acceptance in it. It belonged to the folks and the folks' ideas.... (332)

There is a very un-Ferguson-like recklessness in her determination to break off the old bonds to assert herself and make a fresh start. "And even if she went on the rocks—actually on the rocks!—she had at least reached out to seize the kind of life that belonged to her" (357). Here, in a bohemian way of living, she finds relaxation, individualism, and values quite opposed to those prevalent in Belmond. Her dissociation from her parents is more or less total and it leads to her acquiring father and mother substitutes. In New York she is closely attached to a woman, Grimmie, who "was more her mother than her *own* mother, than mama was—just as once she had felt that Frank Gesell was more her father than dad" (387). Her total dissociation from her family comes to the fore in her choice of friends, exiles and outlaws from home, with whom it is possible to achieve spiritual affinity. Her break with her background and her past is irrevocable and made abundantly clear in her adoption of a new name, Margot.

Though she never marries, the pseudo-marital relationship in which she gradually becomes involved fits well the usual pattern of a Suckow marriage with the typical elements of unfulfillment, sadness, frustration, and compromise. It is ironic that Margaret falls in love with Bruce, a middle-aged married man who embodies all the qualities that she used to despise. Against her reckless unconventional way of living is posed his prudence, responsibility, and sense of duty. To her, he constitutes "the perfect complement, the other self," which she has always dreamed of and longed for. Margaret's life can be viewed as an extended maturing process, from a long and frustrated childhood through the mixed states of mind during her New York period to a more mellow insight into different kinds of values, which Bruce is instrumental in helping her to attain.

The climax of Margaret's quest is the trip West that she and Bruce make. Her conviction that there is a place of affinity somewhere is now justified. For the first time ever she has an inkling of what it means to belong. "What *she* felt was, that she had found her home" (429). The fact that now she even considers marriage, which used to be unthinkable, amounts almost to a surrender on Margaret's part. The sense of wonder, splendor, and *belonging* that the West inspires is juxtaposed with the fatuousness of her earlier life in Greenwich Village. Everything there felt "as if all that were something to which she belonged, and yet never could belong; for when she came to it, it was past." But here there was "something so ancient and deep that it went far back beyond personal recognition" (426), a truth that was "ancient" and "eternal."

This state of happiness, however, is shattered when Bruce announces he feels his "responsibility" and that he has to go back to his family. Margaret's reaction is typical of her fundamental independence, when she feels once more "her fierce recklessness, the thing that had made her rebel against the Ferguson cautiousness" (443). Again she sees the old repudiated values embodied in Bruce.

In Bruce's absence Margaret manages to achieve a certain level of independence which is shattered when Bruce returns with no other offer than that they continue their old relationship, and Margaret has to accept. What helps her overcome her humiliation is the "stratum of Ferguson practical ability" which is there under her romanticism. Although these two sides of her personality are in constant opposition to each other, her position makes it imperative that both be recognized, that she make them work together. The outcome of Margaret's quest is an admission of her partial failure to realize her dreams of a place of affinity and happiness. It means a relationship based on compromise and practicality and it means the achievement of just a partial self-fulfillment. Her dissociation from home, however, is complete and conclusive. Her relationship with Bruce, a very insecure substitute for a settled homelife, is marked by unpredictability and confusion but also by an awareness that they still have a chance to come to terms with their situation . Margaret/Margot must settle for a lot less than she had set out to attain.

But there are also open-ended situations where the reader does not know anything about the outcome of the quest, which has been occasioned by a combination of both adolescence and alienation, resulting from a restraining environment, be it town, village, or family. In the inevitable railway scene the reader says good-bye to the protagonist setting out on his quest with self-fulfillment and liberation in view.

In *Winesburg, Ohio*, (1919) Sherwood Anderson sees the American small town as a place of suppressed feelings, frustration, and bitterness. The small town warps and twists life for many people and, in describing the lives of these people, Anderson evinces great understanding and compassion. In these stories George Willard serves both as observer, commentator, and recipient of the confidences of the townspeople. Thus, he is implicated in the private agonies of all the various town characters. By being a listener George helps them, but eventually he will reach a point when he has to leave or stay and become another thwarted soul. His departure is foreshadowed in a conversation with his mother when he says: "I'm going to get out of here. I don't know where I shall go or what I shall do but I am going away" (47). What finally releases him from the town is the death of his mother. Though his departure is in fact a "revolt from the village" it is not a revolt of hatred and hostility. He will carry fragments and memories from his past life with him implying a certain attachment to his past. No doubt they will recede little by little and Winesburg will become "but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood" (247).

The surrounding countryside is depicted in terms of beauty, peace, and idyll and seems to be taken for granted, which should be able to make up for the spiritually stunting atmosphere of the town, so adverse to personal development. These natural resources, however, are never taken advantage of.

In his first novel, *The Apple of the Eye* (1924), Glenway Wescott begins his grim recording of what constitutes life in the rural Middle West. Dan Strane, the young protagonist at odds with his father, classmates, and the country itself, becomes the symbol of the discontent and the alienation that is characteristic of Wescott's work in the 1920s. In Johnson's words, *The Apple* is primarily a novel of "initiation, secondarily one of revolt from farm and town" (8) and Mike, the hired hand on the farm of Dan's aunt and uncle, becomes the vehicle of the process of initiation and the instigator of the revolt. Dan, always aware of his inadequacy and inability to measure up to his father's standards, is drawn to his mother who becomes the mediator between father and son, whose relationship seems doomed from the beginning.

> His father was a stranger—his mother's husband, his harsh critic, and his master. Dan mistrusted him, and thought him unimaginative and coarse, of commoner clay than his mother and he. John Strane had wanted a son like himself, to work with him, to hunt and fish. Instead he had fathered this moody, indolent creature—like a girl, he thought—clinging to his mother, sarcastic and sensitive, a bundle of nerves; and his mournful resentment grew. (122)

Thus the extreme estrangement that marks this father-son relationship makes Dan all the more susceptible to Mike and his seductive ideas about life, religion, beauty, and self-assertion. These ideas counteract the standards of this mother who insists on a life guided by the precepts of "a clean body and a pure mind." Dan's dependence on her makes him easily malleable, and "she bent the sprout before it knew how to grow, moulded the green fruit in her hands" (120). When Dan discusses religion and life with Mike, he is introduced into a world of ideas that completely undermine his values and his outlook on life. Mike tells him bluntly:

> "Your religion is wrong.... It cuts us in two. It divides the body from the spirit. The body is what we are, and the spirit what we think. Don't you see what that comes to? Hypocrisy, weakness, nerves. And the reality contradicts their claims, the higher they push them, the vaguer and more cruel and more mocking they become." (134)

Dan feels that this new world means the beginning of the end of his loneliness and maladjustment, pointing to the possibility of spiritual affinity with somebody, an impossibility even with his mother. Not only is the estrangement between Dan and and his father augmented, but there is also a beginning rift between mother and son. Mike constitutes the subversive element in "the Puritan idyll," questioning the authority of Dan's father as well as his mother and persuading Dan that "[y]ou weren't meant for a farmer. You won't have to stay here" (144). His preaching of a "religion of sensuality" directly counteracts everything Dan's mother stands for. Dan is the willing recipient of the seeds of doubt and questioning sown by Mike who incurs the resentment, even condemnation, of Dan's parents and aunt for "corrupting the minds of younger boys and girls with his modern city ideas" (200) and for not being a "Christian." Unable to face up to the consequence of his involvement with Rosalia, Dan's cousin, Mike goes away, somewhat surreptitiously, and leaves Dan feeling deserted and perplexed. There is no undoing the disruption that he has caused in the seemingly impregnable facade of the Strane family, which, however, is marred by the tensions between father and son.

His father's vague suspicion of Dan's homosexuality adds to the list of his son's failings. In Dan's relationship with Mike there is never explicitly stated or shown anything of a homosexual nature, but Dan's feelings, gestures, and behavior and also Mike's response definitely suggest this possibility, which is further hinted at in "their short, brusque kiss" (189) on their leave-taking. In a confrontation after his father had accused him of negligence and incompetence, Dan's confused feelings about Mike after his departure and mixed emotions about his parents and his aunt cause him to say to his father: "'I didn't ask to have you for a father'" (287). After a tenuous reconciliation Dan is buoyed by his father's offer to send him to university but also, at the same time, saddened by the feeling that "his life was now somewhere else, though he did not know where" (289).

Lack of affinity with land and people, the straitjacket of religion, estrangement from family and family values are all factors which may have made Dan's departure inevitable, but which Mike's appearance on the scene only precipitated. Whether Dan's going away to Madison will complete the process of finding release that Mike initiated is perhaps doubtful. At the railway station "[t]he tracks narrowed away in both directions, empty and dull" (292), not holding any promise of a positive outcome of his open-ended search.

Another example of the open-ended quest and escape is Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920). Felix Fay's ambiguous relationship with the surrounding reality derives from both grandfather and father, both of whom display an oppositional and individualistic disposition. Furthermore, Felix's childhood is also characterized by a series of departures necessitated by the decline of his family's financial position. His unstable childhood and his sensitive temperament estrange him from the world of other boy's games and activities, but just as much as boys, girls are also "a part of the mysterious and troublesome real world which he feared and disliked" (64).

These early experiences, leading to escapes into the world of books and fantasy, carry over into a political commitment to socialism, which also makes him into an outsider and a social critic. His involvement with socialism provides him both with a sense of belonging and a platform for pursuing his political ideals. But since these ideas are looked upon as dangerous and deviant, they also serve to further compound his estrangement. The obtrusive and offensive reality is offset by an inner world of dreams and ideas, and there is an alternation of escapes into his inner haven and then back into real life, because the outer reality is also the place in which an idealist/poet/intellectual has to live.

However, Felix's socialism also proves a stumbling block when he tries to apply his theories to Joyce, a girlfriend of his, and argues against marriage as a conventional and bourgeois institution. Their relationship is terminated because of ideological incompatibility and Felix is left to his own devices. When, in a scene in a railway station not unique in Midwestern fiction, he sees a map "in which a dozen iron roads were shown crossing the Midwest and centering in a dark blotch up in the corner ...." (393), Chicago becomes a tangible reality to Felix, which he envisages as "a golden fraternity" of like-minded people.

It is important to be aware that when Felix, the dreaming and seeking intellectual and individualist, leaves or escapes Port Royal, his third home town, it is on a positive note without any rankling sentiments. "He had been happy in Port Royal: it had given him love, and painful wisdom, and the joy of struggle. He would like to write a poem about it. The town had been built for him, though they who built it had not known" (394).

The escapes dealt with so far have all represented more or less unrelenting dissociation from home and village/town. but there are also inconclusive escapes in which the goal of the departure is final dissociation, but in which no such thing is achieved. The protagonist wavers between antipathy and sympathy towards his/her native region; there are alternately embracement and denial of its people and values. This qualifies the "revolt-from-the-village" approach and makes the attitude/s/ towards the Middle West much more complicated that merely looking at the Middle West as a "metaphor of abuse."

For example, Ruth Suckow's early short story, "A Rural Community" (1922) in *Iowa Interiors* (1926), expresses the ambiguities of *escape* convincingly. Here Ralph Chapin, main character and well-traveled journalist, is being pulled in two directions, away from and back to the land where he grew up. The story describes how he comes back to his foster parents for a brief visit. The impact of the land on Ralph is rendered in poetic and wistful terms and imagery. During his world-wide travels, the experience of change has stood out as the most powerful impression, and he expects this to be true of Walnut, his home town, too. But there everything is the same. When he recognizes old landmarks, he is amused to see that nothing has changed but, at the same time, he also feels "a tinge of sadness that was like the haunting of melancholy in this exquisite autumn day" (139). Here he finds something which is not liable to constant changes but instead represents what is unchanging and permanent. The "old eternal hills" are still there and the "lay of the land" stirs "the deepest feeling in a man." The way nature is rendered confirms a sense of home and attachment to Iowa's soil and countryside, which is also a reflection of Suckow's own feelings.

It is a significant Suckow trait to have an individual who returns home to react so susceptibly to the influence of nature and the hold of the past. But the situation also illustrates another pervasive feature of Suckow's writings: the crucial importance of home and family. Even from childhood Ralph has been aware of his position as an adopted child, although he has always been given the same treatment as his foster brothers and sisters. But he has not been "one of theirs" and this awareness, as well as his own restless temperament, has forced him away from home. Ralph has returned convinced of the "superiority of his life," However, he finds himself questioning his own attitude when he experiences a sense of affinity both with his foster parents and his foster brothers, although they all represent the utter opposite of his own life in terms of interests and life style.

The story points up clearly the contrast between Ralph's own hectic, restless, and rootless life and the place of his childhood and adolescence, where nothing was "new, after all, but endless, slightly varied repetitions" (167). This is a place where it is difficult to notice the almost imperceptible alternation of generations and the passage of time. After his brief visit, going back on the train, he is "conscious of that silent spreading country outside, over which changes passed like the shadows of the clouds across the pastures; and it gave him a deep quietude" (184).

In discussing the myth of the Midwest, Margaret Stuhr suggests that "The Middle West may be perfect for childhood, so goes the mythology, but not for a productive and satisfying adulthood" (25). This statement is certainly not true for many of the characters dealt with in this essay, but it does tie in very well with the story of Jim Burden in Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918). His childhood and adolescence on the Nebraska prairie are delineated in idyllic and pastoral terms and imagery, conveying the impression of carefree and unrestrained living, until in his late teens he becomes increasingly aware of another world, characterized by "furtive and repressed" speech, by "evasions and negations." To Jim, "[t]his guarded mode of existence was like living under a tyranny" (210), which strengthens in him the urge to get away.

When Jim moves first to Lincoln, Nebraska, and then to New York, he carries with him images of the past. These images crowd in upon his memory and he can suddenly find himself "thinking of the places of [his] own infinitesimal past" (262). Although Jim's escape from the cramping environment of the Nebraskan small town is permanent, cutting ties completely is prevented by the hold of the past, a past that reasserts itself when after an interval of 20 years Jim goes back to see Ántonia. Although his stay in Black Hawk is a disappointment, he is still as susceptible to the old pull of the land as he used to be, feeling "the solemn magic that comes out of those fields," making him want to be "a little boy again" (322). The old bond with Ántonia is still there in the form of "the precious, the incommunicable past" (372), which is a gift, an asset, but perhaps also something with which Jim Burden himself is "burdened."

The inescapability of the Midwestern background is also briefly referred to in *The Great Gatsby* (1926) when, in summing up *Gatsby* as a "story of the West," Nick Carraway refers to himself and the other main characters as "Westerners" and recognizes that they all had in common, a deficiency which "made [them] subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (183). Although Nick is keenly aware of the temptation and the superiority of the East, he also associates a "quality of distortion" with the East, which is not part of his Midwestern experience.

This ambivalent attitude to the Midwest, this pattern of escapes and returns, of belonging and non-belonging, is a characteristic trait in the Midwestern literature of the 1920s. Floyd Dell's *The Briary-Bush* (1921), his sequel to *Moon-Calf*, fits well into this category. It is mainly an account of how Felix Fay gradually comes to terms with what he used to dissociate himself from. "The shadow-world of ideas, of theories, of psychic fancies, amidst which he used to move all his life, was not enough. He must live in the real world" (4). Although he does not give up his plans to write, he decides to try the real world. He finds a newspaper job, he meets Rose-Ann and, after some time, they decide to marry. On the outside it is a conventional marriage, but in reality it is a marriage well in keeping with Felix's earlier ideas. When Rose-Ann proposes that they try to give their marriage a framework of freedom "for each other and ourselves" (107) Felix readily agrees. No doubt there is also in Rose-Ann's personality a reflection of Felix's own mind divided between longing for domesticity and at the same time shunning it.

There is nothing revolutionary or subversive in either *Moon-Calf* or *The Briary-Bush*, aside from Felix's mild and harmless involvement with socialism. Although Rose-Ann considers her marriage to Felix "one final defiance and farewell to the particular tribe to which I belong" (119), it is more complicated than that. When after their separation Felix goes to California to try to get Rose-Ann to come back, the ambiguity of her situation becomes clear. To Felix's question about whether she would like to live in California, she replies that "the Midwestern winter has got into my blood. I guess I want to see snow again!" (417), indicating the failed escape and eventual return. This is something that she has in common with many other Midwestern expatriates living in sunnier, more genial or exciting parts of the USA.

Dell was just as popular as Anderson, Lewis, and Fitzgerald among readers; the *The Briary-Bush* was less acclaimed by critics and reviewers than *Moon-Calf* (Hart 78). *The Briary-Bush* reads more like a wholesale embracement of values and attitudes questioned and repudiated in *Moon-Calf*. One would have expected a continuation of iconoclastic adventures and the quest of a young individualist but the very conventional plot and ending do not fulfill these expectations, although the final pages of *Moon-Calf* give an indication of what is to come.

One of the best examples of the ambiguities of the revolt from the village approach is Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920), a blistering attack on Main Street mentality and life. Reading *Main Street* is almost like studying a graphic chart, meticulously recording the ups and downs of Carol Kennicott's life as the wife of Dr. Will Kennicott in Gopher Prairie.What is depicted here is the gradual break-down of the hopes and aspirations of a young and innocent girl who naively decides to take on the reformation and beautification of her husband's town. Her initial impression of both Gopher Prairie and its inhabitants as drab and sluggish intensifies her desire to "wrench loose from this man and flee" (310).

Early on, she realizes the futility of her ambition to lay her "hands on one of these prairie towns and make it beautiful" (11). Gopher Prairie is an entrenched community, the social wall of which is impenetrable, unless social values and attitudes are shared. Carol, looking upon herself as an enlightened and competent person, finds it difficult to overlook characteristics of the community, such as social jealousies and spurious respectability. Thus, Carol's life as a housewife in Gopher Prairie is characterized by an alternation of alienation and adjustment, of seeing through the pretenses of various social sets, but also of trying hard to blend in.

Carol's various attempts at making her mark on the town are tolerated and resented at the same time, but the ultimate result is a gradual defeat in whatever area she involves herself, be it social clubs or theater associations, followed by another period of adjustment. Not unexpectedly, this pattern is also reflected in the relationship between husband and wife. Will embraces the values and traditions of Gopher Prairie, but the inevitable clashes between Will and Carol also lead to reconciliation, albeit more or less temporary.

Carol's pervasive loneliness is somewhat alleviated by a small set of kindred souls, a few of whom survive by adjusting. However, two of them are driven to escape. Miles Bjornstam, the incorrigible , rabid radical, and Fern Mullins, a young teacher falsely accused of loose morals, are disowned by an intolerant and bigoted community. When they are gone, it becomes even more essential that Carol adapt to the social norms of the town. Guy Pollack, when prodded by Carol to take a stand, answers her that he is infected by Village Virus. "The Village Virus is the germ which...infects ambitious people who stay too long in the provinces" (153-4). While Carol fights the Village Virus, she also lapses into lethargic periods, letting herself be repossessed by Main Street.

Carol escapes to Washington to work in an office. Although this experience means a relief and a breather for her, she also "recognizes in Washington as she had in California a transparent and guarded Main Street" (409). Main Street equals a state of mind that has become a permanent part of an individual. People may leave their Gopher Prairie physically, but they are forever marked. Obviously, Carol has also been infected by the Village Virus. Scattered reminders of Gopher Prairie, however, serve to awaken in her a sense of belonging in and an affinity for Gopher Prairie. Her dislike and opposition have dissipated and she can even admit to loving it (425). Her revolt ends, if not in a fizzle, at least in the realization that Gopher Prairie can measure up to her aspirations.

> Though she should return, she said, she would not be utterly defeated. She was glad of her rebellion. The prairie was no longer empty land in the sun-glare; it was the living tawny beast which she had fought and made beautiful by fighting; and in the village streets were shadows of her desires and the sound of her marching and the seeds of mystery and greatness. (424)

About 95 per cent of the novel is taken up with cataloging all of Main Street's vices, prejudices, and stock characters, although they are only an extension of the institution which they represent, for instance, the church, the party, and the business world. Throughout this catalogue the theme of flight and escape is throbbing and when the time finally comes to escape the stages of actual escape and return are disposed of in a scanty 25 pages.

Ruth Suckow is a writer who particularly well typifies both the urge to leave and the pull back. but even if Suckow was part of the "revolt from the village" movement, her revolt was qualified with many reservations. Ima Herron writes of Suckow that "her earlier work did seem to belong to the revolt against the village movement, but it never had the note of intolerance characterizing *Main Street*" (410). Harlan Hatcher notes that "Ruth Suckow has joined no side in the controversy between Main Street and Friendship Village" (106).

Of the Ferguson children in *The Folks*, Carl is the one for whom a successful career seems to be clearly staked out from the beginning.

Good-looking and successful at school and at sports, he is admired and emulated by other students. But as early as his high-school days, Carl is aware of conflicting traits in his personality, which will also influence his marriage. On the one hand he wants to excel and do what everyone expects of him. But on the other hand he is also aware of "a blind new desire to strike out for himself, go away somewhere, start out new, work out his great glowing ideas without the cautious limitations that he felt somehow the folks imposed on him" (129).

After Carl's graduation from college Mr. Ferguson tries to tie him more closely to the old family tradition by suggesting Carl go into banking. Asserting his own preferences, Carl objects, fearing a curtailment of his own talents. When he is offered the job as principal in an Iowa town, he is eager to take up his responsibility as an adult citizen, but he is also haunted by an urge to seek the unknown, the uncharted, something which "would have forced his life out of the clear daylight course he had set out on in his childhood" (141). By accepting the job and marrying Lillian White, his childhood friend, he does what is expected of him.

Lillian is in many ways the opposite of Carl. She has been brought up in a repressive religious atmosphere, dominated by her grandfather. She has become fearful, subdued and unwilling to try anything new. Husband and wife represent two different sets of values which make for increasing estrangement in their marriage. According to Margaret Omrcanin, Lillian even recalls Sherwood Anderson' warped and tormented grotesques in "her fears, her sense of inferiority, her powerlessness to communicate, and her sexual unresponsiveness" (120). While this may be an exaggeration, it does underscore the difference in temperament and outlook between Carl and Lillian. What is frustrating to Carl is not only her sexual indifference, but also his feeling of her "always holding him back, clinging to fixed ways." There is in Carl an acutely felt need to break through that attitude of provinciality which he despised, and which he sees typified in Lillian. Instead of satisfaction and content, Carl's success as college superintendent and prospects of stability in his career and his homelife fill him with restlessness, impatience, and a fear of being "left behind." There is an unbearable awareness that his "life and vigor" can be put to no use. Carl shares with many Suckow characters a longing for the past and his childhood because life gets too complicated, the sense of being lost makes itself felt, and things "were no longer so simple as they had been when he was a little boy in Belmond" (154). But although Carl meets other women who attract him and who make him aware of an exciting sense of danger, "there had always been—there still was —the firm, narrow, old-fashioned, central stability of Lillian in his life" (199). All the time Carl's; life is characterized by this pull in two directions, away from home and Lillian, and back.

What also exacerbates their relationship is the incompatibility of their values. Lillian's upbringing with its "almost nun-like purity" in her grandfather's house makes it hard for her to accept the kind of light-hearted jesting and jargon so common among their friends, their empty phrases of politeness. It is impossible for her to comprehend "the demands of external social courtesies on people who had been brought up under them. To her, it just seemed like being insincere—she was bewildered and disapproving both" (160). When Carl adjusts to their new environment too easily, he feels her silent reproval and counters it by accusing her: "'You'd like to tie me down to your own little principles and keep me there'" (171). Even if life in their new place is alluring and exciting to Carl, to Lillian it constitutes a "whirl of upsetting *modernity* (italics mine) leading to a deterioration in their relationship. Although Carl is aware of his susceptibility to external influences, he ignores Lillian's exposed and vulnerable position and her objections to the direction his life is taking.

The worsening relationship between Carl and Lillian comes to a head when Carl insists on accepting an offer of a new job in Philadelphia. "'I've got to have a chance for a change and I'm going to have it. The world isn't all of a piece'" (207). To him this offer is a chance to break with Lillian's narrow-minded principles, to make a new start, and he is ready to cut all the ties and "throw everything else behind him" (201). It is an opportunity to satisfy all his more or less secret needs for luxury, secularity, money-making, and splendor. But although there is this urgent desire to go away and experience new things—"he wanted to get away from their hold" (197)—Carl also "wanted the old things to hold him."

Carl's' split attitude towards home, his awareness of both attraction and repulsion, has no counterpart in Lillian. She represents a commitment to the values implanted in them in their childhood. She resents and objects to influences tending to disrupt traditional family life, and she objects to Carl's dissociation from feelings and convictions they have shared since they were children. The fact that she is firmly rooted in traditional family life proves to be incompatible with Carl's changing standards of values, leading ultimately to non-communication and estrangement. Kissane interprets the story of Carl and Lillian as showing "a Freudian concern with the unhappiness resulting from childhood repressions" (100), which further underscores the deep-rooted inflexibility of their characters. When Carl tries to persuade his wife to accept the move to Philadelphia, Lillian sees through his motives and her "hard rectitude was ashamed of his own specious arguments sliding so brightly over the hidden yet deeply known truth" (206). To go East is quite inconceivable to Lillian; it would mean a new world and new concepts which are completely alien to her. So when faced with pregnancy and the move to Philadelphia, she cannot bear up under the strain any more and attempts suicide.

Lillian's attempted suicide constitutes a turning-point in their marriage. It has an enormous impact on Carl and makes him perceive what questionable influences have governed his life so far, "his restlessness, inner promiscuousness, light attachment, selfish concern," as contrasted with "the small, simple completeness of her integrity" (227). The plan to move East is abandoned but although Carl feels disappointed and defeated, he is also relieved to find a new relationship with Lillian, based on truth and sincerity. The quest has been given up and it is probable that a certain degree of discontent will continue to be a part of his life. The following passage illustrates Carl's mellow insight into what can be expected from life.

> He had nothing really new ahead of him. A certain hope, expectancy, feeling of boundlessness was gone from his work. He felt sure—he thought—of his competence, but he expected only to do what he could. The old innocent 'ideals' of his college days were like a tale that had been told. And yet he felt a kind of firmness—not wholly cynical—underlying the future. (250)

The ironic outcome of the quest is Carl's acceptance of the post as principal in a town close to his home town instead of far-away Philadelphia. But this quest has also brought about an insight in Carl into his own personal shortcomings and limitations and a recognition that he has not entirely renounced old values and ties, exemplified by his attachment to, even dependence on, his grandparents' old farm. This is a place where he can get back into "that lost simplicity," a simplicity which to him is something "healing." Carl acknowledges the outcome of his hopes and aspirations as defeat marked by "humiliation" but, at the same time, there is also an awareness of "self-respect" acquired in this defeat.

The Odyssey of a Nice Girl (1925), Suckow's second novel, is, as the title indicates, the chronicle of the development of an ordinary "nice" girl. In writing about *The Odyssey of a Nice Girl* (1925) Frank Luther Mott points out that the novel "belongs to the 'Revolt against the Village' category plainly enough, but unlike many of the books of that movement,..., it shows genuine and unaffected appreciation of what there is of charm in the Iowa small town" (223). Marjorie's childhood and adolescence is, on the whole, carefree, happy, and comfortable, but she is also aware of the intrusive and insensitive reality, reflected in her childish dreams of going away to Boston and Europe. Intermittent spells of loneliness and dissatisfaction with her cramping environment thus foreshadow later stages in her development.

Even the qualified "rebellion" of a "nice" girl necessarily involves some strain on the parent-child relationship. Thus, Marjorie's sense of dissatisfaction and impatience with Buena Vista, her home town, is further enhanced by a rebellious awareness that her parents want to keep her near them. Her rebellion, however, never reaches the final escape and dissociation from the family that marks Margaret's relations with her parents in *The Folks.* Kissane is right in pointing out that Marjorie should not "be understood as the victim of parental domination" (61). The occasional tensions with her parents are rather the result of conflicting forces within her own nature and an expression of her will both to stay and leave. A critical stage is her graduation, after which there is nothing but emptiness for her. Life in Buena Vista stands out in all its barrenness and lack of a purpose. People just "lived there, just lived on and on, kept stores, waited on customers, went down town to buy things for supper...." (139). A good case in point is the new set of bedroom furniture that is her parents' graduation gift for Marjorie. Her initial joy is soon vitiated by the feeling that the gift might force a compromise with her plans to go East and compel her to show her gratitude and stay on at home. Suckow carefully records how Marjorie is torn in two directions, away from home and towards the East and back again, and how she both rejects and embraces the values and concepts related to her home, Buena Vista and Iowa. "Yet the very bonds of family ties and her contentment with the familiar from which she seeks to free herself are deterrents to her freedom" (Omrcanin 104).

When Marjorie is finally able to realize her dream of escaping to the East, although meant to be just a stage in her gradual liberation from her Midwestern heritage, she is torn between conflicting forces and feelings. In the midst of Eastern refinement and culture, thoughts of home interfere "like a wound that kept aching and then stabbing her with pain" (167). When she goes back to Buena Vista for her summer vacation after her first year in Boston, her earlier disavowal of the Midwest and her Midwestern origin is reversed and her suppressed attachment to the land and a sense of belonging surface in a passage reminiscent of *The Great Gatsby* and Nick Carraway: " A deep sense of recognition stirred in her heart at the sight of the smooth roll of the land. This was hers. The moist black earth, the rich green of late May. Her mind detached itself from the minds of the other girls and became solitary, itself, almost exultant...." (211).

When Marjorie goes home after her second year in Boston the culture shock is even more pronounced. The absence of culture, art and beauty upsets her and she feels entrapped by social life in Buena Vista. The urge to light out and enjoy freedom and independence in other, preferably far-away places is acutely felt. But at the same time, "that *treacherous* clinging love of home, of the lawn, the flowers, every piece of furniture, pulled her back, held her" (266, italics mine).

However, a stage of temporary reconciliation with home and Buena Vista is reached when her mother falls ill. Now the roles are reversed: she is there because her parents need her and Marjorie realizes she is happier at home than anywhere else "when there was actually a reason for her being there" (288). But Marjorie's patience is again put to the test when she has to go to the doctor and finds herself to be part of the boring, aging, middle-class women with real or imagined ailments that she has always despised.

This is a critical stage for Marjorie. In reviewing her situation, it is obvious that all her escapes and returns, her aspirations and ambitions, have been to no avail. She is still stuck in Buena Vista and almost part of life there. She and her friends seem to have passed "out of that bright certainty of childhood into some limbo of middle youth" (307). But "her feeling of rebellion, misunderstanding, helplessness" (343), still burning, precipitates her final escape, which occurs after the death of her father. There is a complete severance of ties with her past when she decides to go West and accept an offer of a job there.

The novel ends in an abrupt and inconclusive way. Eventually, her mother goes West, too, and on a visit to Buena Vista she tells her old friends that Marjorie has married and settled down on a fruit farm. The outcome of Marjorie's odyssey seems to bear out her reflection earlier on in Buena Vista that "[l]ife did not seem to turn out as they had thought it must" (309). but the odyssey has also mellowed her and made her aware of the virtues of a home, of belonging, an insight that maturity brings: "Somehow she must get that satisfaction that was a warmth in the blood, that gave all life a glowing pattern. The two ways made each a different pattern; but the patterns were intertwined" (348). Even if Marjorie's old plans and dreams came to nothing it must not be forgotten that she managed to tear herself away from home and the Midwest and to create her own home out in the West, despite the hold the Midwest undoubtedly had on her.

Although it is not spelled out explicitly, the tenor of the novel indicates a partial acceptance of Midwestern ways and values, formerly repudiated by Marjorie. Kissane is probably right in her estimation of what the future has in store for Marjorie when she writes that "[t]he commonplace marriage is recognized as Marjorie's true destiny" (64). In the light of her earlier aspirations and hopes, Marjorie's escape, or rather escapes, and quests are unresolved and incomplete.

There is a variation on this approach in Wescott's *The Grandmothers.* When Alwyn's great-uncle Leander joins the army to fight in the Civil War, he is motivated not only by his sense of duty, but also by conflicting feelings for his brother Hilary and his fiancée Rose Hamilton, whom Leander's brother Henry Tower later proposes to and marries. The incestuous relationship between Leander and Hilary is never stated explicitly, but only suggested. The impossibility and hopelessness of this relationship, however, leads to Hilary's disappearance in the war and, after the war, to Leander's departure for California in order to fill the empty space that Hilary has created. After twenty wild and unsettled years Leander returns to Wisconsin and the Towers because he "loves [his] own people more than ever before" (58). Leander's escape from both Rose and a missing Hilary, however, does not lead to an alleviation of his longing and despair but rather an intensification which gradually passes into resigned acceptance.

The farm as a repressive environment was a reality to Alwyn's father, Ralph, as well as his two uncles, Jim and Evan. The meaning of unfairness and disadvantage is brought home early to Ralph. He would have to give up his dreams and ambitions to become a veterinary surgeon, while "his brothers were going to leave the country."

> [H]e would have to turn back among the still only half-cultivated hills, to go on being what they had all been as ignorant children, what their forefathers had been: a child of nature. He was strong, obedient, and moody, resenting what the future might do, as if, at the age of eighteen, the past had already done its worst. (135)

To Ralph there was nothing in the future but bitterness and resentment at having been sacrificed for his brother Jim, as poverty and limited resources made it impossible to send more than one son to college. This is a situation which was not peculiar to the Tower family but a pattern which was prevalent all over the Midwest and which would be repeated in later generations.

But when Jim, the most-favored brother, is sent to college, it is with the proviso that he enter the ministry after graduation and this way pay back the sacrifices that had been made for him. However, after some time at college, Jim discovers diversions and temptations that living in a small town brings, at least compared to living on a farm, and to which he is not insusceptible. Jim deviates from the career determined by his family when he tries to change "the direction of his life" by entering on a singing career with the girl he intends to marry. There is "the brilliant threshold of an unexpected life, of a career more brilliant than the ministry" (137), a dream almost come true, an expansion of his limited Midwestern origin, a chance at fruition which ends up as frustration brought about by his father's harsh and moralizing words that he has got a duty in the world. "'You've got to bear witness to the Lord. Remember that'" (144). Although Jim's escape to the little college town takes him close to the realization of a dream, his father manages in just a few words to thwart his hopes by calling on his sense of obligation and commitment to his family, thus enforcing Jim's compliance. "Whether he liked it or not, it would be a lifework in itself to recompense them for the opportunities they had given him; whatever he wanted to represent, from now on he would have to represent their ideals. Perhaps, he thought that is all it means to be a servant of God" (143).

When, in the service of a fashionable church outside Chicago, Jim comes back for regular visits to the farm the crudeness of his birthplace, "the labor, the poverty, the narrowness of outlook, which were still established when he had been born" (178), is mercilessly juxtaposed with the elegance and comfort of his life in Chicago. Having married into a wealthy family, Jim retires to serve his new family completely. This shows Jim's' weak and yielding character and even Alwyn notices how he gives up "every least ambition."

The progression of Jim's attempt at liberating himself from the restrictiveness of his background shows the futility of his ambition. Giving in to the comfort, idleness, and luxury of a wealthy marriage and his attendant come-down as merely servant and janitor only earn him the censure of Marianne, his sister-in-law and Alwyn's mother, who accuses him of wasting "his opportunities and [exchanging] the family birthright of anxiety, ambition, and loneliness, for the comfortable approval of a family that was not even his own" (197).

In *The Apple* Westcott initiates a thematic pattern of movement, which is developed and expanded in *The Grandmothers.* This approach is further pursued in *Good-bye Wisconsin* (1928), a collection of short stories. Of particular interest is the title-story "Good-bye Wisconsin," which in Rueckert's words is "a hodge-podge of highly wrought fragments elicited by Wisconsin, the Midwest, and America and held together by Wescott's arrival at, brief stay in, and departure from the small Wisconsin town where his family lives" (70). In an erratic and impressionistic style, Wescott expands on what constitute the Wisconsin and Midwestern way of life and what makes it impossible. Although Wisconsin seems like "the ideal state to live, a paragon of success," what the young people mostly dream of "is getting away" (26).

"How much sweeter to come and go than to stay" is Wescott's laconic judgment of and good-bye to Wisconsin and the Midwest, a "nowhere; an abstract nowhere" (39), which represents "a state of mind of people born where they do not like to live" (39). But Wescott also wants to elevate his detailed catalog of Midwestern shortcomings to a both national and universal level, this making the concept of Middle Western "in the commonest way human"(39). Here Wescott also anticipates Ruth Suckow's definition of "art in style" as "the shaping of the universal forces by time, place, person, and circumstances; that thought and feeling are universals, but that style—at any rate, the material, the rudiments of style—is a local circumstance" ("Middle Western Literature" 178).

All of the works discussed here reflect the complicated relationship of characters to their place of origin. A departure may seem like a dream come true but there is no such thing as a clean escape leaving no traces. There is both fruition and frustration: fruition in the sense that an escape could be pulled off at all, but also frustration because the hold of the past is still powerful and inescapable.

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"I BELONG IN LITTLE TOWNS:" SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S SMALL TOWN POST-MODERNISM

CLARENCE LINDSAY

1

In my stories I simply stayed at home, among my own people, wherever I happened to be, people in my own street. I think I must, very early, have realized that this was my own milieu, that is to say, common everyday American lives. The ordinary beliefs of the people about me, that love lasted indefinitely, that success meant happiness, simply did not seem true to me. (*Letters* 403)

2

After several days of it (Niagara Falls) I got to thinking—the truth is that the grandeur of it got rather boring—I got to thinking how much more interesting were the little, quiet rivers... (*Letters* 420)

3

He had returned at the end of his own life to live out his days alone in his native place because, as he said, one had to accept his own time and place and people, whatever they might be, and that one gained nothing by wandering about the earth among strangers. (*A Story Teller's Story* referring to Judge Turner, 134)

4

I want to write beautifully, create beautifully, not outside but in this thing in which I am born, in this place where, in the midst of ugly towns, cities, Fords, moving pictures, I have always lived, must always live. I do not want, Paul, even those old Monks at Chartres, building their cathedral, to be at bottom any purer than myself. (*Letters* 79)

5

We do, I am sure, live and die better rather better in the Middle West. Nothing about us is as yet so completely and racially tired.... Back here I almost feel able to say that I don't care if I never travel again. The place between mountain and mountain I call Mid-America is my land. Good or bad, it's all I'll ever have. (43 *Letters*)

6

Far down below me in the city streets there are people hurrying along. They are city dwellers hurrying about their city offices.

But I do not belong to this. It is not mine.

I belong in little towns... (*Memoirs* 432)

7

"The eastern men, among whom I had now come, were perhaps right in demanding something more than courage from American artists," I began telling myself. It was apparent there were two steps necessary and it might well be that we middlewestern men had taken but one step. One had first of all to face one's materials, accept fully the life about, quit running off in fancy to India, to England, to the South Seas. We Americans had to begin to stay, in spirit at least, at home. We had to accept our materials, face our materials. (*A Story Teller's Story* 287)

8

And again digression. Oh again sweet digression. (*Memoirs* 267)

These various statements from Anderson's letters and his several autobiographies are not for the purpose of introducing any sort of celebration of small town virtues, at least not those virtues that we normally associate with the village. As we can see from these quotations, the notion of staying home was connected rather closely to the other idea: the value of littleness and corresponding theories regarding bigness; the acceptance, but not necessarily affirmation, of the life about him, both aesthetically and personally; the relationship of visiting, both literally and metaphorically, Europe and the past as opposed to staying home in the small town American present; and even the aesthetic relationship of himself to the small town as opposed to the urban. These notions are inseparably intertwined throughout the autobiographies, essays, and letters. When he is talking about one he is tropically talking about the others. Anderson's thinking about those related subjects is very nearly obsessive. In fact, his frequent and astute comments on the Midwest make Anderson, arguably, a major theorist regarding the way the Midwest is constructed and the way those constructions affect those who live there.[1]

I begin with a few of Anderson's reflections on staying home, just a few, for two reasons: First, the remarkable formal innovations in *Winesburg, Ohio* can be related to Anderson's relationship to the small town. Those features, among the most radically experimental and post-modernist in the modernist canon, formally express Anderson's psychological, problematic relationship to his small town origins; the seemingly sympathetic and non-overtly judgmental narrator, the narrator's digressions, the textuality of all relationship, and the related-tale nature of this collection of short stories—are the formal equivalence of certain aspects of the small town. The second reason I start with these manifestations of Anderson's compulsive and often compelling commitment to the Midwest and to the small town is that while it is the source of his genius, it is also, like Murphy's very first move in the chess game in Becket's novel, the cause of all Anderson's subsequent trouble.

Anderson's many comments on the small town convey his distinctive sense of its special qualities. Just as Anderson is a major theorist regarding the Midwest, he is also one of our first intellectual thinkers regarding the complexities of the small town, although I must add that his intellectualism is hidden to some extent, first because he works from a very restricted vocabulary and second because much of the intellectual complexity is conveyed artistically through parables. He comes to the subject frequently, indirectly and directly, throughout the autobiographies and letters. When Anderson had first gone to Chicago acting out the familiar small town drama of escape to the big city, his experience had been typical and disillusioning. Forced to work at hard, physical warehouse labor with hard physical warehouse types, Anderson used the Spanish American War as a way of escaping the demeaning futureless job in Chicago to return, if not triumphantly then at least with a good patriotic excuse, to the town which he had fled only a few years before. In those days it was still customary to raise regiments and other units entirely from a particular town or area, so it was possible to go off to war with friends. The enlisted men were likely the same age and had gone to school together, and the officers were older but from the several social layers of the originating town. Anderson comments on this odd feature on several occasion, contrasting it with the subsequent practices of the First World War, ostensibly, but clearly sarcastically, approving of the newer impersonal techniques for waging war. What he has to say about the dynamics among the boys and men in the new regiment reveals the contradictions and tensions of the small town from which sprang his greatest work:

> And so there we were, just boys from an Ohio country town, with officers from the same town, in a wood in the South being made into soldiers, and I am much afraid not taking the whole affair too seriously.... The captain of our company had been a janitor of a public building back in Ohio, the first lieutenant was a celery raiser on a small farm near our town and the second lieutenant had been a knife grinder in a cutlery factory. (*A Story Teller's Story* 206)
>
> As for the officers, well, it was to be admitted that in military affairs they knew more than ourselves, but there the superiority ended. It would be just as well for none of them to attempt to put on too much side when we were drilling or were not on actual military duty. The war would soon be over and after a time we would all be going back home. An officer might conceivably "get away" with some sort of injustice for the moment—but a year from now, when we were all at home again.... did the fool want to take the chance of four or five huskies giving him a beating some night in an alleyway. (*A Story Teller's Story* 206-7)
>
> They discuss their officers, the position of the officer in relation to his men. "I think it's all right," says a doctor's son. "Ed and Doug are all right. They have to live off by themselves and act as though they were something special, kind of grand and wise and gaudy. It's a kind of bluff, I guess, that has to be kept up only I should think it it would be kind of tough on them. I should think they might get to feeling they were something special and get themselves into a mess." (*A Story Teller's Story* 207-8)

There are a fair number of separate and important issues here. In the first passage, Anderson identifies an aspect of the small town sensibility, a suspiciousness toward grandness and overstatement, a habit of "not taking things too seriously." This self-conscious anti-romantic posture is a Herb Shriner or Will Rogers shrewd small town debunking of big city/national pretentious bombast. His subsequent

statements suggest, however, something beyond this stereotypical small town refusal to get too revved up over puffery. It's not, as we perhaps might have suspected, a matter of the wholesome goodness of the small town folk who know phoniness when they see it, know falseness because they have not been corrupted, because they are "real." Anderson carefully moves beyond the pastoral sentimentalism. The second and third statements suggest that small town folk have big time desires, that they either would or might express the full weight of their selves' imperious desires if only they could "get away with it." But they can't because everyone knows them, because the town is, in a very real sense, still with them, the town who knows who these men really are, who will know the enormous gap between what they might aspire to and what they have come from and will have to return to. James Gatz can't be Jay Gatsby at home in North Dakota. And it's not just that those aspirers would feel uncomfortable or embarrassed being caught out by the home folk when they indulge in their pretenses. It's more than that. It's dangerous. Anderson hints a a variation of the "you can't go home again" theme: "If you pretend to be something that you are not, 'put on too much side,' it's really not so much the question of inability to go home but a warning that you had better not." Right alongside the delicate hints of a familiar small town comedy, the robust pastoral lad ("Huskies") justifiably taking down a peg or two someone who's gotten too big for his britches, there is a real violence conveyed in words ("beating") that don't quite fit the more acceptable and comfortable context, a sense of the unjust and disproportionate mob punishment of the one who had dared the "injustice"[2] In the second passage Anderson, rather cleverly, insinuates a real tension between the desire for specialness and "home." All the warm associations in a phrase like "back home" are jostled a bit. That enduringly effective phrase is pried loose from its normal meanings of nurturing, refuge and pure numinous space by means of that beating, done secretly out of public view in the alleyway.

The third passage offers other complications and issues. There is just the hint of a complicating class drama related to the notion of the self's aspirations as they are expressed in Doug and Ed, the first names themselves tropes of the leveling and restraining knowledge of the small town. We've been told (in the first passage quoted above) that the company's officers were comprised of a janitor (the captain), a celery raiser (the first lieutenant) and a knife grinder in a cutlery factory (the second lieutenant). I don't know if these were indeed the occupations of the officers or whether Anderson, who consistently confessed, actually boasted, that he manipulated the details to get at the "essential truth," created these details for the significant effect. Whatever the case, these occupations strike us forcefully as being just beyond the edge of prosaic realism. The occupations are either contrived or presented so (celery raiser instead of farmer, for example) as to blunt any of the normal kinds of romanticizings that we might want to attach to them. Thus, they offer the circumstances that explain the need to exaggerate one's self worth. The words of the doctor's son, who might very well be especially sensitive to the reversal of class prerogatives, may convey class conflicts and the peculiar tension between what Anderson identified as the American disease, the self's hunger for specialness, and the subtle but permeating system of class as it existed in small town, Midwestern America. But in the doctor's son's voice and point of view there is something else, something that sets Anderson's work apart from his chief rivals Hawthorne, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Faulkner, those other students of American selfhood.[3] When I say apart, I am not arguing Anderson's superiority, although I can imagine that people might line up on one side to the other depending on taste, but rather a conspicuous difference in tone or attitude in response to some of the tough minded insights that Anderson shares with these other writers. When the doctor's son says "Ed and Doug are all right," he strikes a note that we can't imagine a Hawthorne narrator, for example, using toward Young Goodman Browne, a narrator who is, after all, pretty stern about Browne's stern, hard heart. The doctor's son's assessment of his townsmen is made from a radically different perspective from that of any of Hawthorne's narrators or Fitzgerald's or Hemingway's. He knows the officers in a different way. In that "Ed and Doug are all right," there is a wealth of information regarding the relationship of the speaker to the men. It is a statement that could only be made with a certain kind of knowledge, a summing up, a conclusiveness based on intimate experience through time. We know this from the idiomatic import of the phrase itself, from the first names shortened to nicknames and from the context, a man talking about people he has lived with. The doctor's son also reveals a kind of special empathy, an imaginative entrance into the officers' lives based not solely on his imaginative powers but also on his apparent knowledge of their circumstances ("I should think it would be kind of tough on them.") Apparently speaking from a knowledge of his town (like the narrator, he may know the kinds of punishments likely to be meted out) and from a real knowledge of the officers' circumstances (at least he knows they are not especially special), he empathetically and sympathetically constructs their futures: "I should think they might get to feeling they were something special and get themselves into a mess." That last statement serves as a consciously understated rubric for a great number of American fiction's most notorious figures. The doctor's son might be talking about Young Goodman Browne, Ahab, James Gatz, Dick Diver, Frederick Henry, Quentin Compson, Thomas Sutpen. All leave home. Sometimes it's just a short trip into the forest, sometimes into the past, but they all get to feeling they're pretty special and they all get into pretty bad messes.[4] Anderson knows what, to one degree or another, these other writers know: that their characters leave home because they feel the need for a larger canvas, can't accept the impossibly limited narratives they have had the bad luck to be born into. Like Gatsby who believes that he can't possibly belong to his very ordinary parents, all see themselves as belonging somewhere else. American fiction is, to a large extent, a fiction of exile and the grand figures of that fiction are, in a manner of speaking, changelings.

Anderson, at least in his best work, keeps his heroes at home. For him the small town, home, is where this essential American drama of identity is most intensely felt. It is most intensely felt, first, because it is there that the sense of limitations is so at odds with the self's hunger for grandness. All through the autobiographies, Anderson comments on the peculiar restlessness of the American Midwest, especially of the small town. He refers to the hastiness of the building, the flimsiness of the construction, conveying the sense of impermanence:

> Let us (in fancy) imagine for a moment an American lad walking alone at evening in the streets of an American town.
>
> American towns and in particular American towns of the Middle West [of twenty years ago] were not built for beauty, they were not built to be lived in permanently. A dreadful desire of escape, of physical escape, must have got, like a disease, into our fathers' brains. How they pitched the cities and towns together! What an insanity!....
>
> The lad of our fancy walks in the streets of a town hurriedly thrown together, striving to dream his dreams, and must continue to

> walk in the midst of such ugliness. The cheap hurried ugly construction of American physical life still goes on and on. The idea of permanent residence has not taken hold on us.

No hint here of any heartland mythologies, no sense of sweet place. In fact, Anderson says again and again that to be an American is to have no sense of place: "No man in America quite expected to stay where he happened to be at the moment. Really it was hardly worth while making the spot express himself: (*A Story Teller's Story* 291); "Often I have asked myself whether, in America, anyone lived anywhere at all.... Why have not Americans begun to accept their cities and towns and begun to live in them?" (*A Story Teller's Story* 295). When Anderson goes to Europe, he, like almost every other significant American writer (and some not so significant), notes essential differences. Anderson, for the most part however, resists the allure that attracted so many of his contemporaries and those who came before, the appeal of the rich and heavy European past ("We did not want to spend our lives living in the past, dreaming over the dead past of a Europe from which we were separated by a wide ocean[*A Story Teller's Story* 315])[5] What strikes him is that Europeans have a sense of place, have a sense of a relationship to place because they do not have the American need for specialness. In an essay on Alfred Stieglitz, Anderson, after noting the peculiar American anxiety, a "great uncertainty, roots trying to go down into American soil" (Salzman 37), comments on the different relationship to place in Europe:

> It was English skies in the Englishman, French skies in the Frenchman, sense of fields, horizons, of place in man. Man in a place he knows, feels related to. "Life has gone on a long time here. Our sins are in our own heads.
>
> "We are men standing here. We will not pretend to be something greater, more splendid than we are.
>
> "I will accept myself in my own place and time..." (Salzman 38)

While this positive relationship to place, which depends on the acceptance of one's own time and place and depends, significantly, on an acceptance of one's self, is something that Anderson values, he doesn't want to go there, so to speak, aesthetically. He committed himself irrevocably to staying home, not because that home represented, as we have seen, any of the appealing small town mythologies nor because it represented the sense of acceptance of place he found in Europe. When we look at those epigraphs with which we began this discussion, we can see that Anderson is in no way expressing an emotional contentment or ease or an affirmation of small town beliefs. In that first epigraph, for example, he begins by saying that he "simply stayed at home." Trained as we are in certain pieties, we expect some sort of affirmation of that home. It's noble, good, to see the good in "my own people." But that isn't quite what happens. As we will see often in the stories in *Winesburg, Ohio,* we are thrown off just a bit. Expecting that affirmation of home, of small town certainties, we are told that he is fundamentally estranged from the people about him, that he is separated from their "ordinary beliefs." In epigraph #3, he tells of Judge Turner who has returned to his small town after wandering through Europe. Turner's dictum, that we must accept our "time and place and people," is followed with a sort of parenthetical observation: "whatever they might be." That qualification lifts the statement above cliche, registers the awareness that the speaker does not affirm the circumstances; they are not, necessarily, what he would, ideally, want them to be. Similarly, in the fourth epigraph, just after he says that he wants to write beautifully "not outside but in this thing in which I am born," a place where he has "always lived," he adds "must always live." The "must" registers a recognition of necessity rather than desire. For Anderson the small town is really the only place, aesthetically speaking, he could go. Like Turner he too "must" always live there. In fact, in each of the passages with which we began the discussion, when he urges an acceptance of the small town or American life, there is, almost as if by reflex, an immediate qualification. The urge to accept is followed by the urge to "face one's materials," almost suggesting a self-conscious bracing.

So, for Anderson, the small town's superiority is, like baseball's superiority to other games, purely aesthetic. For Anderson that small town was where the essential American drama, the imperious self's dissatisfaction with its circumstances and the related desire for escape, was acted out most intensely.[6] The lad he imagines walking the streets of an American town has dreams that cannot be satisfied either by the ugly buildings or, we imagine, by being a celery raiser or knife grinder. And it is in the streets of such a town where the margin between what America promised and what Americans actually were, or could be, was paper thin.

We can now discuss how the set of formal features in *Winesburg, Ohio* express his sense of and relationship to the small town. Earlier I mentioned distinct technical features: the non-judgmental narrator; the digressive narrative form; the textuality of all relationships; the related tale format. While these are indeed separate, they rise out of common condition. In one way or another they formally represent a peculiar kind of knowledge. When describing the doctor's son's voice, his perspective, I said that he spoke from a cumulative knowledge of the characters he commented on, affected by that experience in ways that seemed different from other narrators. The doctor's son is, in this way, a representative of the *Winesburg* narrator, of what might be called his multiple and consequently palliative knowledges. The *Winesburg* narrator stands in possession of the narrative swirl, the various narratives, that constitute Winesburg, Ohio. He not only knows the various protagonists' stories, the way they understand themselves, he knows the various ways those stories are interpreted. As we read *Winesburg, Ohio* we encounter individual responses that, in one or several aspects, represent the narrator. Through his repeated witnessing of characters' claim to specialness, the narrator is like the conductor, Tom Little, in the collection's final tale, "Departure." The conductor knows George Willard, likes him, but the climactic departure which culminates the story of George Willard's development and final escape is not especially climactic or in any sense dramatically final for him. The conductor has seen so many of these exactly the same formal closures that he can't be too excited. He stands in this final story almost as a literary critic suspicious of the implications of the story's generic formalities: "When the train started Tom Little punched his ticket, grinned and, although he knew George Willard well and knew on what adventure he was just setting out, made no comment. Tom had seem a thousand George Willards go out of their towns to the city. It was a commonplace enough incident with him" (246). The familiarity makes Tom Little into a sort of post-modernist, aware of the dissonance between the formal ending of George's narrative and a different subversive form, implicit in his knowledge and experience, a form that would register alongside the *bildungsroman* a series of contradictory, contrary patterns. And, of course, that is precisely what *Winesburg, Ohio* is, a myriad of narrative patterns that imitate and subvert one another, duplicate often in formal narrative

pattern but differ in tone. But the conductor does not bend toward George Willard and reveal his misgivings. He does not say, "You may think you have emerged into maturity, that as an artist and as a man you are now something special; you many have thought that you were the hero of a novel, but there are a thousand other pretty much the same novels going on and that have gone on, most of them with comic or tragic consequences." That's no way to get along in a small town, with people you see day after day. The conductor's cynical, suspicious knowledge is registered merely by the grin (forcefully different than a smile) and his good sense decency in his lack of comment. The conductor's knowledge is also the narrator's knowledge, represented in the formal structure of the work itself, with its clever repetitions within individual stories and from story to story, which create multiple levels of knowledge and interpretation. The narrator, too, does not say this sort of thing out loud. The narrator doesn't remind us at this point, for example, that George's experience is similar to Enoch Robinson's, another young artist who had left for the city with artistic ambitions only to have them broken there and then again back in Winesburg. But the repeated stories constitute his awareness. His lack of overt comment is like the conductor's, a form of restraint, possibly out of common sense, but also because he has a different relationship to George's story (and to the other grotesques) than does the conductor. The conductor is critically jaded and not especially alive to others' stories. He is not interested in George's adventure because, first, experience has made him suspicious of outcome and dulled him to the excitement, but also because he has his own specific pleasures on his mind: "In the smoking car there was a man who had just invited Tom to go on a fishing trip to Sandusky Bay. He wanted to accept the invitation and talk over details" (246). The *Winesburg, Ohio* narrator is not distracted by his own personal involvement in the life of the town, but he too, out of temperament and experience, grins suspiciously at all claims of specialness, at all the high rhetorics of selfhood and at all those special mythologies of past and patriotism. But that grin is never translated into direct evaluation. His ironic knowledge is conveyed slyly, even duplicitously, through what amounts to winks, winks, delivered so imperceptibly that many, I'm afraid, have not seen them. He uses words that don't quite fit contexts, disturbing those invoked narratives so as to bring them into question. His is an art that often doesn't quite let the reader get the purchase that he expects. In the discussion of "Hands" that follows we will see him especially adept at smiles that subtly insist on the difference at the same time they draw attention flatteringly to similarity. This slyness, this nearly compulsive duplicity, is certainly an important dimension of Anderson's personality. At least he says it is. All through his autobiographies and letters he warns his reader not to trust him, not to take him too seriously: "I have always, from the beginning, been a rather foxy man, with a foxiness approaching slickness. If you ever by chance get into a horse trade with me be a little careful" (*Memoirs* 12). But the slyness is also a matter of manners, a necessity for staying aesthetically home. *A Story Teller's Story* is filled with parables probing the artist's relationship to various communities, stories that dramatize the various ways of achieving duplicity and doubleness. Anderson is fascinated, for example, by Judge Turner who uses his elaborate chivalric manners to satisfy his womanizing desires. But he's also intrigued by the Judge's style which allows him to maintain his standing with his audience even as he speaks for a perspective alien to and even contemptuous of that audience: "And when he spoke he, as always, concealed under so thick a coat of good natured toleration what sarcasm may have lurked in his words that he won and seemed always to hold the respect of all of his hearers" (*A Story Teller's Story* 138).[7]

But the *Winesburg* narrator is not simply ironically suspicious toward his characters and their stories. He is also really interested. In this respect, and others, George Willard is clearly a representative of the narrator. George Willard, in his several incarnations, exhibits a sort of respectful awe and fascination at the individual stories, an awe complicated by his own peculiar psychological complicity in their stories. that interest is, to some degree, a familiar small town gossipiness and the narrator is a small town gossip, an extraordinarily artful one. His minimalist introductions of character satisfy commonplace front porch desires for particulars of origin, distinguishing features, essential detail. But these minimalist portraits, so easy to skip over quickly, are remarkable expressionist portraits, condensing enormous issues in the seemingly artless front porch gossip. Just as Jane Austen's novel are the artful expression of the late 18th century upper middle-class gossip, so is Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* the artful expression of small town gossipy knowledge. Just as the complex structural symmetries of Austen's novels are a trope of her balanced, wise certainties, so is the extraordinary, complex narrative structure

of *Winesburg, Ohio* a trope for his equally wise uncertainties. The narrator is more than just interested. As he recounts these stories of the grotesques, he's also fascinated. Part of the fascination is conveyed by the rhetorical device of claiming he's not up to the job of describing the wonder of what he has to describe, that there is a story yet to be told and that it needs a poet to do it: "The story of Wing Biddlebaum's hands is worth a book in itself. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet" (29). Again and again the narrator insists on the wealth of mysteries that need to be explored, that promise beauty and strangeness that lie beyond normal, discursive comprehensions. So he's fascinated by the story he is telling, fascinated by stories that need to be told, distracted constantly, in fact, from the story he is telling: "Alice's stepfather was a carriage painter, and given to drink. His story is an odd one. It will be worth telling some day: (112). The central focus of every story is, in a sense, threatened in this way, by a narrator whose attention is likely to wander, or seem to wander. Early criticisms, even some very favorable ones, commented on this looseness, suggesting that what was of value existed in spite of this sloppiness:"Allow everything to the imperfection of form and everything to the author's occasional failure to rise to: what remains is a truly remarkable book..." (Mencken 258). This suggestion of formal deficiency was one of the criticisms that nettled Anderson. Usually he struck a pose of polite, self-deprecating gentlemanliness in response to negative comments, but he was impatient with this remark. Again from the autobiographies and letters, we can piece together a rather sophisticated essay on this issue of form, always remembering that Anderson was working from a fairly limited critical vocabulary. He frequently insists on the distinction between plot and form, arguing that his critics demand worn out plot, which he considers antithetical to life:"...and as for the plot stories of the magazines—those bastard children of De Maupassant, Poe and O'Henry—it was certain that there were not plot stories ever lived in any life I had known anything about" (*A Story Teller's Story* 262). Behind all Anderson's various comments of form is the same sort of defense that Conrad and Ford made of their impressionistic, narrative experimentation, that they were more realistic, imitating the nature of experience and the way we came to experience. Anderson knows that what he misleadingly calls his "loose form, " this rich roundabout circling and interruption and diversion, is his meaning:

> Hackett always attacks me by saying my sense of form is atrocious, and it may be true, However, he also commends me for getting a certain, large loose sense of life. I often wonder, if I wrapped my packages up more neatly, if the same large, loose sense of life could be attained. (*Letters* 72)

While I'm busy extracting the aesthetic explanation for this digressive impulse, I don't want to lose sight of its rhetorical function in *Winesburg, Ohio.* This fascination with the individual stories, the tug away from those stories by the attractiveness and mystery of the untold, convey a sense of plenitude and inexhaustible carnival of narrative possibility that runs counter to individual Winesburg citizen's' sense of narrowness and limited possibilities, and runs counter, as well, to his own ironic knowledge insinuated through his own descriptive language and present also in the work's structure.

The related tale format itself is a formal expression of the digressive impulse, expressing as it does a sort of democratic multiplicity of claims on the narrator's attention. In "An Awakening" George Willard, filled with a Lawrentian script of manhood, tries to assert his self at the pool hall. The other Winesburg boys who also want to talk about themselves, listen for five minutes to his artistry of self, as "he looked about, eager for attention" (132). But then the young Willard is shouldered aside, metaphorically speaking, by Art Wilson, who has his own theories, his own story in which he is special and plays the central role. This little drama compresses problematic selfhood in small town Winesburg. Willard is filled with a sense of his immensity and is impatient with his audience. He later becomes quite contemptuous of them, feeling that his understanding is conspicuously larger than their small town understanding. Distracted as he is, he cannot really listen to or understand the implications that Art Wilson story has for his own convictions, premature as it turns out, of manly significance. The narrator is the other side of this aesthetic competition. His interest, his recording, his implicit awareness of the subversive and complicating relationship of Art's story to Willard's, contradicts the altogether understandable and familiar infatuation-with-self script that makes George Willard so impatient with and contemptuous of his audience.

So the related tale format, like the digressions within the stories themselves, does double duty, acting to register fascination as well as problematizing knowledge. The democracy of fascination subverts the traditional novel's insistence on the centered individual. True, we can extrapolate the outlines of the traditional developing hero, see the collection of tales marking the development of the artist as a young man and see as well specific moral developments, for example in Willard's relationship to women. But as I have already suggested, one of *Winesburg, Ohio*'s achievements is to call into question those traditional scripts by identifying them as scripts of selfhood, challenging them with patterns that subvert.

Standard paradigms of artistic and personal maturation are complicated by rival reverse patterns of diminishment and failure. When Willard learns to pierce to the heart of another's story in "Loneliness," he does so at his expense and at his subject's expense. Tom Little's knowledge and the existence of many failed exiles who have already acted out the young Willard's adventure check our response to Willard's triumph, those other exiles acting in a sense like the doctor's son's foreboding, imagined future for George Willard, a future constructed out of intimate knowledge of the town. But Willard's story is central in an especially provocative way so as to give the "related tale" idea a new dimension. From the collection's very first story, we see that George Willard's development, and we should perhaps call it instead his various transformations or revisions, is purely a textural matter. I am using textural here in the sense of narrative or story and related interpretations. Living in Winesburg is conspicuously an aesthetic enterprise. Willard is audience to various textual assertions, stories, of selfhood. He makes personal decisions regarding his relationship to their stories, which are in fact aesthetic.[8] When he adopts apparently humane limits on his artistic/personal relationship to a story, he reveals a fear of self-recognition (see discussion of "Hands"). When he adopts a different, and we are tempted to think more nature, aesthetic and gets to the heart, he reveals desires for masculine power and domination that are hidden by the appealing aesthetic (see discussion of "Loneliness"). In addition, we see him as not just audience but blank text on which others try to rewrite their stories. Or at least they see him as such opportunity for visions and revisions. His mother wants his story to end differently from hers. He is her:"Within him there is a secret something that is striving to grow. It is the thing I let be killed in myself" (43). Wing Biddlebaum wants to rewrite his new radical romantic narrative in George. He plays central roles in the fictions of others. Elmer Cowley and Seth Richmond and Louise Trunnion use him as a rhetorical device in their respective narratives of self. His friendships, his filial, mentor, professional and erotic relationships are all aesthetic enterprises through which run all the cultural narratives that make up our lives. Every crisis, every tragedy, every comedy in this work is created by an aesthetic act. Wing Biddlebaum's high minded tousling is misinterpreted, perhaps, or interpreted correctly, perhaps. The idiot boy is successful with his story where Wing had been unsuccessful with his. George Willard's Lawrentian gibberish, his drama of manhood, is not only not accepted by Belle Carpenter, she's using him in a different story for the purpose of affecting Ed Handby who has a story of his own at work quite different as it turns out from the one playing in Belle's mind. In turn Willard and Belle Carpenter are a part of a misogynistic fable that Wash Williams, the town's potential serial killer, is working on. *Winesburg, Ohio* is the most fictive of the great fictive worlds that make up the canon of modernist/post-modernist fictions. It makes the fictive layers of *Lord Jim* seem, frankly, a bit thin. It makes the *Roshomon*-like fictionalizing of *Absalom, Absalom!* seem a bit self-conscious and melodramatic.[9]

George Willard is not, as I have indicated, different from the other citizens of Winesburg in respect to this issue of selfhood as a matter of interrelated, intertwined assertion of text and interpretation of those texts. He is representative. And in his curiously problematic relationship to the various stories he must, inevitably, constitute a self-interrogation on the part of Anderson himself, the sort of probing, aesthetic self-examination that is so much a part of the autobiographies. And each of the other artist figures in *Winesburg, Ohio* and those appearing in various guises in the autobiographies also represent provisional artistic selves that taken together can be said to represent Anderson's whole aesthetic and account for aspects of Anderson's effects. We can go through the collection and argue that one perspective is discredited and another valorized; but the truth is, every aspect of every artist representative—from Reefy's confounding to Parcifal's suspect autobiographical fictions to Welling's dazzling gibberish to Robinson's attempt to control meaning—is effected in *Winesburg, Ohio.*

I have argued here that this related tale format, especially as it expresses the fictive nature of life, is a form arising out of and congenial to small town living. the narrator's knowledge of repeated patterns, his habits of presentation, his interests, his suspiciousness of high claims—all are identified by Anderson as salient features of small town, Midwestern experience. Anderson's narrator, clearly a product of the town and experience beyond the town (see opening of "Respectability"), stands in possession of all the town's fictions but is untroubled by specific complicating personal relationships to the experiences he describes.[10] He has no fishing trip to go to, he reveals no fears based on a refusal to see himself, he is untroubled by desires for domination. And, perhaps most significantly, at least in respect to comparing this work with those other documents of modernism, he is untormented by the fictional, textual nature of reality. Conrad's Marlow agonizes over the "truth", shouts at his audience to wake up, is suspicious of them and of himself, tells two endings for two different audiences and then worries that he may have lied to one audience and implicitly lied to himself. So too with *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!.* We see the fragmentations, the different stories as tropes not only for the hopelessly incomplete modern condition but also for the lamentable loss of reality. It is Mr. Compson's grand, somber acknowledgement that all is language, story that Quentin finds intolerable. But Anderson's narrator, presiding over every bit as fictive, storied world as is present in these other novels reveals not one hint of real, modernist angst. In this respect he is very much like Anderson himself. Again and again in his autobiographies , Anderson will try to pin down some past part of himself and always, through one method or another, he discovers that he doesn't in any real sense exist, can't recreate or retrieve the past or a real part of himself because it is irrevocably fiction. Thomas Hardy makes a good portion of his poetry out of this, for him, agonizing discovery. Anderson is not dismayed, never laments the absence of real past, never disturbed by his lies, cheerfully, in fact, tells us that "men do not live in facts. They live in dreams" (*Memoirs* 26). And so they do. Anderson's narrator is a surrogate for this acceptance, even relishing, of the fictive nature of our most day to day living. Everything may be story, but he loves the stories. Anderson doesn't mind that he himself is an ever changing fiction. He's enraptured by his own story or stories. How else could we explain three autobiographies. Similarly, the *Winesburg* narrator may see through the various stories and claims of the grotesques, understand them in ways the individual citizens of Winesburg cannot, but he is enthralled at the same time. Every pull, every interruption, testifies to his delight. So this remarkable narrator offers us something unusual in narrative relationships in modernist fiction: a Post-modernist completely at home, in several senses, in the fictive carnival, and unlike his contemporaries, at home at home.

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I want to conclude this introduction by examining briefly the issue of Anderson's reputation. Two not especially contentious assumptions govern my remarks: First, all reputations, no matter at what level, represent complex cultural sociologies, so complex that it may be futile to even consider the notion of fixed criteria, although most of us hold on to such standards fiercely, if secretly; The second assumption seems unassailable. Anderson has been lost to us as a major writer; indeed it is arguable that he has never been looked at seriously being consigned to a type of avuncular, forerunner of more serious writers who displaced him almost before he was established. This is not to say that there has not been a fair amount said about him. A pretty steady stream of articles and books have appeared, but they are limited almost exclusively to bibliographical, biographical and thematic treatments. Missing almost entirely are close critical engagements with his language; missing are any sophisticated treatments by sophisticated theorists who have talked enthusiastically and at length about many lesser figures. Missing in the large body of criticism is any sustained, compelling sense of Sherwood Anderson as artist, artful user of language. When critics set out to engage even a minor Hemingway short story, they will find a dozen close engagements. Theorists of every stripe from Lacanians to strident feminists to the most opaque Marxists confront Hemingway at all levels. A great body of criticism for a great writer. There is a rich and ongoing discussion and negotiation between these different strata. One's approach checks and/or responds to or incorporates another in an ongoing discussion. But nothing remotely like this thoroughness of response exists in Anderson criticism. When a writer is not looked at closely, when he is merely used as a repository for a host of cultural pronouncements, he is not taken seriously. When there are no careful examinations of the artful use of language, thematic critics will be able to say pretty much anything they want. And they have. But the problem, if you concede that it is a problem, is not with those who have written about Anderson. It's with those who have not.

I want to offer a few speculations about why we do not read Anderson. I'll present them separately, but I think you will see their relatedness. Let me first look at two related facts that account at least partially for Anderson's second-rate, in several instances, critical treatment, especially as it has affected consideration of *Winesburg, Ohio.* The odd hybrid form, the related tale/novel, the salient formal fruition of Anderson's unique post-modernist sensibility, is part of the reason that individual stories have not been looked at carefully. If we look at the two compilations and summaries of critical treatment of his short fiction, we find that comments on individual stories are almost entirely at the service of larger thematic pronouncements regarding the novel as a whole. Getting at the complete aesthetic richness of any sizable novel is, of course, an impossibility. But with standard novels, standard in respect to certain conventions, there is usually some intense attention to *some* aspect which at least earns the right to make more general comprehensive statements. *Winesburg, Ohio*, however, with its separate tales, invites surface examination. [11]

While the related tale format has invited surface treatment of themes, there is another problem connected to the perception of Anderson as a writer principally of short fiction. the argument, or more properly speaking, the feeling, which I construct with some license, I imagine to go something like this. Novels are more important than short stories because they are, well, bigger. If a writer writes great novels then his short stories merit attention (although still they can't be as significant as the novels). But Anderson didn't write any great novels. Even though *Winesburg, Ohio* might be called a novel, it's really made up of short stories. I can't prove that this feeling exists, although I have a fair amount of anecdotal evidence to support it. I don't think the prejudice exists in poetry, or at least not any longer. We can't imagine denigrating Keats because he was only great in those tiny odes. Hardy's and Yeats's undisputed high rank rests firmly on their comparatively small pieces. but with fiction writers it is different. Those perceived as writing principally short fiction are generally not taken as seriously as writers who are perceived to be mainly novel writers.

And then there is this seemingly powerfully commonsense explanation. He may have written one fine book but one fine book, no matter how fine, is not enough to get to the top of the critical heap and be taken seriously by the kinds of people who mediate these issues. This may sound plausible at first, but, finally, can't be the determining reason although it may be contributory. First, even if it were true, just the stories in *Winesburg, Ohio* should be enough to establish Anderson in that first rank, guarantee him the sort of close examination by every new wave of critical notion so that he would, like Hemingway and Faulkner, be continually renewed and kept alive in our national consciousness. But it's not true that he wrote only one exquisite thing. In fact, he compares well in this respect with his counterparts who themselves certainly had many more misses than hits in their output. Repeating my argument that *Winesburg, Ohio* is not just one exquisite thing but many, he wrote as well a number of other extraordinary short stories. And, *A Story Teller's Story* deserves its place among the serious documents of this century, but it remains virtually unread, a giant tree falling in a forest with no one to hear it.

Perhaps more compelling than these reasons is the odd accident of Anderson's peculiarly bad timing. Delayed by education, by circumstance, by, as he might argue, the cultural pressure to succeed in business, Anderson emerges as a writer essentially contemporary with Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Hemingway, writers who are younger both literally and metaphorically than he. While he's briefly a *cause celebre* for his sexual naughtiness, in only a few years, that naughtiness had to seem, well, just naughty, a bit naive. How could those small time, rather coyly put forth "adventures" which seemed so daring and caused such a hullabaloo in 1919 compete for public attention with the cosmopolitan promiscuities of *The Sun Also Rises* or the heroic adulteries of *The Great Gatsby*. To the "with it" generation of the twenties and increasingly to the critics, Anderson must have seemed like he was looking back, Hemingway and Fitzgerald confronting the now. The lives of Hemingway and Fitzgerald and even Faulkner verified and reinforced and even reified their fictions. And this is, of course, the most compelling explanation for at least Anderson's initial slippage to the middle of the pack in respect to public and even critical estimation. His life seemed positively dull when put up against the great romantic fables lived out by Fitzgerald and Hemingway. They acted out the romantic mythologies of the lost generation and Jazz age excess they created in their fictions. For the general audience and to a large extent for the more specialized, sophisticated critical audience as well, both positive and negative, they were those fictions. Their written fictions sustained and nurtured their lives; their lives sustained and nurtured their fictions. What's more, their fictions were a marketer's dream. They managed to tell stories is such a way that the very things that, arguably, they were implying the most devastating things about, those things were what various audiences found most appealing, so appealing that they might be said to have missed what the stories were all about. So, while Gatsby might be in one sense about Gatsby's terrifying, corruption, his desire to deny history and enter back into the past, lots of people manage to read the novel either fully unaware of those complexities or by paying a sort of lip service to its trenchant truths while indulging in its very available wistful approvals. That lost generation in *The Sun Also Rises* may be lost but it's a delicious lostness, away in exotic lands, in command, or seeming to be, of the things Americans always seem to want to be in command of but aren't, other languages, authenticities, drinking wine from those impossible leather flasks. Anderson's life and the world of his fictions is, in comparison, painfully prosaic. True, he was a bit of a womanizer but not one who conducted himself in such a way as to get his name in the headlines. As far as wars go, he had especially bad luck, caught between his father's tales of the Civil War, in many minds humankind's greatest struggle on the one hand, and World War I, everyone's trope for the loss of innocence; he had only the Spanish American War, which, while it suited his ironic temperament, was not the stuff to fire anyone's imagination. While Hemingway and Fitzgerald wander in search of appropriate homes, exotic and other from what they had come from, Anderson builds a home in Marion, Virginia, which while it's not Clyde, Ohio, is pretty close. There he runs two newspapers, one Republican and one Democrat, makes dandelion wine when it's time to make dandelion wine, gossips with friends, disputes with neighbors over sanitation regulations, lives in a small town. No *Rachael* need wander the seas looking for this lost orphan. He was right at home. Most significantly, especially as it affected our overall sense of these writers, Hemingway and Fitzgerald died so much more convincingly, appealingly, than did Anderson. Their deaths, as indeed their lives, appear to have been written by a screenwriter steeped in the more superficial mythologies of the romantic artist. Fitzgerald's consuming alcohol and Hemingway's suicide gathered them up into the artifices they had themselves created. But Sherwood Anderson, on a goodwill trip to

South America sponsored by the State Department, accidentally ingests a cocktail toothpick and dies of peritonitis.

All these explanations of or, more properly, speculations on the reasons for our general neglect of Anderson may be subsumed, I think, under the general principle of his aesthetic decision to stay at home in the small town. We have assumed, provincially I think, that Anderson must be provincial because he stayed aesthetically and actually in the province from which he came. Of course, none of this can be proved except by the sorts of inferences I've already made from the mainly platitudinous treatment that dominates the body of Anderson criticism. But what else can, finally, explain the failure to read this great work closely. Some years ago, Susan Sontag made a famous, infamous to Sherwood Anderson scholars, dismissive comment regarding Anderson. Essentially her point was that we couldn't take Anderson seriously because he was too serious. I suppose it is axiomatic that a great theorist, or in Sontag's case, a popularizer of great theorists, need not necessarily be a careful reader. But still it is ironic that the writer who perhaps more than any other American writer exemplified all that Sontag was celebrating, the writer most at home in a purely fictive world and its interpretive maze, is the one she dismisses out of hand. Such deafness and blindness can only proceed, I would imagine, from her unshakable predisposition to find him as she did, naively non-modern, deadly intent on meaning, country cloddish. I realize that I might be accused of a similar sin, of arguing that Anderson should be taken seriously and that the only way to do so is to get him out of the critical provinces,metaphorically speaking, and let him experience the exotic taste of all those new-fangled critical discourses. Proving that Anderson is big time by talking about the textuality of all relationships then, might be seen as something akin to Gatsby's mansion, imitative of European models, or Myrtle Wilson's taking on the airs of the lady of the manor. But I would argue what Anderson knew so instinctively as an artist: that all the qualities we associate with modernism/post-modernism are simply another name for the condition of being American. Freed from history, or bereft of it depending on our point of view, Americans have from the very first been burdened with contriving identities and have done so in ways that expose the fictiveness of the world. As Gertrude Stein said,"America is the oldest country because it has been living in the Twentieth Century". Anderson knew as well that this great American drama of identity was rehearsed again and again with peculiar intensity in small Midwestern towns. And he knew that he belonged in those small towns.

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NOTES

1. Now that a certain group of sophisticated scholars have begun to examine the rhetoric and discourse that makes up the sense of the Midwest, perhaps there will be some interest in Anderson who is, I believe, our most thoughtful theoretician, at least among his contemporary Midwestern writers, regarding the Midwest and its problematic relationship to the East, to America, to the Old World. See Edward Watts's fine bibliographic essay encapsulating a number of the most recent developments in Midwestern Studies (36-45). Of special interest to Anderson scholars will be James Shortridge's *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (1989) which examines, in Watts's words, "the conflicted image of the Midwest as both backwater and heartland" (43). Other works which might provide critical starting points for new discussions of Anderson are John C. Hudson's *Making the Cornbelt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture* (1994). Hudson, according to Watts, associates the Midwestern cultivation of corn with a "lost period of democratic virtue" and the intrusion of soybeans with "late twentieth-century insurgence of corporate farming" (43) While Anderson writes well before the appearance of those dreaded soy beans, he certainly complains in similar fashion about the loss of a natural, sensual relationship with life. He speaks mainly about the devastation caused by industrialization's effects on man's craft. And he seems, by the way, to mean specifically men. Anderson has theories regarding the impotence of the modern male which, while they sound Lawrentian at times, are on balance much more sensible. He reasons that mechanization has broken the relationship between men's hands and their work, that this has made them impotent, metaphorically speaking. One explanation for the "disease of self" Anderson offers is that grotesque narratives of self-importance substitute for the once natural relationship now no longer possible. It should be understood that the origins of this disease of self is something that Anderson returns to again and again. Moreover it will be a large part of my argument that at his best, *Winesburg, Ohio,* Anderson never uncritically accepts the sort of numinous space, temporal or psychological implied in Hudson's comments and which, I'm sorry to say, make up a great part of the thematic treatment of Anderson. That is, Anderson's art documents the enormous significance of these narratives of purity and loss, not just pastoral but also biblical and chivalric, to the ways characters textually construct themselves. He is especially interested in the way impurities are cleverly masked by those numinous pure spaces.
2. We are reminded that there's a fair amount of violence in *Winesburg, Ohio*; there are real mobs, real beatings, actual murders, attempted murders and murders contemplated.

3 I mean by selfhood the aesthetic (partaking of the nature of art) enterprise of identity formulated through narrative and the dialogic interaction with other narratives. (See beginning of Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion.) "The Book of the Grotesque" offers a little fable of selfhood which resonates uncannily with post-modernist discourse. The narrator describes an old carpenter who has a theory of sorts regarding the evolution of human consciousness. First, "in the beginning" there is a kind of pre-human Eden when there are no truths, "when the world was young, there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth: (25). Clearly imitative of a creation myth, the next stage is human agency, represented by the generic "man" who "made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and

they were all beautiful" (25). Now, this difference between "thought" and "truth" may seem arbitrary. but the carpenter locates the difference in the construction, the making. The truths seems to correspond then to narratives, stories about particular abstractions (positive ones such as "passion," "wealth," and less positive such as "carelessness and abandon") and the thoughts then correspond to capacities or feelings not yet mediated. The truths have been made by humans but not yet claimed by individual humans. The world is still Edenic, beautiful:"Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful" (25). Then, "the people came along, " "people" a way of suggesting individuals as opposed to the generic man:"each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths..." (25). The narrator and the carpenter whose ideas he reports are merged here. The narrator tells us that the carpenter's ideas "made an indelible impression on my mind" (25) and they enabled him to "understand many people and things that I was never able to understand before" (25). The narrator joins his understanding with the carpenter's: "It was the truths that made the people grotesques" (25). The narrator doesn't say "some of the people or a few odd ones become grotesque but "each" implying that this grotesqueness is common to all. The carpenter we are told has a theory concerning the matter, (25) a theory of consciousness which, if not exactly Lacanian, certainly is compatible with post-modernist discourse: "...the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood" (26). There are several related implications: 1)To be human is to be grotesque. Anderson seemed genuinely puzzled by critics and friends who persistently viewed his grotesques as unusual or somehow distinct: "They are only people going along as I am. What happens to them in the stories happens to everyone" (*Memoirs 446*). 2)To be human is to claim an identity, to enter into a constructed truth, to live in terms of that identity. 3) To do so, to be human, is to enter into falsehood, to be ruptured from the truth, fallen, in a sense, into narrative, language, the signified. The "truths," themselves constructions of fictions, becoming "false" at an inescapable moment in human consciousness when they come to signify the "real," the human identity.

4. So many of Hemingway's characters are American tourists vainly taking on Europeanisms or exotic other worldliness, their empty narcissisms exposed in nameless train stations in Spain or in rainy winters in Switzerland. Of these characters, Brown physically goes home although psychologically he manages to remain distinct, apart, which was more or less the point of leaving in the first place. He was different, he was sure, from everyone else, especially the upstanding members of his little town. Diver, too, goes home, in a sense, but his sightings in upstate New York are part of the rhetoric of diminishment.
5. I don't want to misrepresent Anderson in respect to Europe and collateral issues. America's relationship to Europe, especially cultural, is a subject which preoccupies him in his various autobiographies and his letters and essays. Just as I have argued that these autobiographies, particularly *A Story Teller's Story*, are rich complicated meditations on the subjects of the Midwest and the dynamics of the small town, so too are they among the richest American meditations on America and its relationship to its European past. Much of the richness is more artistic than intellectual. That is, much of the complexity is conveyed parabolically in stories that appear deceptively simple. And like all the other issues that preoccupy him, he doubles back, undermines positions he has just presented, often with a story whose implications slyly run counter to an assertion he has just made. This is another way of saying that these autobiographies need to be examined aesthetically as well as sifting through them as a record of Anderson's intellectual perspectives. At times Anderson apparently finds much to value in Europe, often sounding a bit like Lawrence celebrating the more instinctive life of the European (See *A Story Teller's Story* 289). but finally he does not hanker after Europe. Even where Europe would seem to have clear superiority, in its valuing of culture and the artist, Anderson warily but definitely affirms America, claiming that Europe accepts the artist because "they know how harmless he really is—or rather do not know how subtly dangerous he can really be..." (*A Story Teller's Story* 217). Artists in Europe are not feared because they have less to expose whereas America promised so much, Americans aspired to so much, that the artist who registers the gap between the aching desire and the truth is indeed dangerous. His commitment to America is on several levels aesthetically, as a craftsman accepting his materials (see epigraph above); aesthetically and morally, those materials are superior because the stakes are higher, but the commitment is also profoundly an American commitment to living in the present and looking toward the future which is without question American. ("The future of the western world lay with America. Everyone knew that. In Europe they knew it better than they did in America" [*A Story Teller's Story* 315].)
6. There is another way to consider this commitment, a way less flattering to Anderson. The truth is that Anderson's imagination could not engage experience outside of the small town. While some have tried to argue that Anderson is a significant urban writer "analyzing both the phenomenon of the American city and the effects of urbanism upon a group of characters" (Williams 23), he is not. He sees the city always from without. Unable to imagine the stories of the city, Anderson is robbed of the digressive impulse that marks his best fiction. In his first two novels, *Windy MacPherson's Son* and *Marching Men* the novels go dead when the hero leaves for the city. One could argue that the problem was not in Anderson but in the city itself. Anderson in fact suggests in *Marching Men* (54) that the city is undifferentiated ugliness to be contrasted with the distinct grotesqueness of Coal Creek. In *A Story Teller's Story* he argues explicitly that their America offered only one story, one narrative, for expressing the soul's hungers:

> In America there seemed at that time but one direction, one channel, into which all such young fellows as myself could pour their energies. All must give themselves to material and industrial progress. (163)

This streak of historical sentimentalism, implying that in some prior time there were more varied,richer narratives or more aesthetically appealing and diverse channels for "young fellows" to create themselves, is certainly present in Anderson's many reflections on history. We see something similar in *The Great Gatsby* where one viable interpretation is that Gatsby has been failed by history's aesthetic deterioration which has only provided him with cheap magazine fictions with which to create the self. Fitzgerald's masterpiece is, of course, considerably more complicated than this, problematized deliciously by a problematic narrator whose motives for this sympathetic interpretation of Gatsby are at least suspect. Anderson's own various romanticizations of history are also aesthetically problematized, especially in *A Story Teller's Story* which offers parable after parable of both artist representatives and others who feel born "out of their time." There is story upon story of Anderson creating selves for their rhetorical effects; he tells stories about creating fictive pasts to satisfy personal needs; in what amounts to a deconstructionists's dream, he reflects on the incontrovertible fictionality of the past, concluding that no such thing as a real past exists. (At one point in *A Story Teller's Story* Anderson remembers lying in a hayloft with the fat son of a prosperous farmer who has recently built a new house reflective of his growing prosperity. The old house, which seems to be "smiling and calling" (97) to him comes to represent an older pastoral purity menaced by the new emerging order. The whole episode is further complicated because it is stimulated by overhearing his father's tale-telling. What happens here, among other things, is that Anderson locates the appeal of the older "pure" pastoralism in his own psychological need for a home ("Now myself and my brothers had no home..." [97]). He suggests here and elsewhere, then, that these narratives of our pasts and edenic pastoralism are not “real” plenitudes but constructed fictions expressing our desire for such purities. We will see in the discussions of “Hands” and “Respectability” that the characters’ constructions of these pure pasts have written into them parodic, undermining discourses.

7. *A Story Teller’s Story* merits full examination as a full fledged work of art. As I have said before, it is a meditation on the metaphorizing of the Midwest, on the nature of America, on the peculiarly aesthetic nature of small town life. Embracing all these topics is the persistent, nearly obsessive, interest in the artist: his accommodations to audience, the past, both European and personal; the ways that the artist disguises his ignoble yearnings with high minded abstractions or the way he uses fictions of self rhetorically to accomplish specific ends. These reflections, provocative as they are as individual comments, are complicated aesthetically by juxtapositions, so that some of Anderson’s generally assumed standard postures are subverted when they are followed by other stories. His stories about his father, especially those where he examines his father’s tales, their motivations, their effectiveness, and his relationship to those stories, his recognition of himself, his terror at being imprisoned in the father, become parables of ways the artist has of accepting the past, providing for its deficiencies and thus triumphing over it, yet at the same time repeating its illusions of escaping, ways of acknowledging the past yet and then using the acknowledgment as part of the rhetoric that distances one from the past. There are artist figures who stand for different relationships to the community. (In the *Memoirs* he tells of Sneaky Pete who is in the habit of learning the names of respectable men of the town who have visited prostitutes and then standing in the street and shouting out their names and their particular sins. One of the richest and complex of these parables is the story of Judge Turner whose story is so congruent with facts from Anderson’s own life. Because his story ends with a return to and commitment to the life he had left and because it is similar in so many ways to the stories Anderson has told about his own life, all of the implications of his story have special authority to Anderson’s own aesthetic. Turner has tales about telling tales for revenge, tales about masking personal humiliations; and stories about the problematic relationship to an intimate audience; stories about the artist who notes the grotesque obscenities that are disregarded by others. Anderson uses these stories about other artist figures as a way of suggesting that he is significantly different from them. At the same time they, inevitably, become ways of understanding origins and implications and dimensions of his own work. Something similar goes on with the many artist surrogates in *Winesburg, Ohio.* Characters like Dr. Reefy in “Paper Pills” and Joe Welling in “A Man of Ideas” provide different views of the artist and alert us to important qualities of art and its relationship to audience, qualities outside the comfortable platitudes about communication. Reefy arranges truths, writes them down on scraps of paper and in new and different ways then wads them up in balls and throws them at an old friend saying, “‘ That is to confound you, you blithering old sentimentalist,’ he cried, shaking with laughter” (36). Joe Welling succeeds in his artistry by means of distraction and dazzling performance. His success with one audience depends on confounding another. Both these stories and others contribute to our recognition that Anderson’s aesthetic is *Winesburg, Ohio* cannot be restricted to any one containable thesis.

8. It is not going too far to say that each personal relationship is a parable of the artistic and that each artistic relationship is a parable of the personal. It is in

“Loneliness” where Anderson artfully blurs the lines between and among artist, audience, and personal.

9. I don’t mean this as an invidious comparison. Faulkner and Conrad both are interested in other issues, especially in the appropriateness of certain ways of telling stories, different literary modes so to speak. They have complexities that Anderson does not, but he has complexities that they do not. Anderson stands with them.

10. The possible psychological relationship of the narrator to his reformulation of characters’ discourses will be discussed in the chapter on “Hands.”

11. There is a notable exception to my claims of neglect by certain kinds of critics and theorists. John Crowley’s *New Essays on* Winesburg, Ohio, published in 1990, presents four fine essays by David Stouck (“Anderson’s Expressionist Art”), Marcia Jacobson (“*Winesburg, Ohio* and the Autobiographical Moment”), Clare Colquitt (“Motherlove in Two Narratives of Community: *Winesburg, Ohio* and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*), and Thomas Yingling (“*Winesburg, Ohio* and the End of the Collective Experience.”) John Crowley’s generally sensible and accurate introduction, especially sensible in its recognition that “Anderson’s literary reputation was founded on apparent misapprehensions,” provides a useful background to the essays that follow. Stouck is one of the very few critics to respond to stylistic complexities in Anderson, one of the very few who has been willing to take Anderson’s frequent insistence on his own stylistic complexity seriously. My understanding of Anderson’s expressionism differs from Stouck’s mainly in that I do not see it as a way of transcending, through art, “the relativity of truth” (46). Stouck is acute in his sense of the work’s repeated patterns and stylized repetitions (43). Marcia Jacobsons’s essay should have served as the beginning of a renewed interest in Anderson’s autobiographical fictions, now one of the most energetic of theoretical discourse. Unfortunately, it has not. She notes the work’s many subversions of the standard *bildungsroman* interpretations offered by critics such as Fussell. I find her argument that at the end the narrator (Anderson) and George Willard merge to be challenged by her own noting of the patterns (the other failed artists etc.) that subvert that assumption. Clare Colquitt’s essay is valuable mainly for its recognition of “*Winesburg’s* multivalent generic identity” (77). Colquitt underestimates, I believe, the complex notion of community that underlies *Winesburg, Ohio* and how that notion is compatible with post-modern critical discourse. She, convincingly I think, contrasts the numinous, sentimental sense of community (although she doesn’t represent it so) found in Sarah Orne Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs* with Anderson’s without fully understanding how the *Winesburg* narrator represents Anderson’s radical understanding of community as of set of recognized texts to be interpreted but never agreed upon. She too subscribes to a sentimentalist notion of believing that only the artist can “impose order and meaning on an essentially meaningless world, one in which both God and mother have died” (86). The implied equation there of God and mother is one that Anderson’s characters might occasionally accept or privilege, but not Anderson, at least not the Anderson who understands that Willard’s mother’s sacrifice is part of her own narrative of self, part of her own need to retell her story. The full complexity of this mother’s love is seen in the various autobiographies where Anderson most certainly gives vent to the mother adoration that Colquitt ascribes to him but also examines carefully the origins of those narratives. Colquitt’s essay is an example of why we need to look

at the individual stories carefully before making general pronouncements. Thomas Yingling's essay is, in my opinion, the most significant essay on Anderson to appear in some time. It is important mainly for bringing to bear intelligently and thoughtfully contemporary critical discourses on Anderson, our most underdiscussed and undertheorized writer. Before getting to his main point, a reading of *Winesburg, Ohio* arguing a historically situated loss of harmonious collective experience, Yingling brings up Jacques Lacan.

> Jacques Lacan, in his reading of Freud's theory of the mirror stage, has suggested that the ideal, coherent self we posit for ourselves in the mirror stage of development (at approximately eighteen months) is a fundamental misrecognition of what remains the contradictory otherness of our bodily and psychic existence; such misrecognition "situates the agency of the ego," Lacan remarks, "in a fictional direction" (Lacan 2). (104)

As I understand Yingling, he substitutes, writing with Gramsci in mind, "cultural recognitions" for Lacan's "familial recognitions" (104). So, the peculiar grotesqueries of *Winesburg, Ohio* are the result of historical, cultural failure:

> ...but without the mirroring agency of strong collective structures, identity (considered as self-knowledge anchored in a coherent, stable ego) may be impossible. As institutions falter, so do the identities of those people who have recognized themselves in them. (104).

Yingling, thus, cleverly shifts the focus away from Lacan's ahistorical emphasis on the nature of consciousness to an emphasis on historical and cultural culpability, especially seen in his reading of "Queer" where "a completely different economic formation, one in which the regime of the commodity has taken hold" (112). Yingling accepts, then, the notion that without the intervention through history of industrialism, capitalism, a healthy relationship between human and labor would exist, believes that a "coherent, stable ego" would then be possible. That is why he concludes that *Winesburg, Ohio* must be read as "an elegy" (125). I should add, that he might have cited countless instances from Anderson's autobiographies and letters to support this position, or allotropic versions of it, expressed variously as a desire for craftsmanship, relationship to place, to land, to the inner life, to the feminine, etc. But as I have said repeatedly those various statements are themselves aesthetically modified and complicated. From my point of view it is more accurate to say that while the various identities are clearly historically distinct, Anderson does not valorize or privilege those identities from pasts that precede the historical intrusion. In *Winesburg, Ohio,* this privileging is called into question in several ways: first, characters themselves reflect on edenic pasts in such a way that we see that those harmonies mask contradictory, unprivileged discourses,; second, Jesse Bentley in the "Godliness" sequence enacts what might be called a sort of historical allegory in which Jesse's pre-industrial, pre-modern Old Testament narrative of self is transformed and finally supplanted by his grandson's byronic romantic narrative of self. Neither of these identities seem privileged or valorized. Rather they are versions, historically distinct, of the process of consciousness described in "The Book of the Grotesque." It is true, however, that to be an American is to confront and reveal in an especially intense way the nature of human identity. And it is also true that to be a small town American from the Midwest is to enact that larger American drama of identity in an especially intense and aesthetically satisfying way.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S MIDWEST AND THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH IN *BEYOND DESIRE*

DAVID D. ANDERSON

After the publication of *Dark Laughter* in 1925 Sherwood Anderson did not publish another novel for seven years, until he published *Beyond Desire* in 1932. For Anderson, however, those seven years were neither idle not fallow, but they were instead years of muted but real discovery: of the people of the hill country of Western Virginia; of his new identity and role as a small-town journalist; of the turmoil of a newly-industrialized South; of a nation adrift in an accelerating depression; of the machines, alternately fascinating and frightening, that threatened to dehumanize those who had become its servants; of the threatened failure of a nation and a people.

Those seven years were also a time of self-discovery during which he probed deeply into his own past, that of his boyhood and youth in a Midwestern town of another generation, and which he found oddly reprised in small-town Virginia. He rediscovered, too, his role as a writer, a teller of tales, and he wrote "Death in the Woods," with a theme that had haunted him, and that is perhaps his best short fiction; he came to the end of another love and another marriage, even as he met the woman who was to be his last, his best, and his most enduring love. And in the hills of Western Virginia he re-discovered a time, a place, and a people that he had been convinced had long disappeared from the American scene but that he knew as intuitively and compassionately as he had the people of Clyde and Elyria, Ohio, of the volunteer Army of 1898, of those who shared with him the intimacy and impersonality of a series of Midwestern boarding houses as the nineteenth century had become the twentieth.

During those seven years, from his new-found base in the Western Virginia hills, where he built a new-old stone and timber house on Ripshin Farm at the junction of Ripshin and Laurel Creeks near Troutdale, Anderson did a great deal of wandering—through the South, to writers' conferences here and abroad, to Washington to confront the members of a moribund administration, to mill and mining towns to demonstrate his sympathy for the workers. He lectured; he pondered the future of a nation that had lost sight of its destiny; and he pondered, too, his own intellectual commitment to the means by which the nation might be returned to its proper course. As friend after friend moved to the left and beyond, urging him to join them and berating him for not committing himself to the new age of revolution and the inevitable future that was exemplified by the Soviet Union, Anderson, too, drifted slowly to the left, but, reluctant to commit himself to Communism, he maintained that his true role was neither as a revolutionary nor a politician, neither as an activist nor a theorist; he was and remained a teller of tales.

During those years, however, Anderson told few tales, but he did a great deal of writing, most of which reflected his searches, his new identity as a townsman-journalist as well as his old as writer, his wandering, his concern with the effect on people of the new industrialism in the South, and the interests he absorbed from his growing relationship with Eleanor Anderson, the YWCA social worker with whom he travelled to the mill towns of the South. Inevitably they fell in love; his third marriage to the bookish Elizabeth Prall had disintegrated; his fourth was approaching.

In spite of the countless impressions and conflicts as well as recurring bouts of depression during those years, Anderson, true to his fundamental and enduring identity, continued to write. But little of it consisted of the fiction that had made his reputation as a writer and a mentor to the new, younger writers of the twenties and early thirties, many of whom later repudiated him, as did Hemingway in *The Torrents of Spring* (1926). Instead Anderson probed his past in *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926), a thinly-fictionalized autobiographical memoir; he collected recent occasional pieces in *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook* (1926), his country journalism in *Hello Towns!* (1929), and his fugitive verse in *A New Testament* (1927), and he wrote a brief celebration of an age old ritual in *The American County Fair* (1930).

Then, as he discovered the people of the South in industrial turmoil as he had earlier known those of the Midwest in the same circumstances and transmuted that knowledge into literature in *Poor White* (19210, he began limited, tentative explorations of that new experience in two brief fictional limited editions, *Nearer the Grass Roots* and *Alice and the Lost Novel* (1929). Longer tentative fictional interpretations were attempted and abandoned, and in 1931 he published *Perhaps Women*, a testament to his new understanding of a nation in turmoil. In essays, sketches, bits of free verse, and recorded thoughts and observations, Anderson at once defined the fear and wonder that the machines of a new industrialism engendered in him and in the Southerners he encountered in his wanderings, and he concluded with a growing conviction that the men who tend the machines have lost both their identity and their manhood in the process; that only the women in the mills remain strong enough to reclaim the human freedom and strength the men have already lost to their new industrial masters, human as well as machine.

At this point Anderson knew that he was ready to return to fiction as a means of recreating and interpreting in human terms what he had learned, and, although his wandering, his political indecision, and bouts of depression continued, he began sustained work on a new novel. This was *Beyond Desire*, published in 1932 and dedicated to Eleanor Copenhaver, who had shared her world, her insights, and her people with him.

For the subject matter of *Beyond Desire* Anderson turned to the South in social and industrial turmoil in the late 1920s and early 1930s; for the structure of the novel he returned to the form he had used only once before, that of *Winesburg, Ohio*. The atmosphere of the novel is permeated with the indecision that marked not only his life at the time but much of America's as well. It is not a proletarian novel in either a descriptive or an ideological sense, nor had Anderson attempted to write one, although such novels, portraying economic strife as class warfare as they denounce capitalism, call for revolution, and celebrate the proletariat, had become popular on the left and praised for their social awareness by the doctrinaire Marxist critics who had, by the time of *Beyond Desire*'s publication, begun their decade-long domination of the literary and intellectual journals. Like *Winesburg, Ohio, Poor White,* and his other novels and short stories, *Beyond Desire* is about people, about those caught up in the events of their time and place, forces that they can neither understand nor control, as they search for the elusive understanding and strength that will enable them to survive and perhaps ultimately take charge of their lives.

Beyond Desire, in spite of its setting in the newly-industrial mill towns of the South and despite the clear insight with which Anderson defines the traditional social class hierarchy of the South, is firmly rooted in Anderson's own Midwestern experience and in the best of

Anderson's attempts to define them in fiction in *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Poor White*. The structure of *Beyond Desire* is *Winesburg, Ohio* reprised. The novel consists of four interrelated novellas, the cumulative effect of which, unlike the quiet anticipation of George Willard's leaving Winesburg in "Departure," makes inevitable a clash that is perhaps the first skirmish in what Anderson had predicted eleven years earlier in *Poor White*, the war between classes that would be the worst possible war.

Each of the four novellas is both self-contained and interrelated through plot, character, and/or setting with each of the others, as are the stories in *Winesburg, Ohio,* and each is the story of a single individual in the town of Langdon, Georgia, as in the *Winesburg, Ohio* stories. The first, "Book One: Youth," is the story of Red Oliver, the son of the respected town physician and his wife, a proud, silent woman considered "white trash," and the beginning of Red's search for his own identity in the rigid three-class structure—the old, secure, powerful families, the newcomers from the North, supervisors and engineers, who control the mills, and the mill workers, poor whites from the town, the surrounding countryside, and the hills—that defines individual identity in the town. The few blacks in the town are outside the class structure, used but ignored by the others.

Like the town and the old mansion in which Red's family lives, Red's family, like some of the other old families in the town, is slowly decaying. Red had been sent North to college, where he was introduced to radicalism, but he had been forced to return to Langdon when his father died unexpectedly and to go to work in the mill as a common laborer. Because of his background, however, the mill superintendent sees him as one who undoubtedly will rise. In the background of this simple phase of a young man's life are the people and the mills of Langdon. The people—an itinerant preacher; the mill hands and mill girls, the latter mothers to their children, the machines; the lame old watchman at the mill gate; Tom Shaw, the president of the mills, a member of an old family who "had read his "Grady" and saw the New South; the black women servants—are all grotesques in the Winesburg manner. They are all caught up in circumstances they neither sought nor understood nor controlled, and beyond all of them is the smooth, orderly operation of the mills, as well as hints of labor trouble and of the coming automatic machines of the future.

Book One reaches its climax when Red must make the first decision concerning his self image. He had been a good baseball player in high school and is expected to continue playing. Both the town and the mills have teams that reflect the town's social structure. They do not play each other—"For the town team to have played the mill boys..." was unthinkable, Anderson tells us. Red chooses to play on the mill team, the team of his mother's people, with whom he has become increasingly sympathetic. Book One and Red Oliver's youth end in tones reminiscent of *Dark Laughter* when he remembers an incident of his childhood: the soft laughter of the black woman servant and her male lover as they mock Red's mother, whom they can only despise.

"Book Two: Mill Girls," the shortest of the four novellas, which was first published as a novella in *Scribner's*, January 1932, is the story of Doris Hoffman, one of the young women who work in the spinning room at the mill, her baby, her weak husband Ed, a mill hand, and her friends and co-workers, Grace, Fanny, and Nell. Doris is strong, intelligent but unread, capable, and unafraid, the natural leader of the mill girls, aware as the others are not, or —as the others are afraid to be—conscious of the larger world beyond the mill and the town. Consequently, like Kate Swift and Alice Hindman in *Winesburg, Ohio,* she knows that that world is far beyond her grasp, and she accepts the role—or more properly roles—in the mill, in the frame mill-owned house, one of forty all alike, in which she lived with her husband, her baby, her mother-in-law, and in the few social moments she allows herself with her friends, that seem pre-determined for her. But there is the promise of a respite.

The year is 1930, the month October, the time of a travelling fair which permits the mill girls and mill hands a glimpse of something brighter and more attractive than their lives in the mills and drab houses. Doris determines to go with her friends; unaware that in its emphasis on the machine—the mechanical rides, the mass-produced treats of Coca Cola and Milky Ways, the impersonal, automatic fun—it is a fraud, but in it Doris catches a glimpse of the world beyond hers. "The fair was crowded and your shoes got dusty and the shows were shabby and noisy but Doris didn't know that," Anderson says. And for Doris and the others, the few hours there are all too brief, a temporary respite in the dull lives they have no choice but to accept.

Even as her husband stays home, wrapped up in the scheming for a union that will save them, Doris doesn't care. Her concern is with people, those in her daily life. At the fair she cheers the mill team as it plays a mill team from another town. She notes how well a young redheaded man plays, and she reflects that he seems okay. She had heard that he was a townsman, a sweeper in the mill, rumored to be a company spy.

"Book Three: Ethel" returns to the life of the town as it coexists with but apart from the life of the mills. The longest of the novellas and perhaps the most complex, it is the story of Ethel Long, a young woman who is at once a member of one of the town's first families and an avowedly modern woman who, like Red Oliver, is determined to find her own identity in a structure that denies her that right. Ethel is a "new woman" in the spirit of the Chicago Renaissance, a modern, in her terms, who rejects the conventions of the South as observed in Langdon, Georgia, the town in which she had been born. She had been educated in the North, at the University of Chicago, from which she had received her A.B. as the Chicago Renaissance became history and had taken a job in the Chicago Public Library. Anderson's vignettes of Chicago include the magnificence of Michigan Avenue, which Ethel admires, and the tawdriness of a crowded literary party in which the lesser lights pay obeisance to the literary giants Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg, which upsets her, especially when "A poet named Bodenheim came, smoking a corn-cob pipe. It stank." Anderson reveals her to be a bit of a snob when she tells herself "'I'm the best-dressed woman here'" and "'What a lot of frumps there are among the literary ladies.'" Finally, working in a far West Side branch of the Library among Chicago's working class, she rejects the substance of much modern literature—the "low-grade people" of Dreiser and Lewis, the tedious stories of life in Midwestern towns, the hired men in them whom she knows would smell, people like the mill hands she remembered in Langdon.

However there are men in her life, a young instructor at the university, who is ineffectual, and another, an advertising man whose sexual sophistication—in Langdon it would be perversion—frightens her, and when a new Carnegie Public Library is built in Langdon, she returns home to become the librarian, itself to her father, Judge Long, a daring if not dangerous act for a southern lady to the manor born. Still, however, as in Chicago, she dreams of what she wants: "elegance, style, a world of color and movement," and then she meets in the library as a patron a younger man whose questionable behavior and ill-bred mother had made him a subject of gossip in respectable circles in the town. His name is Red Oliver, and in time an affair, largely at her instigation, develops in the library after the last patron is gone and the lights are out. At the same time she is pursued by Tom Riddle, a wealthy, realistic lawyer, whom she eventually seeks out, knowing that he'll marry her, and leaving Red Oliver to confusion and a sense of defeat.

"Book Four: Beyond Desire," is, for Red Oliver, the protagonist, just that, beyond the sex, overt or covert, that had threatened to ensnare Red, Ethel, and the other people of Langdon, as it had ensnared so many of the people of Winesburg. There it had permitted only George Willard and Helen White to go beyond it, if only for a moment in the empty Winesburg Fair Grounds, in the sketch "Sophistication." Thus George was free to leave the town for the future that he approached in confidence.

For Red Oliver, however, beyond desire is a camp of striking workers in a field near the town of Birchfield, North Carolina, in November, 1930. Red, wandering the South after his rejection by Ethel and a strike in the Langdon mills that compounded his confusion, had come to the camp with a young woman who had mistaken him for an expected Communist labor leader, but neither was Red a Communist nor was he a committed striker. Yet when a fat travelling salesman had picked him up on the road earlier he said that he was, and he thought about the tales the garrulous salesman would tell his friends. Later, in the camp, he was a communist, but he wasn't. Red's doubts intensify; he wants to be counted, and yet he isn't sure, but in the end the indecision didn't matter as the National Guard is called up to restore order, and the rhythmic echo of marching men is heard in the hills.

But these are not the sounds of workers united, as had been the case in *Marching Men* (1917), Anderson's first attempt to deal with the frustration of the factories, and confrontation is inevitable. The guard, under command of a young man who might have been Red's friend confronts the strikers and a psychological line is drawn. Unlike George Willard, who, in "Departure" had gone on to a promising future in the city, Red in the forefront, still unsure of his identity, his commitment, or his beliefs, steps forward, shots are fired, and he is dead, even as the strike disintegrates.

Perhaps the term most frequently applied to the novel among contemporary critics is "confused," although Anderson's contemporaries saw it for what it was: an accurate, deeply-felt portrayal of one of the most confusing times in the then century and a half of the nations' existence. Edmund Wilson later commented in *The American Earthquake* (1958) that for those who hadn't experienced the depression it was difficult to believe that it had taken place, that indeed, in his words, "between 1929 and 1933 the whole structure of American society seemed actually to be going to pieces." *Beyond Desire* is not only a more accurate reflection of that apparent disintegration, in Wilson's terms, that "American earthquake," than any of the other novels of the period, including Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited* (1933) and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), both of which are more conventionally proletarian in their celebration of the working class and their call for revolution, and both of which remain higher than *Beyond Desire* in the academic, intellectual, and critical hierarchy. Unfortunately *Beyond Desire* is long out of print, and, like the times that engendered it, it has passed beyond the consciousness of most living Americans.

Unfortunate, too, is the fact that, except for a few perceptive reviewers and readers then and a handful of academics now, the subject matter of *Beyond Desire* is not the only aspect of it that is forgotten, lost in the rhetoric that saw it as a "sex novel," as "disappointing, as "puzzled," even, in Clifton Fadiman's terms in *The Nation,* as "embarrassing;" what is forgotten is that *Beyond Desire* is a good novel, that it is a novel about people and that those people are not merely symbolic of their times but are recognizably human, that in their confusion, in their humanness, even in their grotesquery, they are worthy to stand beside Wing Biddlebaum, Dr. Reefy, Elizabeth Willard and all the other people of Winesburg. Not only is the novel worthy of reprinting but it should be required reading in a nation and a generation that have forgotten and refuse to remember their past.

One footnote remains: surely Anderson knew what he had accomplished, knew the durability of the work. In a vignette in "Book Four: Beyond Desire" he portrays a young woman, a Columbia M.A., a radical feminist, a small town woman like her mother, unmarried, yet in another character's words, potentially a good wife, a beautiful lover. Not only is the novel dedicated to "Elenore," but here in *Beyond Desire* is Anderson's most durable tribute to her.

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S DISCOVERY OF A FATHER

PAUL W. MILLER

While trying to separate fact from fiction in the sharply divergent views of Sherwood Anderson's father presented by Sherwood at different times in his life and by others who knew Irwin McLain Anderson well, one may initially find it comforting to learn that certain facts in his life are indisputable. No doubt these facts, as well as being indisputable, are essential to an understanding of Irwin's life and character. Nevertheless, it is not these facts but the son's changing interpretations of them that requires the lion's share of attention as we explore the son's discovery of a father—a discovery leading simultaneously to the son's discovery of himself as a "writer man," to use his own quaint expression.

The contrast between Anderson's earlier and later views of his father is so sharp as to be almost contradictory. Initially he rejects his father not only as a liar, a poor provider, and a womanizer, but as an embarrassment to the whole Anderson family, especially as he participates enthusiastically and sometimes foolishly in Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades. Later, however, the son comes to recognize in his father, with all his faults, the very type of story telling artist Sherwood had once despised but whom he eventually he comes to admire, a man who converts facts into entertaining fictions superior to everyday reality. In addition to crediting his father, correctly or incorrectly, with whatever artistic potential he (Sherwood) may have inherited from his parents' gene pool, he identifies his father as the long unrecognized, hence long unacknowledged model of his own artistic development from childhood to maturity. Regretting the fact that his father could not be a conventionally successful father as well as an artist, the son nevertheless finds consolation in the fact that his father, like many other creative artists including Sherwood himself, eventually comes to accept, or at least to cope with, the alienation from society which is the price the artist often pays for his freedom. In the course of changing his views on his father, Anderson also comes to realize that as a child he had been part of the conventional, censorious society which he later sees as the enemy of art, and from which his father helped liberate him. In effect, the wheel has come full circle. The son has finally come to see his father not as the enemy he was in childhood. Far from despising him, he comes to see him not only as the progenitor of whatever is artistic within him, but as his best friend and mentor, bound to him closer than a brother by "the blood," the biological inheritance passed from father to son. Interestingly, the views of Irwin's stepson and close friend Fred Stevens, as well as the judgments of such seasoned scholars as Ray Lewis White, tend to support Anderson's later views of his father rather than his earlier views.

Before dealing with these divergent views of Sherwood's father as they illuminate Sherwood's artistic development and growing self-knowledge, I will sketch some of the more important, undisputed facts of Irwin Anderson's life as they reveal his life and character. He was born on August 7, 1845 on a prosperous farm in West Union County, Ohio. From 1863 to 1865 he served in the Civil War as a private in the Grand Army of the Republic, first in Company G, Regiment 129 of the Ohio Volunteers, then in Company F, Regiment 7 of the Ohio Cavalry Volunteers. He saw military action in Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. After several years of travel following the war, travel that included visits with relatives in California, he settled in the village of Morning Sun, Preble County, Ohio, about 1870; there on March 11, 1873, some months after suffering a painful rejection by his first love, he married 20/21 year old Emma (Smith) Anderson from the Hopewell United Presbyterian Church they both attended (White 229; Sutton 493-94). Not much resembling "the dark, beautiful and somewhat mysterious woman" Sherwood portrayed her as being, Emma impresses the editor of her 1872 diary as "an attractive, healthy, industrious, pleasant, unsophisticated quasi-adult" (White 221-22; 225).

By 1873 Irwin was supposedly ready to settle down to life as a married man. However, it was not stability and prosperity but the itinerancy and poverty of his wandering years that followed him and his family most of the rest of his life, as he changed employment from saddlery to house painting, to sign painting, to interior decorating. He

also moved from county to county, mostly in Ohio—Preble County until 1877, Richland County until 1879, Marion County until 1883, Clyde in Sandusky County to about 1899 (the family's longest residency, where Sherwood grew up), Connersville in Fayette County, Indiana to 1914, and Dayton, Ohio in Montgomery County until his death in 1919. Emma bore him seven children under painfully adverse circumstances from 1874 to 1890, with six of the children surviving to maturity. Of the six, Sherwood was the third, born on September 13, 1876 in Camden, Preble County. Supported by Emma's impassioned affidavit to the effect that Irwin suffered terribly from bleeding, incapacitating piles brought on by chronic diarrhea during the war, he applied for and received a gradually increasing army disability pension that amounted to $35 a month at the time of his death (Documents dated Nov. 16, 1888; Dec. 13, 1889; June 4, 1898; Sept. 25, 1915; June 13, 1919). On May 10, 1895 Emma died of consumption at age 43 (*Story Teller's Story* 8, footnote 4). Both before Emma's death in Clyde and after Irwin moved to Connersville, he was known for stories embroidering and glorifying his war experience, for his spirited participation in parades and amateurish but well received theatricals nostalgically taking him back to the Civil War, and for his apocryphal experience in San Francisco and elsewhere as a well-paid actor.

On March 13, 1901 in Connersville, Irwin married Minnie (Stevens) Anderson, who had a young son , Fred, by a previous marriage. She also bore Irwin a son, Harold, born on March 21, 1903 (Documents, August 29, 1919). For Sherwood the years from his mother's death in 1895 to his father's death twenty-four years later was a period of almost total alienation from his father. During this time Sherwood hardly ever saw his father, if indeed he saw him at all (Sutton 359; Townsend 30). In 1914, for reasons unknown, Irwin moved from Connersville to the National Military Home, commonly called the Soldier's Home, in Dayton, the city where his son Ray was living. There he lived an active life until shortly before his death on May 23, 1919, following injuries suffered in a fall from a ladder ("Prominent Civil War Veteran" 1).

Although Sherwood was probably notified of his father's death by Karl, the oldest son, he did not attend the funeral. Of Irwin and Emma's five children still living in 1919, only Ray, then editor of the *Miami Valley Socialist* newspaper, was present (*Williams' Dayton*

City Directory 1918-19). Irwin was buried in the National Cemetery adjoining the Home, in Section 2, Grave 15, Row 2 (Graves Registration Card).

We turn now to Sherwood's interpretation of these facts early in his career as a writer. According to his autobiographical *A Story Teller's Story*, Irwin was a poor provider, indeed little more that a drunken buffoon. His successive trades and skills included "harness maker, house painter, sign writer of a feeble sort...the tooter of a cornet in a village band," none of which produced more that a meager, irregular income for his family (64). When not working, Sherwood's father would eagerly participate in wretchedly performed, itinerant amateur shows or magic lantern shows. After two or three weeks absence on such expeditions, he would come back with a ham or even a quarter of beef, to show that he was a good provider after all. And always the Major, as he was called, would tell all who would listen about the battles he had fought in the Civil War, a war culminating, at least for him, in a bullet wound to the leg on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg just as the Union troops were repelling Pickett's charge (53).

Irwin's stepson, Fred Stevens, presented quite a different picture of the man who, after moving to Connersville about 1900, met his second wife-to-be at the boarding house where both of them lived. Although according to Stevens Mr. Anderson continued his interest in amateur theatricals, and in the G.A.R., and continued to be a great storyteller and entertainer, he never drank to excess and remained pretty much a homebody, never leaving home except to work or attend a lodgemeeting. In addition, he provided well for his wife and son Harold. Fred, a paperhanger, liked to work with his stepfather, who did paperhanging as well as the house painting for which he had been known in Clyde (Sutton 530). From the many discrepancies between the son's and the stepson's accounts of Irwin Anderson, one would have to conclude either that in the aging process he settled down to an unaccustomed life of conformity with his second, rather controlling wife, or that the stepson was inclined to play down whatever flaws in character the son was prone to dwell upon and exaggerate. Supporting the latter interpretation, Anderson scholar Ray Lewis White argues persuasively that Sherwood, "possibly seeking unconscious approval of his own irresponsibility," had in his early writings tried to distance himself from his father by portraying him as much worse than Sherwood ever was, almost as a kind of comic

monster. On the basis of Irwin's 1871-72 diary and other evidence White concludes that Irwin, at least in his younger years, was "a hard-working, pious business man," just the kind of man Fred Stevens described him as being in his later years (*Story* 221-22).

In summary, then, Sherwood the son had become alienated from his father and in his early years professed to despise him as a good-for-nothing clown, whereas Fred the stepson respected his step-father as a good workman, liked him, and enjoyed his company. Even so, a common denominator of Irwin's character emerges from these conflicting portraits—that of a storyteller much more attracted to the world of the imagination than to the humdrum, workaday world in which he felt obliged to earn a living. This character profile fits the son, Sherwood, as well as the father, as Sherwood himself eventually came to recognize, and as his transformation from part-time to full-time "artistic man" three years after his father's death made explicit.

Interesting as the son's and stepson's divergent perceptions of Irwin may be, they are less important to our understanding of Sherwood's personal and artistic development than the changing images of his father found in the works written before and after his father's death, images moving gradually from total rejection to sympathy, acceptance and almost total identification with his father as a gifted storyteller born out of his due time. With the son's acceptance of the father comes acceptance of himself and the universe of good and evil, and a somewhat rueful acceptance of his and his father's shared faults along with their undoubted talents and virtues.

The literary signposts of Sherwood's personal and artistic development from the period of rejections of his father to the period of identification with him are to be found in the works Anderson wrote from about 1915 to 1939, with the death of his father in 1919 perhaps serving as an unacknowledged catalyst of this changing perception and image. Found in many of his writings, these signposts are particularly evident in his more or less autobiographical fictions like *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916), *A Story Teller's Story* (1924), and in his patently autobiographical "Discovery of a Father," published in 1939 and later incorporated in the posthumous *Memoirs* (1942). Thus in *Windy McPherson's Son*, Windy the father is a source of embarrassment and fierce humiliation to his son Sam. In later works, however, the son not only sympathizes with the father but identifies with him as a storyteller and celebrates their shared talents in an age when the businessman has come to be admired more than the bard. Anderson must also have come to see how closely his father's occasional abandonment of his family to go on theatrical junkets around the state paralleled his own, permanent abandonment of his wife and three children in 1913 to become a part-time professional writer, a process not completed until 1922, when he left the world of business in Chicago to become a full-time writer in New York.

In Anderson's fictionalized autobiography *Windy McPherson's Son*, begun before 1913 but not published until 1916, the best comic manifestation of young Sam's rejection of his father comes one Fourth of July when, mounted as a regimental bugler on a white horse at the head of a parade he volunteered to lead, Sam's father Windy is astonished to find he cannot play a single note:

> Out of the bugle came only a thin piercing shriek followed by a squawk. Again Windy put the bugle to his lips and again the dismal squawk was his only reward....
>
> It was only another of Windy's pretensions. He couldn't blow a bugle at all.
>
> A great shout of laughter rolled down the street. Men and women sat on the curbstones and laughed until they were tired. (*Windy* 24)

Having hoped against hope that his father in the role of bugler would finally do something of which the son could be proud, Sam's delayed response to another of his father's many failures is to burst out in tears, then shake his fist in the direction of the town. "You may laugh at that fool Windy, but you shall never laugh at Sam McPherson," he cried, determined to earn the respect of the town by selling newspapers and making lots of money...a goal which he eventually achieves by becoming a corporate wheeler-dealer in Chicago, but then abandons in favor of a search for life's meaning as he travels incognito around the country. A somber counterpart to the hilarious parade scene in *Windy* comes as young Sam's mother is dying, long before his departure for Chicago and corporate success. Convinced that Windy's drunkenness and irresponsibility have brought his mother to her deathbed, Sam gets an irresistible urge to choke his drunken father. In the very act of choking him, however, he exhibits some restraint, and stops just short of choking him to death, saying, "I must choke till he is silent, but I must not kill" (Windy 84).

A Story Teller's Story, written about a decade after *Windy McPherson's Son* and published five years after his father's death, reveals a significant change in Sherwood's perception of his father. In the first few pages, the author reveals his and his brother's childhood contempt of their father, but also the need they will one day have to reassess their harsh judgment of him. "The two boys, filled with scorn of their parentage, on the father's side, are in a little grove of trees at the edge of an Ohio town. In later days the father—also born out of his place and time—will come to mean more to them, but now he has little but their contempt" (15). Later in the book Anderson clarifies this reference to the future by saying of his father, "Although he was never what we called, in our Ohio country, 'a good provider,' he had his points and, as one of his sons, I, at least, would be loathe to trade him for a more provident shrewd and thoughtful father" (38). In *Story*, though he is still reluctant to identify with him because of his failure as husband, father and provider, Anderson comes to recognize his kinship with his father as a story teller. He blames his father's failure not on foolishness or incompetency, as in *Windy McPherson's Son*, but on his turning away from the artistic life for which he was born, toward a world obsessed with the pursuit of material success, for which he had no talent whatsoever. The son, learning from the father's bad example, determines to turn his back on the goal of material success to which he had once been devoted:

> I was in my whole nature a story teller. My father had been one and his not knowing had destroyed him. The tale teller cannot bother with buying and selling.... The horse cannot sing like a canary bird or the canary bird pull a plow like a horse and either of them attempting it becomes something ridiculous. (223)

Not until 1926, in an interview published in *Success* magazine, did Sherwood not only identify closely with his father as a teller of tales but actually shift the emphasis from his father's failure as a provider to his success as a storyteller, a better measure of his worth as a person and a father than his failure to achieve financial success:

> My father was a romantic and thrilling sleight-of-hand performer with the truth. I don't mean that he was a liar, for he always stuck to the facts, but he wove those facts into magnificent new patterns. What adventures he could tell with himself always the hero! From him came my inclination to be a teller of tales. (Anderson, *Letters to Bab* 337 quoted from *Success* 10 [March 1926] 55, 109-11)

Perhaps the clearest example of the new paternal image emerging in Anderson's writings can be found in his 1939 essay, "Discovery of a Father," when the identification of the son with the father is complete as they swim across a big pond one night and back to where they started, while lightning flashes and thunder crashes overhead. Here the father's strong hand holding his young son's hand on his powerful shoulder signifies not only a blessing but the eventual transfer of the father's power as a story teller to the son. When the son goes to bed that night, he is still in the grip of that strange epiphany in the pond, the knowledge first felt "in the blood" that he is the father's son. His fantasies about having another father, one of whom he could be proud, are behind him. "For the first time," Anderson writes, "I had come to know that I was the son of my father. He was a story teller as I was to be.... No matter how much as a story teller I might be using him, I would never again be wanting another father" (*Memoirs* 85).

This last image of Anderson's father represents the end of his quest to replace his recurrent childhood image of a foolish, irresponsible father inciting murderous rejection with the image of a father he could respect and love. Ironically, the image of a father he finally settled on, the father with whom he identified and whom he came to accept, is very like the image of his own mature self in the mirror—the image of a story teller with flaws in character along with undoubted talents, a story teller who longs for love and acceptance in spite of his flaws and regardless of his worldly success or failure.

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GRASSROOTS COMMUNISM: CONTEXTS FOR THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF GRACE LEE BOGGS

ROGER J. BRESNAHAN

I

Her father's Times Square restaurant, Chin Lee's, was perhaps the best known Chinese restaurant in America.

She studied philosophy at Barnard and Bryn Mawr.

She wrote theoretical articles for *The New International.*

She participated in A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington movement.

She joined the Trotskyist Workers Party.

She counted among her co-workers C.L.R. James and worked with him in the Trotskyist movement known as the Johnson-Forest tendency.

She was a close friend of Kwame Nkrumah.

She married Jimmie Boggs, a self-taught African American radical worker and author.

With Jimmie and others, she was blamed—incorrectly—as an instigator of the 1967 Detroit riots.

She has been active in Detroit Summer and numerous other movements to make Detroit a city friendly to the human condition.

Who is this person who has for many years exemplified the maxim, "think globally, act locally," but is hardly known outside Detroit?

II

To understand Grace Lee Boggs one must first understand the Trotskyist movement, C.L.R. James, the Johnson-Forest Tendency, and their relation to race in America. Trotskyism, according to *The Encyclopedia of the American Left*, held that the Soviet Union had degenerated under Stalin and that what was needed was a vanguard party. American Trotskyists, with the encouragement of Leon Trotsky, sought to create such a vanguard party that would lead American workers to socialism and have internationalist implications, as well.

When Trotsky resettled in Mexico in 1937, he instructed his North American followers to make particular efforts to bring Black workers into the ranks. This was especially attractive to C.L.R. James, a Trinidadian who had worked in Britain with Jomo Kenyatta and James Padmore in the International African Service Bureau, a Pan-African and anti-colonialist organization. James is known for his 1938 biography of Touissaint L'Oeuveture, titled *the Black Jacobins*, and his 1953 study of the works of Herman Melville, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*. At the urging of Trotsky, James traveled throughout the American South in 1938 to win Black workers to the revolutionary cause and became involved with the Mississippi sharecroppers' strike in 1941.

Aside from James's involvement on behalf of Trotsky in the militant factions of the civil rights movement was his leadership of what became known as the Johnson-Forest tendency of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1940s. The Johnson-Forest tendency was a collaboration among certain advanced radical thinkers, namely James, whose Party alias was Johnson, and the Russian emigrée, Raya Dunayevskaya, who was Forest, together with Martin Glaberman and Grace Lee. In short, the Johnson-Forest Tendency was a step away from Trotskyism. According to the *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, the Tendency abandoned its stance as a vanguard party. Instead, its emphasis came to be a recognition that the distinctive American ethos was a search for personal happiness that was "thwarted by a pernicious combination of the assembly line and the bottom line" (394). James's 1950 manuscript, "Notes on American Civilization," which was published posthumously in 1993, along with his Melville book, developed this notion of the frustrated pursuit for individual happiness in respect to such alienated groups as blacks, women, youth, and industrial workers.

Grace Lee's description of her own situation at this time is instructive. In the lengthy and somewhat difficult chapter on C.L.R. James in her memoir, *Living for Change*, Lee criticizes the Socialist Workers Party for a "concept of Revolution" that could not see beyond the Russian Revolution and argues that "their concepts of the working class came from the Minneapolis Teamsters strike of 1934." Significantly, she held that these limitations indicated a broader failure to understand "the new energies and social forces of rank-and-file workers, blacks, women, and youth that had emerged during the [First World] War" (66). She writes that the Johnson-Forest Tendency, unlike other radical groups, held a "passionate conviction that the independent black struggle was a formidable threat to the U.S. power structure" (66).

Consequently, in 1951 the Tendency split from the Old Left Trotskyists in order to "recognize and record the views and activities of rank-and-file workers, blacks, women, and youth—the four groups that we recognized as the revolutionary social forces" (67). Although after the split they were no longer a "tendency" within the SWP, the James group established a school in New York in 1952, which they called the Third Layer School in imitation of Lenin's 1921 effort to mobilize the so-called third layer of workers and peasants when it became evident that the layers of Bolsheviks and trade unionists were not sufficient to maintain the Revolution. In this Third Layer School, the new revolutionary social forces of blacks, women, youths, and workers "would be the teachers and the older members and intellectuals"—including James, Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee—would become the students.

Two of these new worker-teachers were Selma Weinstein of Los Angeles, who would eventually marry James, and Jimmy Boggs of Detroit, who would become Grace Lee's husband. Within a few years, despite having married Weinstein and fathered an American child, James was confined to Ellis Island and eventually forced to leave the U.S. voluntarily rather than face permanent deportation. The Melville book, which portrays *The Pequod* as a comprehensive analogy of the human condition under Western capitalism, was composed during the Ellis Island detention and published by the former Tendency, which by that time had begun to call itself a Correspondence, in imitation of the Committees of Correspondence that preceded "the first American Revolution" (68).

Eventually, C.L.R. James split from the Johnson-Forest group—first from Raya Dunayevskaya in 1956 and then from Grace Lee Boggs in 1962, largely in reaction, she says, to Jimmy Boggs's book, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Journal.* How much Grace Lee Boggs grew and how much C.L.R. James remained mired in the past is evident in her report of a chance meeting with him in 1976 when "he was rejoicing at the role blacks had recently played in electing Jimmy Carter president." She characterizes their political distance as follows:

> C.L.R. was still excited about Blacks getting into the system. Jimmy had just made a speech at the University of Michigan exposing the emptiness of the electoral system and calling for a "new concept of citizenship." (70)

The development of Grace Lee Boggs into a humanist-activist derives from the theoretical discussions of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, which arrived at a conception of human potential and human community. But she also developed a sense of practicality, which she got from association with her husband and other Communists in the Detroit auto plants. Thus, her advocacy work with co-ops, organic gardens, granny porches, meaningful summer programs for youth, ridding Detroit neighborhoods of drugs, opposition to the freeways that cut the neighborhoods apart, the People-Mover, the destruction of Poletown, etc.

In this, she did not depart from Marxist-Leninist principles. Indeed, they continued to inform her work. In 1982, at the beginning of the Reagan-Bush era, she composed her "manifesto for an American Revolutionary Party" that indicates just how grounded in revolutionary theory she continued to be and how effectively she could apply it to the structural problems in American society in the new stage of multinational capitalism. This document begins as follows:

> In its limitless quest for profits capitalism has defiled all our human relationships by turning them into money relationships: Health, Education, Sports, Art and Culture, even Sex and Religion, have all become Big Business. (180)

This sort of thinking accounts for her clear-eyed opposition to the tax-abatements and other concessions demanded by the Detroit automobile manufacturers, and her support of the Detroit newspaper strike where the issue was absentee ownership by the likes of Gannett and Knight-Ridder chains. "Capitalism," she writes, "has entered a new stage of multinational capitalism, which is even more destructive than finance and monopoly capitalism because it threatens our communities and our cities" (180). In contrast, she advances a vision of what she calls a "new-self-governing America based on local self-government, strong families and communities, and decentralized communities" (181).

In terms of practical realities, the people-centered communities that Boggs advocates would rely much more heavily on neighborhood committees, co-ops, and a palpable sense of common pride. In effect, her view of "self-government" would involve the government much less and the people much more. Departing from the traditional, but now clearly fruitless, attempts of revolutionary forces to affect the political process, Boggs by-passes a political process now largely corrupted by multinational capitalism. To this end, she envisions organized groups of people—she calls them "committees"—that would create communities out of our neighborhoods which today are little more than geographical areas where we live behind barred doors and windows, more afraid of one another than we used to be of wild beasts" (181).

Going far beyond Neighborhood Watch programs, Boggs's committees would prevent crimes by fostering "elementary standards of conduct, such as mutual compacts not to buy 'hot goods'" and "Family Circles to strengthen and support parents in the raising of children." There is a strong sense of outrage at the way city governments and their capitalist benefactors have betrayed the populace. Hence, Boggs would start her revolution with local people, organized as neighborhood committees, taking over abandoned houses to be occupied by "community residents who will maintain them in accordance with standards set by the community" and closed industrial plants "for the production of necessary goods and services and for the training and employment of young people in the community." When neighborhood schools close, the buildings are to be taken over for community use. More radically, "schools that are failing to educate our children" ought to be simply taken over by the grassroots community organizations. Likewise, utility companies that threaten to shut off service in poor communities are to be resisted because "under the guise of public service," they are actually "private corporations seeking higher profits to pay higher dividends to their stockholders" (181-82).

Underlying these solutions is a common-sense, if extra-legal, approach to the value of brick-and-mortar infrastructure: no entity, whether governmental or otherwise, that exists for the common good has any property rights once it has failed to produce results or protect the community. Living in the kind of utopian community envisioned in *The American Manifesto* would require considerable personal commitment, if only in terms of time devoted to the various committees. Boggs is not only aware of that, she would require much more in terms of personal ethics. The role of the revolutionary party is not only to organize and foster the grassroots committees, but also to effect personal transformation at the individual level— "to confront the capitalist enemy" by similarly confronting "the capitalist values which have made us enemies of one another." Ever the practical teacher, she offers this example as a way to "isolate the criminals in our communities"—confronting the individualism and self-centeredness which permit us to look the other way when a neighbor's house is being robbed" (182).

The point of all this is not just neighborhood ameliorism. In this final development of her thinking, Boggs aims to "build the movement and the revolutionary party simultaneously." That, too, represents a departure from Marxism and especially Trotskyism in escaping the elitism of the notion of a vanguard party. The roots of that thinking go back to the late '60s, however. Alluding to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., she declares that one important characteristic of revolutionary leadership is the "ability to evolve as reality changes and as you learn from your own experiences and the experiences of others" (155). Thus, she and Jimmy Boggs and those around them came to see the revolutionary process as transformational Her reading of the last years of King's life shows that he "had also been grappling with the question of how to go beyond rebellion to revolution," convinced as he was that the civil rights movement was headed for chaos. Motivated by his "profound appreciation of the need for human transformation," King "struggled heroically to organize a non-violent revolution of the dispossessed that would combine a revolution in values against what he called the 'giant triplets' of racism, materialism, and militarism with a revolution against the structures that doom millions to poverty and powerlessness" (156).

In her journey from orthodox Marxism to the kind of revolutionary she remains today, Boggs has taken her cues from many sources, the Johnson-Forest Tendency being perhaps the most influential but by no means her only influence. Indeed, in her own mind, her revolutionary principles are measured against the grim realities of life in the auto plants as experienced by the audacious worker phalanges like DRUM and FRUM as well as by the even less privileged on the mean streets of Detroit.

To be sure, Boggs glosses over or ignores the embarrassing excesses of the Soviet Union and China, particularly Mao, but her interest is not on what happened in Russia or China during their revolutionary periods, but rather what might be gleaned from Mao and others to be used in a new American—specifically Detroit—revolution. She holds no brief for traditional Marxists, remarking that "it is not accidental" that they "come across as so negative" owing to their belief that the "capitalist integument only needs to be swept away" for proper class relations to emerge. Rather, the revolutionary process demands hard work and personal integrity, "activities that are both self-transforming and structure-transforming," combining theory and practice "concerning fundamental questions of human life more complex than anything Marx could possibly have dreamed of" (155-6).

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MARY FRANCES DONER: MICHIGAN AUTHOR

MARY DEJONG OBUCHOWSKI

Mary Frances Doner wrote nearly thirty books, most of them fiction, by far the majority laid in Michigan. The first appeared in 1930, the last in 1974, and all but a few reflect the period during which she was writing at the time. They provide a record of the ways in which people made their living in this area, particularly along the St. Clair River, where shipping, dairy and fruit farming, growing sugar beets, mining and refining salt, and involvement in the automobile industry contributed to the economy. The books also reflect the life styles, dress, music and other leisure activities, language, and values of the people in the region. Although all of the books are long out of print and often very difficult to locate, their loss would deprive us of a lively portrait of places in Michigan during the center of the twentieth century.

Her novels enjoyed considerable popularity, especially during the 1940s. Born on July 29, 1893, in Port Huron, to James and Mary Jane O'Rourke Doner, she lived for some time in Detroit and finished high school in St. Clair in 1911. Her father, who was born in Marquette, worked as captain of firetugs, then freighters, and eventually managed the Reiss Coal Company's shipping fleet, and she often sailed with him. She studied music in Detroit and in New York and also attended City University of New York, New York University, and Columbia University. At the latter she studied journalism. Although the reference works make no mention of the fact, late in life Doner said that she left school to marry ("Lady author likes the masculine mind," *Ludington Daily News,* n.d., probably after 1974, n.p.; Ludington Public Library, hereafter referred to as Ludington). A folder of correspondence which she donated to the Bentley Library displays letters dated between 1926 and 1929 addressed to Miss Moore, Mary Doner Moore, Mrs. Mary Doner Moore, and Mrs. Moore (Mary Frances Doner materials, Folder 1, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, University of Michigan, Ann

Arbor, Michigan, hereafter referred to as Bentley). She published nothing while she was in college, but she told one reporter that soon afterward her first story, "Worlds Apart," was published in *Love Story Magazine* ("Lady author"), in the May 10, 1922 issue, (box 2, scrapbook 5, Bentley). Another source says that she sold her first story to *I Confess* in 1921 (Paul F. Kneeland, "Mary Doner, Reconverted Pulp Writer, Now Pens Serious Novels in Boston," Boston *Daily Globe*, May 3, 1946, 19; scrapbook 2, Bentley). She said, "I began in the pulps with such magazines as *Cupid's Diary, Love Story,* and *Sweetheart Stories*. I was writing at least a story a week, and sometimes two or three. Then I moved up to the slicks—*Charm, Collier's* and *Woman's Home Companion*" ("Lady Author"). In 1924 she became a staff writer for Dell Publishing Company, and a few years later also wrote music criticism and book reviews for the Boston *Herald-Traveller*. In late 1929 or early 1930, she married (again?), and this time her husband is readily identified on her book jackets and in Boston society columns as Dr. Claude Louis Payzant, a Boston physician and artist. She dedicated one of her books in the 1940s (*Blue River*, 1946) to "My Son, Donald Payzant, USMRC," but no mention of him appears elsewhere. After her return to St. Clair in 1949 there is no mention of Dr. Payzant, either.

Some of her early books may have been serialized in periodicals, and in 1930, her first three novels appeared. Of the ten published in the 1930s, the first several are formula romances, not relevant to the present discussion, and most of their action occurs on the East Coast, although two of them take place partly in Michigan. She regarded *Let's Burn Our Bridges* (1935), a story of a divorce repaired, as her first serious novel ("Mary Frances Doner: Writing is a Way of Life for Noted Author," *Ludington Daily News*, 16, May 1974, 6; box 2, scrapbook 5, Bentley). The next, *Child of Conflict* (1936), was based on the life of Gloria Vanderbilt ("Novelist To Use St. Clair and Port Huron as Background for new Story on Farm Life," Port Huron *Times Herald*, 28 Feb. 1937, 4B; box 1, unnumbered scrapbook, Bentley).

In *Gallant Traitor* (1938), Doner finally found her setting and her substance. The plots still revolved around romance, and very formula romance it is: a young woman and man fall in love but are separated by circumstances which finally resolve themselves. A feud between adjoining farm families makes Diana Sayre believe that developing a relationship with her neighbor Michael Ward would break the heart of the aunt who raised her. As the seasons move from late winter through the burgeoning of spring, we see how Diana goes about maintaining a dairy herd and marketing its milk. In July, a summer storm devastates the Wards' cherry trees, and in August, a fire that destroys Diana's barns finally brings Diana and Michael together. Doner located the story on farms near the fictional town of St. Gabriel, which is really St. Clair. A review in the St. Clair newspaper states, "Many St. Clair persons might recognize themselves in the characters portrayed" ("St. Clair is Locale for new Novel, by Mary Frances Doner," name of paper not given, Friday, 12 Aug. 1938, n.p.; box I, scrapbook 1, Bentley). The familiar setting, characters based on people Doner knew, and occupations with which Doner had lived or on which she had done some research, provided materials for creating both successful novels and a reconstruction of the life of the area. More novels followed.

In *Some Fell Among Thorns* (1939) Doner utilized her knowledge of shipping and the lifestyles of those who manned the freighters of the Great Lakes. In Riverbend, also much like St. Clair, John Bigelow, a ship captain, loves Lyn Farnsworth, who was adopted as a baby by a local physician. When her wealthy grandmother recognizes Lyn, she tempts Lyn with luxuries while John is away for the long months of spring, summer, and fall. The grandmother's scornful treatment of Lyn's birth mother reawakens Lyn to her real values, and eventually she and John are reunited. *Chalice* (1940), admittedly autobiographical and Doner's favorite of her books ("Busy Mary Doner has little time to reflect on age," Muskegon *Daily Chronicle,* 9 May 1976, n.p.; Ludington), traces the life of Puss Halloran, daughter of a ship's pilot of St. Gabriel, who loves Asa Fleming who would also like to pilot a ship, but whose mother urges him into a disastrous medical career before he can find his way back to Puss and the Lakes. Puss, in the meantime, becomes a successful artist and marries a cruel and lazy alcoholic to whom she remains loyal until he divorces her and she can restore Asa's ambition and self-confidence. The Penn Publishing Company, which was then producing Doner's books, issued a brochure advertising these three book as "Romances of the Great Lakes" (box 2, unnumbered scrapbook, Bentley). Clearly, both formula and setting worked for Penn, although *Chalice*, less formulaic in plot, leaves open the question as to whether Puss and Asa will live happily ever after.

Several of Doner's succeeding novels, although they also had less conventional plots, continued to develop the subject of shipping and those whose lives are bound up in it. *Not By Bread Alone* (1941) follows the lives of three generations of women who strengthen and support the weaker men they chance to love. The first of these, Maggie Killean, finds employment for herself and her husband as cooks aboard freighters that sailed Lakes Huron, Superior, and Erie, until the great storm of 1913 injures and incapacitates Joe. Doner based these characters on friends of her mother (Ms. "On Creative Writing," 59; box 5, Bentley). She added,

> While the highlights of this story were told me by the real life Joe and Maggie, themselves, perhaps; [sic] I could write of that storm with considerable vividness because it happened that my own father and brother—on different ships—were out on the Lakes in the midst of it, and we did not know for many hours whether they had survived. When you touch the edge of terror, you do not forget ("On Creative Writing", 143).

Glass Mountain (1942) explores the limits of ambition to which a reckless seaman can aspire. *While the River Flows—a story of life along the Great Lakes waterways, of sailors and their loves* (1962) touches many aspects of the friends and family of John and Samantha Butler. Their sailor son Michael loves a newspaper columnist who crusades for preservation of the lakeshore from exploitation by industry; he dies in a shipboard fire. Their adopted son, Darrah Malone, runs away from the abusive Samantha and stays for a time with Native Americans who live along the waterways. The effects of the Soo locks on water levels; an incident in which the young people go ice fishing too late in the season and they and their shanty are swept out into the lake; and descriptions of the river and lakeshore enhance the story.

Some of the novels explore other aspects of Michigan life and history. Doner did considerable research for some of them. In *Glass Mountain*, for example, Irene Barker schedules Chautauquas, and we see some of them in progress. *O Distant Star* (1944) takes a historical approach, beginning in Boston during the Civil War. Irish immigrants go from there to Michigan's Upper Peninsula to work in the iron ore mines and furnaces, and then on the railroads. In *Blue River* (1946), Doner may have based the character of Stephen Crane on the designer of the "Wills-St. Clair" automobile, which, according to one review,

> went down to ruin only because [Crane's] social and engineering ideas were a few scant years ahead of his time.... Necessarily Miss Doner has taken broad fictional liberties with the story of the man who sought to make St. Clair, Michigan, the one ideal industrial community in America, and there to produce his automobile, which was to have been the finest in the world (Norman MacDonald, "Miss Doner Does Fictional Story of Great Inventor," Boston *Herald*, 12 June 1946, n.p. scrapbook 2, Bentley).

In that book, Crane designs not only an automobile, but a whole town, much like Dearborn.

Ravenswood (1948) chronicles a family involved in exploiting Michigan's salt wells, refining salt, and transporting it. *Cloud of Arrows* (1950) deals with the sugarbeet industry and also with issues surrounding migrant labor. *Return a Stranger* (1970) picks up the theme of urban renewal by attacking development in Riverbend, another community like St. Clair, but *Thine Is The Power* (1972) takes a more temperate approach to the introduction of a stored power facility very much like that south of Ludington on Lake Michigan. *The Darker Star* (1974) also appears to be set in the Ludington area, on a farm that produced maple syrup, asparagus, and strawberries, each in its season.

In the 1950s, the sales of her novels declined, and she turned to biography, first investigating her subject and then writing *The Salvager: The Life of Captain Tom Reid on the Great Lakes* (1958), which described the many shipwrecks which Reid dealt with during a long career, mainly on the Great Lakes, but also along the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic coasts. She also used court records to document a sensational Detroit trial of the 1960s in *Cleavenger vs. Castle: A Case of Breach of Promise and Seduction* (1968) in which the attorney William Gallagher won a spectacular breach of promise settlement for Bertha Cleavenger.

Doner thus wrote over the course of several decades, beginning with pulp in the twenties, graduating to full-length romances in the thirties, exploring aspects of Michigan in the late thirties and forties, and taking up political issues (somewhat before their time) in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. Each book, with the exception of the historical *O Distant Star*, reflects the dress, kinds of social gatherings, nature of employment available to women, (and attitudes toward employed women), music, art, and language, including slang, of the time in which it was written.

Doner, whose elegant outfits made news in the Boston social columns, describes clothing in especially loving detail. In *Chalice*, for instance, Puss's mother "wore her white duck skirt and the pleated white lawn shirtwaist with the black velvet bow finishing off the high boned collar, and the bit of a straw sailor hat topping her thick gold hair. A black velvet *chatelaine* bag hung from her belt by a neat little chain" (23). Also, "She had made the white dotted Swiss dress for Puss, with the short puffed bodice caught to the gathered skirt by a width of embroidery beading strung with narrow black velvet ribbon. And Puss adored her wide leghorn hat with its long black velvet streamers" (24). Such was high fashion for picnics at the turn of the century.

In addition to picnics, holiday meals, box socials, and potluck suppers occur frequently in the novels as favorite social gatherings. So do dances celebrating the homecoming of sailors. In *Gallant Traitor*, a critical incident takes place during a grange potluck. As in Della Thompson Lutes's books, though without the meticulous attention to preparation that we find with that author, the women take pride in the dishes they create. In *Not By Bread Alone*, two of the three generations of women help to support their families by cooking. Maggie, the first of them, bakes for the crew of a steamship. There, as Doner describes it,

> Her quick hands pulled and slapped and kneaded and shaped the loaves for the day's baking: ten big golden loaves, sweet and fresh and wholesome, from Maggie's quick fingers. And eight dozen biscuits and maybe nine or ten pies for their dinner and cakes for their supper, three or four of them, layer and loaf and cupcakes, frosted to the king's taste. And a crock of doughnuts for breakfast and to set out for the midnight lunch (12).

On land, Maggie's children exclaim over her Lady Baltimore layer cakes, "Honestly, Mama, I never saw such frosting! It's a good inch thick—and all those figs!" (96).

Cooking is not all that Doner's Michigan women can do. Diana Sayre, in *Gallant Traitor*, runs a dairy farm. Puss Halloran of *Chalice* and Beth Fairfield of *Cloud of Arrows*, struggle successfully to become illustrators, though Puss gives up her profession to save her husband's pride. In *Blue River*, Anne Armour makes a living as a pianist when her marriage is in trouble, while Mollie Ward, in *While the River Flows*, has a career in journalism which she may or may not prefer to marriage. In *The Wind and the Fog* (1963), Norma Wittenberger earns a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan but fails to secure a college position because she has been seen in bars rescuing the man she later marries.

These examples suggest that women have ample talents and intelligence but, typically for the time, sometimes sacrifice them to the demands of marriage or the needs of the men in their lives.The concept of marriage as a happy ending may have been one reason that prevented Doner from achieving recognition as a serious novelist. Her reputation as a writer of romances is probably the sticking point. In fact, she said, "Romantic by nature, I write romantic yarns. My goal was ultimate literary achievement, but I was not unaware of my shortcomings and limitations" ("On Creative Writing," 47). The particular formula that recurs in many of Doner's books distressed some reviewers, as it might well also affect some readers. The majority of the women protagonists in the novels are strong, highminded, stubborn, and loyal. These are the qualities that both make them attractive and impede them in courtship situations. In *Forever More: A Love Story* (1934), for example, Marianne Barry runs away from a marriage that her aunt has forced on her, believing that it could never be a success. In *Cloud of Arrows* Beth Fairfield marries and remains married to Henri Beaubein in spite of his dishonesty and infidelity, although she loves Bill Wayne; she waits until Henri divorces her to consider Wayne. With some notable exceptions, the men in the books tend to be weak, needing the support and admiration, however undeserved, of those strong women, or they are downright rotters. Several of the heroines sacrifice their musical or artistic careers to work side by side with husbands who need their presence. The reader may not be meant to expect that reunions of lovers long separated lead to thriving marriages; like the Lakes, the weather, and the economy, marriage has its unpredictable aspects. Not all readers find this comfortable, especially in quantity, and that may have been another, if opposite, reason her books did not maintain their popularity.

Still, Doner knew how to tell a slick story, and her lectures on creative writing, which she taught in New York, Boston, and Ludington, give some clues as to her techniques. In the lectures, she refers specifically to her books, though not the early, exclusively romantic ones, and to reviews, both favorable and unfavorable. She wrote from what she knew, she asserted, saying, "Each of my books examined the Great Lakes Country, its people, resources, social activities and marine activities" (59). She discussed the importance of titles (54), consistent point of view (92), dialogue (99), style (104), conflict (107), and character (143), among other matters, She regarded research as a necessity "to savor and understand the scene" (151).

The strength of her work remains in its portrayal of the parts of Michigan she describes. A reviewer of *Ravenswood*, remarked, "Mary Doner comes through most alive in her appreciation of her favorite state. The beauties of Michigan have more sense of reality and warmth than the human beings who tend to get in the way of the scenery." (Isabelle Mallet, "A Family Chronicle", *New York Times*, no date, n.p.; scrapbook 4, box 2, Bentley). In the end, it is the panorama of the Lakes, the abundance of resources, the balancing act between the determination of industry and the generosity of the landscape, the people who are hardworking, lazy, selfish, thoughtful, imaginative, mean, weak, stubborn, lighthearted, wandering, loyal, tough, gentle, and all of those familiar qualities, working the orchards and the fields, the mines, the factories, the newspapers, the kitchens, all of the places that we know, that make these books worth preserving.

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FROM MA JOAD TO ELIZABETH BERG: WOMEN ON THE ROAD IN AMERICA

RONALD PRIMEAU

Almost a century ago, Virginia Woolf proposed that women required a room and money of their own to exert some control over their own work. In anticipation of car culture, Jack Kerouac and the Beats, Woolf might have added to these requirements a car, a license, keys (and later) a credit card of one's own. While the literature of the American highway has been a genre of protest and liberation for males at least as far back as Walt Whitman, women weren't allowed to, chose not to, or just didn't create their own unique versions of America's road mythology until fairly recently.

The history of women's involvement with automobile travel and the literature emerging from it is complex. We read in literature from pioneer days to the Beat poets that women have always been central to the American journey, though sometimes acknowledged only in overlooked diaries written from the back seat. Of course we know that women, too, moved across the plains, but their dreams were seldom accorded the status of a national quest mythos. In fact, commentators have suggested that while the country forged mythologies of frontier conquest, women's emphasis on relationships and domestic space may have even mitigated against the recognition or popularity of their writings.

Much of this postponement of women's rightful places in the shaping of our road literature is a matter of record. In *Women's Consciousness. Man's World*, Sheila Rowbotham recalls having great admiration for the counterculture of *Howl* and *On the Road* even while she was perplexed by the "rough ride" doled out to women by otherwise forward-looking heroes. In "Woman's Place in American Car Culture," Charles L. Sanford summarizes the "neo-frontier spirit" of exploration, acceleration, and conquest enjoyed by the American Adam even while he asks:"Where is Eve?" And in a series of important studies on metaphor and literary fantasy shaping our views of the American landscape, Annette Kolodny contrasts ambivalent, exploitative, and possessive male paradisal fantasies with the woman's view of the land as"sanctuary for an idealized domesticity." Women traveled, Kolodny suggests, to evade male fantasy structures—stressing home, settlement, relationships, and community rather than "privatized erotic mastery."

While travel literature by women charted its own new directions, many of the best road books by male authors have also recognized the defining role of women in the quest motif generally dominated by middle-class white males. Ma Joad, for example, moved through the *Grapes of Wrath* along the "path of people in flight" on the mother road, serving as Steinbeck's gentle but decisive corrective to the men who almost always did the driving and made the plans. When Pa thinks he "ain't no good anymore," Ma counters that men live in jerks whereas for women "its all one flow" like a river that "goes right on." Women can change better than men, too, she notes, because "woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head." And this realization is quite matter-of-fact. "Woman looks at it like that," Ma Joad concludes—and her pronouncement is supported by countless women who reroute the course. Linda Loman, for example, never quite understands why Willie pushes himself into his grave (in *Death of a Salesman*). "Why must everybody conquer the world?" she laments. And there are other male authors who create women with alternative views. Tom Robbins's Sissy Hankshaw, for example, is the quintessential hitchhiker. Whereas most road heroes are drivers headed toward a destination, Sissy prefers perpetual motion to the point of transforming it into stillness. "The male, in his rebellion against what is natural and feminine in the universe, has used logic as a weapon and a shield," Sissy concludes. To which one of her cowgirl colleagues adds "It's the duty of advanced women to teach men to love the circle again" (348).

Recent critical commentary has shown how women on the road reshaped the literature of the American highway in crucial ways. Not only is the journey itself restructured, but for women the quest motif rewrites the traditionally male-dominated meanings assigned to home, getting away, and returning from the quest. In *Through the Window, Out the Door: Women's Narratives of Departure from Austin and Cather to Tyler, Morrison, and Didion*, Janis P. Stout has reviewed the considerable scholarship on "women's appropriation of the traditionally masculine mode of travel writing and narrative tropes of journey" (xii). Among many informative commentaries are Judith Fryer's *Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather* (1986), Ann Romines's *The Home Plot: Women, Writers, and Domestic Ritual* (1992), Karen R. Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (1994), and Dana A. Heller's *The Feminization of Quest-Romance": Radical Departures* (1992). In her account of how women have subverted "inhospitably masculine models of literary journeying" (p. 6), Stout focuses on the moment of departure as a crucial rupture between the urge to break away and a homing instinct.

For many women on the literary highways, the moment of leaving is more problematic than it is for their male counterparts. The departure for women is a more prolonged time of negotiation between the tensions of going, staying and returning. The energy of those "provocative interactions" is itself more liberating than what is provided by the traditional male quest with its emphasis on separation from home and reaching a destination. In what Stout calls the "home and journey narrative" women see leaving home as a visitation and a supportive network rather than escape. Windows and doors become, then, metaphors for a freedom found in the doubleness and "looping" of getting away while staying home. In this pattern, much that is central to the conventional mythology is inverted. Conquest is not liberating but restrictive because the rupture is too severe. In its place the unresolved tensions at the point of departure dramatize the desirable and necessary interconnectedness of staying home while being on the road.

The distinguished but often overlooked collection of women's road narratives extends from Willa Cather to Anne Tyler. Representative examples over the past three decades include Joan Didion's *Play It as It Lays* (1970), Ann Roiphe's *Long Division (1972),* Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping (1980),* Mona Simpson's *Anywhere But Here (1987),* and Mary Morris's *Nothing to Declare: Memoirs of a Woman Traveling Alone* (1988). In two of the most recent road narratives by women—Elizabeth Berg's *The Pull of the Moon* (1996) and Lesley Hazleton's *Driving to Detroit: An Automotive Odyssey* (1998)—several new directions for the genre are clear.

Driving to Detroit adds a unique perspective to women's modifications of the American road quest. Born in England, Lesley Hazleton plans a 5-month pilgrimage to various automobile shrines—traveling from her new home in Seattle to the Detroit auto show. Along the way she stops for crash tests, car crushes, the scene of James Dean's death, and an innovative Saturn plant in Tennessee. She visits these and other shrines in her determination to "journey into the heart, soul, and wallet of the enduring American obsession with the car" (p. 8). As a journalist and contributor of a regular syndicated column on cars and driving, Hazleton realizes that she has made regular "forays here and there" into the topic. Nonetheless, she feels "the essential story was still missing" and it would take the pilgrimage itself to see her subject whole. To experience the passion, she would literally have to drive into the "automotive geography of America" (p. 9). Although she had a loose itinerary, the real discoveries would come in the things she could never plan: "I'd lay myself open to the way experience toys with fine ideas and tosses them into chaos, forcing you deeper and further than you ever wanted" (p. 9).

Like many women on the road, Hazleton drives deeper into—rather than farther across—places, people, and experiences. Although often feeling like the Lone Ranger, she discovers everywhere a "reflectiveness engendered by being on the road" (p. 10), a contemplativeness that is "the American version of the Tao, the path to enlightenment" (p. 11). While she succumbs at times to what she calls "the old romantic idea of motoring as freedom," she is more attracted to the solitary desert and asks that "someone should get that road out of here… tear it up and let me be in peace" (p. 88). Wanting to be at the precise spot where James Dean died, she is disappointed in the memorial with the empty café, empty bar, and empty town. In spite of the memorabilia for sale, the scene epitomizes what is lacking in the reality of so many road legends.

Despite the realistic detail that Hazleton brings to road symbols and to the workings of automotive icons, she prefers "Whitman's determined romanticism" to the lonely stranger moving in and out of and through unfriendly spaces. She loves driving freeways which she calls the "lifelines of the city" (p, 117) and turns to the road whenever she is in need of healing. Escaping what she calls the atrocity of the Corvette museum, she takes refuge "in the country roads of Kentucky" where America welcomes her back. While mourning the death of her father, she returns from his funeral to get back behind the wheel—not to escape but to drive "into grief." Again the road is restorative as she embraces "the hardscrabble American romance of taking to the road in times of trouble, driving mile upon mile with the thum of tires on the pavement, the relentless hum of the engine, the wind tearing past the windows" (p. 229).

Ironically, *Driving to Detroit* validates America's romance with the road by confronting its dark side. Again and again the pilgrim shrines disappoint. Hazleton bemoans the Sports Utility Vehicle marketing of contrived nature, spends more that the usual time meditating on crashes, and concludes that the new business plan at a Tennessee Saturn plant resembles a "revivalist meeting" (p. 239). In the end it is the underbelly of the mythos that enables her to confront the death of her father and its foretaste of her own fate. In an astonishing denouement, she meets a family of crash dummies at the Automotive Safety Center. Obsessed with wanting to "know what it was like to be a dummy," Hazleton tries to get inside the mechanical chest casing. For a moment, the dummy, her father and her own breathing become one and she lets go. She listens several times to the exact sounds of a car wreck, hoping to exorcise the horror of a crash by making it her own. Someone asks "Did you find out what you wanted to know?" She isn't sure of that but she does know at that point: "My journey was done; I was home free" (p. 290).

Hazleton's odyssey brings to the American highway quest what so many women create. Using the trappings of the conventional road pilgrimage with its leavings, its speed, and its pointedness toward shrines, the heroic movement toward goals gives way to an embracing of what is provocative, unsettling, and contradictory about journeys that never end. On the last stretch homeward, Hazleton is careful to avoid "homitis" and its illusions of invulnerability. Slow and steady is the pace. The road and its healing powers have moved inside her where the contradictions need not be resolved: "I knew that the long drive home would itself be a kind of exorcism: one last dose of motion, the better to be still when it ended" (p. 291).

In *The Pull of the Moon*, Elizabeth Berg also modifies many of the conventions of the American road narrative. At first the journey of this "ordinary woman out on a trip" (p. 168) fills in the genre's formula. "I'm on a trip," Nan writes to her husband, Martin: "I needed all of a sudden to go, without saying where, because I don't know where" (p. 5). Feeling deep inside a fierce howling which no words could capture, Nan sets out on a road trek, buys a journal book to think on paper, and writes letters to Martin explaining feelings she had long kept hidden even from herself. Her plan is simple. No maps, just go and "stop at a house now and then and ask any woman I find there how are you doing?" (p. 9). For Nan the journey is integrative, restorative. Getting away, being in motion, talking to strangers, and thinking on paper allow her to redirect her quest, make discoveries that are her own, and go back home on her own terms.

Berg's modifications of the rules of the road are significant. Nan's first revision of the quest is that she can go at all and go on her own terms. "I stop whenever I want to, for as long as I want" (p. 25), she writes to Martin. She takes back roads that make life larger, one of many desires she could never convey to her husband. He only wanted to save time and wouldn't listen, though this time she feels he will hear her on paper. "It is rather a luxury to go on this way, Martin, to know that you are attending to what I am saying. That you will read this letter through, perhaps twice, because it is a letter and not me" (pp. 26-27). By leaving home and writing to Martin, Nan doesn't have to throw him out of the house to create her own space—an option not available to her grandmother: "She didn't have the option of a trip away. So she created an artificial distance" (p. 148). For Berg, women reshape the road quest first by going on their own terms and then by writing an account that constructs their vision.

The vision Nan constructs is nurtured by new places and people and movement itself, by anxiety, isolation, monologue and dialogue, and periods of incubation followed by revisionary breakthroughs.

Like much travel writing by women, *The Pull of the Moon* recharts the itineraries and redefines what it means to come back home. Nan breaks the rules of the road and turns many travel conventions inside out. "I suppose I did a very foolish thing today...I picked up a hitchhiker," she confides (p. 89). She swaps stories with strangers, meanders along side roads and surprises herself getting "so much further away that I thought I'd go" (P. 72). Two strangers exchange intimate thoughts, she notes, because "most women are full to the brim...ready to explode: (p. 38). For Nan, getting off the beaten path parallels her quarrels with Martin who humiliated her by responding to her dreams with disbelief and disapproval. She regrets letting their travel itineraries and her own feelings rest on his approval. "No more," she discovers, "Perhaps it will be a relief for him not to have to decide for me how I feel" (p. 72). Nan not only breaks the rules but even more radically sets them aside. "This doesn't feel like travel to me. It feels too much like my own to be like travel, if you know what I mean" (pp. 100-101).

As it is for all highway questers, the journey home and the problems of reentry are pivotal for Nan. She decides to go back home but this time to live on her own terms with fewer apologies and no shame for her own feelings. She waits to start back until she can be without anxiety but finds "I am waiting for something that will never come" (p. 192). In fact she eagerly looks forward to reentry: "When I left, I couldn't wait to get away. Now I can't wait to get back" (p. 192). When she gets home, Nan decides, she and Martin will build a house together—or have it built. "I want a little room only for me. Stuffed full of what I love. A ticking clock, too, the smooth measure of time that is not hysterical or guilty or full of longing, that offers no judgment of anything, that just says here, here, here, in slow, sounded seconds" (pp 85-86). There will be places for Martin also—but now on different terms, on Nan's terms, or at least according to some shared privileging.

The resolution of Nan's journey is two-fold. First, she comes to terms with unexpressed longings and the aching of loss. "So here I come, Martin, changed a bit, it's true...I am every age I ever was and always will be...I want nothing more than to try to tell you everything," she declares—and adds in the book's concluding sentences: "I'm so eager to see you, Martin. Perhaps we'll see each other" (p. 193). The opportunity to see each other and to entitle each other is elaborated further in the plans for the house they will build together. "You can do something in our new house just for you, too" Nan concedes, "but this time you will ask *me* about it. It will be your turn to say 'What do you think about this idea, Nan?' And it will be my turn to say "Well...I suppose" (pp. 86-87). Where do men get their sense of entitlement, Nan asks Martin? Where do they get the sense that they simply deserve everything, that things are just there for them? Women struggle with that kind of entitlement and Nan concludes that men are raised with everyone telling them in one way or another that theirs is "the earth to inherit" (p. 112). Nan learned out on the road that women are taught to just hand over that entitlement. She also learns that she is not really angry at Martin but would choose "a class action sort of thing" (p. 114).

The Pull of the Moon epitomizes how women behind the wheel revise the quest motif, Nan leaves but is never really interested in mere escape. She builds relationships during her travels, brings home with her everywhere she goes, and finds freedom not by conquering new frontiers but by reopening questions she thought had been settled for her. She uses recognizable conventions of the genre to revise many of its assumptions. "Isn't that the difference," Nan notes in a comment that sums up how women revise American road mythology: "The woman makes a home immediately; the man walks in to claim it, then leaves it" (p. 137). Overall, women on the road revise the genre by slowing the pace and celebrating exploration over reaching a destination. Working to modify a genre often touted for speed, distance, and power, women seek relationships over conquest and prefer the pull of the moon to the path of "progress."

A reexamination of the role of women in the American road quest is part of a larger ongoing reassessment of travel literature on several fronts. Scholars are beginning to look at what Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (in *Tourists with Typewriters*) call postmodern itineraries concerned with virtual places, the hyperreal, and ectopias (p. 78). There is also emerging a study of travel writing alongside millennial discourse with attention to commodification, specialization, and the inevitable "nostalgic parody" (p. 197). Holland and Huggan see travel writing as a species of "impoverished discourse through which dominant cultures...seek to ingratiate themselves, often at others' expense" (xiii). With one recurring assessment of women's place in postmodern revision I would quarrel. Holland and Huggan find women's travel writing extremely limited as a feminist critique of a genre grounded in male privilege. But...while women's road narratives displace "patriarchal and imperial identitary norms" they nonetheless could not necessarily escape their own positions within an imperialist culture.

I close by simply asking should women's narratives that correct male distortions of what is possible in the quest be responsible *also* for reforming imperialism on the whole? Or is that requirement itself dangerously close to yet another limiting constraint on woman's role in the genre?

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FRESH SALT WATER: THE GREAT LAKES AS LITERATURE OF THE SEA

JILL B. GIDMARK

In 1995, I decided to sign aboard what has proven to be my most consuming and demanding academic venture to date: general editorship of a work now called the *Encyclopedia of American Literature of the Sea and Great Lakes* for Greenwood Press, scheduled for publication November 2000. The decision was not an easy one. Part of my deliberation process involved consulting with colleagues and friends wiser than I, in particular Phil Greasley, who at the time was well into a similar project, editing the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature* for Indiana University Press.

"Are you glad you did it?" I asked him over a long lunch at an SSML conference several years ago.

"Well, yes," Phil ventured.

"If you knew then how much work it would be, would you have done it?"

To this question Phil was uncharacteristically mute. When he found his voice again, he began to raise hard questions of me, providing many insights I hadn't thought of. By the time lunch was over, we had a pact: I'd write for his reference work if he'd write for mine.

Once I had hit on the excellent strategy of appointing an editorial board of six of the top sea literature experts in the U.S. (who would contribute good ideas to my process now, I reasoned, rather than criticize the book later in reviews), I thought I had it made, but several hurdles remained in shaping the scope of the project. The press had in mind for me to compile a compendium of sea literature *of the world* but had at the same time constrained me to a single volume with a sum total of 600 pages or 180,000 words, whichever came first. I said it couldn't be done—can we scale down the focus to strictly *American* sea literature, which I knew best anyway? The press agreed. It then occurred to me that the coastal waters lapping at

America's shores, seminal maritime literary influence that they indeed were, did not tell the entire story. Shouldn't the Great Lakes be included?

I live a three-hour drive from Lake Superior, the deepest, coldest, and stormiest of the Lakes. I had long been familiar with its tradition of lighthouses and chanteys, its history of wrecking ships, its proclivity for challenging the most skilled of mariners and for inspiring the water-gazes of many fine authors. I recalled Judith Minty's contemporary poem "Palmistry for Blind Mariners" (1981), which reads, in part:

> The North Woods
>
> Summer passes too quickly
> Winter brings pain. The past
> dries like strawflowers.
> We must change camp before withering
> begins. In this Indian summer
> the sun lowers its flame
> over the lakes, ignites
> on the flint stone of the Chippewa fathers.
>
> Our canoe is ready, stripped bark
> from birch trees. We will travel light,
> eat berries and roots
> along the way, leave footprints in sand.
> Deer will drink from our hands
> and the hoot of owls will guide us.
> But I warn you, there will be
> wailing and a beating of breasts.
>
> Dip your paddles as you pass the bear,
> asleep at the foot of her dune,
> who mourns her cubs, lost
> in the crossing from Wisconsin.
> Forget love rites and matings
> for children. Bury them
> deep under Mercury's mound.
> This lake and mothers are cruel.
>
> Hold close to the calm
> of fingers, pass gulls who curse
> from their rookery.
> Let fog cling like webs to your face, your hair. Glide

> into whispers of vapor.
> Grope for land if you wish. Go ashore
> if you are tired of seafaring.
>
> For my part, I know this hand
> and cannot turn in again.
> If you must, follow me. I am going
> past the islands out
> into the lake. There is a place
> I have heard of where you can sink
> deep into the center of dreams, where waves
> will rock you in sleep, where everything
> is as you wished it to be.

So I soon had myself convinced that I wanted to include these waters in my encyclopedia, but I was uncertain about where to begin in identifying a succinct body of Great Lakes literature. I began by contacting a person who knows this literature very well, Victoria Brehm at Grand Valley State University. In addition to her Master's License for Great Lakes and Inland Waters from the U.S. Coast guard, Brehm's books—*Sweetwater, Storms, and Spirits: Stories of the Great Lakes* (1991) and *The Women's Great Lakes Reader* (1998)—offer fine testimony to her knowledge of the literature, lore, romance, and history of this area. She mulled over my project for a few weeks and then provided me with a short-list of some 30 potential author and title entries that I should consider for my master list, agreeing to write several herself, including the large thematic entry GREAT LAKES LITERATURE. I surveyed as well Walter Havighursts's *Great Lakes Reader* (1996), which Brehm termed an "excellent" resource, despite the fact that only seven of Havighurst's 65 writers were women. Brehm's books were, in part, she says, reactions to this male-dominated perspective. I knew about Frederick Stonehouse's *Lake Superior Shipwreck Coast: Maritime Accidents from Whitefish Bay's Point Iroquois to Grand Marais, Michigan* (1985) and his *Haunted Lakes: Great Lakes Ghost Stories, Superstitions and Sea Serpents* (1997). I phoned Stonehouse in Marquette, and signed him up to write an entry on GREAT LAKES MYTHS AND LEGENDS and the *EDMUND FITZGERALD*.

Furthermore, I knew, no Great Lakes enterprise would be complete without a contribution from David Anderson, so I asked him if he'd be interested in signing aboard the project. Not only did he graciously offer to write two important thematic entries, GREAT LAKES BALLADS and GREAT LAKES CHANTEYS, he suggested additional entries on people I hadn't considered—DWIGHT BOYER and JOHN DISTURNELL—and he wrote them. Finally, I enlisted the aid of long time SSML buddies Bob Beasecker, Mary Obuchowski, and Ben Lindsay, whose student at University of Toledo, Donald Curtis, spends summers working aboard Great Lakes freighters.

So with entries and contributors and an editorial board in place, I felt the need to articulate my academic rationale for linking the literature of the Great Lakes to that of the sea. It had to do with how I understood sea literature in and of itself. Consider the two following sentiments:

> Only the sea is like a human being; the sky is not, nor the earth. But the sea is always moving; always something deep in itself is stirring it. It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting.
>
> —Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*

> The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation. The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.
>
> —Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Both Schreiner's South African perspective and Chopin's Louisiana reflection attest to the sea's power to pull at and to charm human thought and action . Schreiner's simile binds the sea to humanity; Chopin's personification gives the sea human voice and limb. The sea swells with praise and keens in lamentation; in its simultaneous constancy and movement, the sea provides both impetus and object for extended contemplation. Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Charles Olson, Melville scholar and Black Mountain poet, makes vital the longstanding connection between humankind and the sea: "The beginning of man was salt sea, and the perpetual reverberation of that great ancient fact, [is] constantly renewed in the unfolding of life in every human individual" (13).

While navigating the sea can be physically demanding and downright dangerous, it can also be emotionally and spiritually clarifying. Melville knew this better than anyone. His character Bulkington from *Moby Dick*, having just returned from a four-year voyage, restlessly signs aboard the *Pequod* for another term at sea; because "land seemed scorching to his feet," he sought "all the lashed sea's landlessness again" (ch. 23). He is the archetypal water-gazer, a "deep, earnest" thinker who craves "the open independence of...[the] sea" and for whom "in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God" (ch. 23).

The sea's impact upon the human imagination is also the subject of British author James Hamilton-Paterson's *The Great Deep: The Sea and Its Thresholds*. The sea, he says, is "reservoir of private imagery and public myth.... We are full of its beauty, of that strange power it gives off which echoes through our racial history and fills our language with its metaphors" (9). Sensing the human insignificance that was so apparent to Crane adrift in his open boat, Hamilton-Paterson remarks that a man alone in the deep, "in this wide salt world...is nothing" (247). He comments, too, on the sea's "special melancholy and...power to haunt," as shown in "a capacity to conceal, [in] the ability to stand for time and the quality of erasure" (143), and in the psychic power behind the very notion of "the Deep" (165). The sea retains, says Hamilton-Paterson, its psychic force, its sonorous and chilling stateliness, its amalgamation of height and depth, of gulfs of space and of time" (193). Some water-gazers, of course, are literally overwhelmed; Edna Pontellier in Chopin's *The Awakening* and Owen Browne in Robert Stone's *Outerbridge Reach* both intentionally seek their deaths by immersion into the sea.

Maritime inspiration in America had long arisen from the Great Lakes as well as from the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Polar seas. Citing Rudyard Kipling's assertion that the freshwater seas of the Great Lakes are each a "'fully accredited ocean'" (2), Haskell Springer, in *America and the Sea: A Literary History*, comments on the Native American and European literature inspired by those waters. In fact, in terms of depth and breadth, industry and economy, and the potential for meteorological or technological disaster, the Great Lakes far more resemble a sea than they resemble other waters; in Kipling's words, the Lakes "engulf...and wreck...and drive...ashore" (159). Moreover, as Brehm proposes in her essay "Great Lakes Maritime Fiction," these bodies of water figure into two significant traditions within the larger context of sea literature: as an unchanging "presence bent on destruction" (231) and as a myth of conquest limited by technology (232). Brehm suggests further that Lakes fiction is unique in illustrating a truth not shared by most American fiction: the fact of "our own frailty in the face of nature, and our fear" (232).

It is of no small significance that the most eloquent and persuasive argument for linking the Great Lakes with the ocean appears in America's greatest sea novel, *Moby Dick.* Between his apprentice voyage to Liverpool and his long whaling voyage to the Pacific, Melville made a trip to Illinois in the summer of 1840, sailing over the Great Lakes and returning East by Mississippi and Ohio river steamers. Ten years later, when he was writing *Moby Dick* in a Massachusetts farmhouse, his mind reflected back to the inland seas of America. In "The Town-Ho's Story," the whaleship *Town-Ho* has a crew that includes Steelkilt, a Lakesman from Buffalo. Although he hailed from inland America, Steelkilt knew the somber stress of great waters. No whales swam past Thunder Bay and the Mackinac Straits, but the Lakes, he said, could well match the ocean's massive fury. At the end of June, 1840, Melville sailed from Buffalo to Chicago, a week's voyage, fare ten dollars. On the night of July 1 Lake Erie was swept by a storm that threw travelers from their berths and horses across the halfdeck; Steelkilt had learned seamanship in blasts like this. It is most appropriate that Melville thus celebrates Lakes-bred seamen, and the Lakes themselves, in this great saltwater novel:

> For in their interflowing aggregate, those grand freshwater seas of ours,—Erie, and Ontario, and Huron, and Superior, and Michigan—possess an ocean-like expansiveness, with many of the ocean's noblest traits....[T]hey float alike the full-rigged merchant ship, the armed cruiser of the State, the steamer, and the beech canoe; they are swept by Borean and dismasting blasts as direful as any that lash the salted wave; they know what shipwrecks are, for out of sight of land, however inland, they have drowned full many a midnight ship with all its shrieking crew (ch. 54).

In addition to these inland Great Lakes, the interior landscape of America partakes of the myths of the sea. In *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination* Robert Thacker explores how maritime sensibilities affect human nature even in the landlocked grasslands/farmlands of North America. It is noteworthy, but not uncommon, that a book concentrating on the relationship between the human psyche and the earth should use sea imagery as a touchstone.

Early geographers tended to represent the uncharted North American interior as what Thacker calls a "vast inland sea" (52), and to characterize the appearance of the prairie lands themselves as a "level sea of grass" (52).

Thacker evokes nineteenth-century geographer Sir William Francis Butler, who, charting the Canadian Northwest, first encountered the "prairie" traveling northwest from central Minnesota. Significantly, Butler's narrative of prairie travel begins with an Atlantic crossing during which he observes an "unruffled" sea: "...as evening came down over the still tranquil ocean and the vessel clove her outward way through phosphorescent water, the lights along the iron coast grew fainter in the distance till there lay around only the unbroken circle of the sea" (*Great Lone Land* 11). It was Butler, in fact, who, several decades prior to Kipling's use of the metaphor, had termed Lake Superior an "inland-ocean" (*Great Lone Land* 74) and the Great Lakes themselves "immense inland seas" (*Great Lone Land* 18). Though his travel narrative does not attain the status of imaginative literature, something about the land and its geography draws Butler meditatively seaward, something in his quest of the soil seeks imagery from the sea for inspiration and validation:

> The great ocean itself does not present more infinite variety than does this prairie-ocean of which we speak.... No ocean of water in the world can vie with its gorgeous sunsets.... This ocean has no past—time has been nought to it; and men have come and gone, leaving behind them no track, no vestige, of their presence (*Great Lone Land* 199-200).

Butler's later American travel narrative, *Wild North Land*, is in part more symbolic that descriptive; here the Great Prairie, "the vast rigid ocean of the central continent," is "ocean-like in everything save motion" (49); here the westward migrations of bison are characterized as "the waves of the ocean roll[ing] before the storm" (53). Predating Butler by four decades, William Cullen Bryant had compared billowing Illinois grasslands to an ocean in "The Prairies." Writing fifty years after Butler, an obscure poet of the Red River Valley named Eva K. Anglesburg (I thank Lawrence Moe for introducing her work to me) described the winter prairie of her native North Dakota as being "sculpted like the sea" with "fiery-crested, black-troughed billows roll[ing]" (20). Bryant, Butler, Anglesburg, and other prairie authors who use sea imagery are in venerable company: Melville in the first chapter of *Moby Dick* compares the Pacific Ocean to the prairie.

Charles Olson echoed the same sensibility in *Call Me Ishmael*; for him it was important "to understand the Pacific as part of our geography, another West, prefigured in the Plains, antithetical..." (13). And in the 1990s Jonathan Raban, author and seafarer, opens his book about Montana homesteaders with nautical imagery: "Breasting the regular swells of land, on a red dirt road as true as a line of longitude, the car was like a boat at sea" (3). In *Landscape and Memory*, art critic and prize-winning author Simon Schama discusses the ways in which geography shapes mythology, how "place...exposes its connections to an ancient and peculiar vision" (16). His observations that landscape is "a work of the mind, a repository of the memories and obsessions of the people who gaze upon it" can apply as well to the sea's power and potential; he gives the title "Water" to the second of four parts of his book (and titles subsections "Streams of Consciousness" and "Bloodstreams").

In the final analysis, one need not be near or on the sea to resonate to it, to ingest its power, to respond in memorable and even transcendent prose. Or near or on the Great Lakes, but it obviously helps.

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THE COMMODITY CULTURE AND OTHER HISTORICAL PRESSURES IN HARRIETTE ARNOW'S *THE DOLLMAKER*

MICHAEL BARRY

Harriette Simpson Arnow's *The Dollmaker,* the story of a Kentucky family's settlement in Detroit in the late years of World War II, is an unsubtle novel in which the characters are one-dimensional and the messages explicit and repeated. Still, the verdict is provisional and reserved when it concerns individualism in the face of forces that will crush it (probably all the more quickly if we refuse to surrender) and when it concerns the proper attitude to take toward the progressive nature of history. In general, Arnow's novel looks at a shift to a commodity-based culture, and associates such a shift with coldness, smoothness, and a decrease in individual expression. But the shift is a dialectical sublation; any historical synthesis that is achieved contains elements of its preceding states of being; moreover, the opposite terms of the argument often look like one another and often require one another for their differentiation. The novel may be a protest; but more likely it is a lament and a social historical investigation.

The novel's first scene has Gertie Nevels performing heroics in her unassuming fashion: she maneuvers her mule to get a car to stop on a country road, performs an emergency tracheotomy by the side of the road on her son Amos, whittles a little pipe to keep his windpipe open, helps to push the car out of the mud, and persuades the military officer who owns the car to drive her to a doctor's office in town. It is 1944, and Gertie has found out the day before that she has lost a brother in the war. The bequest that she receives from that brother, along with some money the military officer slyly forces on her and money long saved from chickens and eggs and other services—all of this is going to enable her to buy her own land for herself, her husband Clovis, and her family. But after Clovis leaves to

work in a factory in Detroit, Gertie is shamed by her mother into following him there, as a good wife should. Most of the family is disappointed by the move to Detroit. Gertie and the children feel crowded in a small apartment in a federal housing project in an area called Merry Hill. Gertie loses her oldest son, who runs away to get back to the hills, and her youngest daughter, who is run over by the blind force of industrialization. Meanwhile, she has brought a big block of cherry wood from Kentucky, against the advice of her friends. She means to carve a figure with the wood, and during troubled times, she often seeks her solitude and communion with the "man in the wood." After the war ends, Clovis strikes with his fellow workers against the factory owned by Old Man Flint, and becomes involved in labor violence as well, on both the receiving end and the giving end.

Settlement in Detroit for the Nevels family means being subject to the pressures to adjust in the direction of factorylike sameness and interchangeability. In contrast, farm life and the foolishness of whittling wood offer the aura, preserve the ritual, and even confirm the individuality of artistic creation. These features, these advantages, are mostly evident in retrospect. In Detroit, the radio provides the stories that fill the children's minds, the schools require all the children to walk on the same path (and in fact prompt Reuben Nevels, already acculturated as an individualist from his country upbringing, to declare that "I ain't makin' myself over for Detroit" [286]). The apartments are all the same, the jobs require repetitive tasks and identify workers by number, the food is prefabricated, and Mr. Anderson, the sociologist across the alley, has various theories of childraising that go by the numbers and by the hour of the day.

Surely more of the stuff of Gertie Nevel's world after she moves to Detroit has been commodified.[1] Before Gertie Nevels leaves Kentucky, even the commodities have non-commodity quality. In Kentucky, she saved money, but her money carried around with it exactly the sort of aura and ritual that is incompatible with any regular exchange of cash. Each bill, more like a gift than a commodity exchange, had associated with it a story: "That was the eggs at Samuel's two years ago last July" and "That was the walnut kernel money winter before last." (32). She identified these bills not only by their denominations, but by their newness, the way they are folded, or the pinhole in Lincoln's eye. Conversely, the huge piece of cherry wood she has sent from Kentucky represents for her all manner of non-utilitarian figures, but it changes to a commodity in Detroit. The wood is at first Cassie's pretend friend Callie Lou, then Judas—a Judas who usually seems to be returning the silver that he has gotten for betraying Jesus. The summer of 1945 ends with Gertie's destruction of this wood, the half-carved man almost revealed in it. She destroys it for the sake of selling off its pieces, making mass-produced jumping jack dolls, for gifts. The loss of the aura and the potential religious power of the handmade object is explicit. As Clovis has said, taking pleasure in the rigged-up machine that he has presented to Gertie as a gift,"Christ er pieces fer a jumpin' jack doll—it's all th same to a jigsaw" (329)[2] Even before Gertie's decision to split the cherry wood, we have had many glimpses of commodification and its discontents. Christmas itself causes the Nevels children disappointment since their expectations have been inflated by catalogues, advertisements, and the hockey skates of other children. By the end of Christmas, Clovis is a bit resentful that the shopping he has done has not been fully appreciated, and his disappointment shows that his gifts are not freely given, that he requires some escalation in his standing as payment. The Nevels family has achieved some of this heightened position by the end of the day, in fact. Their refrigerator, bought on time, is the finest on the block and the envy of other families. It is an "Icy Heart" refrigerator and freezer, and it stands for all that we ultimately see of industrial capitalism. It is like Victor's car, parked out near the steel plant: "Cold, but she runs good" (326).[3]

According to contemporary theories of gift exchange and reciprocity, giving a gift to another, or doing a favor, entails much that does not meet the eye and has, moreover, properties that are better appreciated in the context of the workings of the whole society rather than simply in isolation, as part of an individual-to-individual relationship. In summarizing some of the most prominent features of these reciprocity relationships, social psychologist Barry Schwartz says a gift, in contrast to a market exchange, tends to keep the giver in the mind of the recipient, and so a piece of the self goes with the gift. Certainly inheritances are a key example, one in which a memorial purpose is explicit. Gifts also keep the recipient in the mind of the giver, particularly in that time before they are given. Furthermore, gifts can be manifestations of aggression if they cannot be repaid. Such giving that cannot be reciprocated requires the recipient to accept a socially inferior role to that of the giver. And if the gift confers social status on the giver, then surely another feature of gift giving is the way that it enables socially powerful people to advertise that status: Schwartz gives the example of the parent who gives the expensive car to the sixteen-year-old; the competition in this case is not with the recipient, but with...the Joneses.[4]

These are all cynical views of a ritual known for its altruism; all of them question the wisdom of the simple moral superiority of giving to receiving. Somebody has to receive. But the anthropologists' and social psychologists' views of gift-giving also call attention to the dangers of a commodity-based society in which all obligations are retired at the point of purchase, where we all walk away from transactions owing no favors to the people with whom we have done business. Marcel Mauss's famous anthropological essay called *The Gift* argues that the obligation that we feel when we owe somebody a gift is what keeps precapitalist societies so tightly bound together. That function means that discomfort about uneven reciprocity can be an advantage, if communal bonds are ultimately important.

These communal bonds appear to Gertie to be under stress. By the end of Christmas Day, Gertie notes that the families of the alley have celebrated the birthday of Christ and what they have to show for it are broken ribbons, pictures of angels and Santa Claus "crumpled and torn into nightmarish little images," broken toys, and reindeer with their feet chopped off (272).

Urbanization and industrialization seem to have fragmented the society by isolating individual transactions. Life in Detroit concretely manifests this fragmentation. It is not only the reindeer whose feet are amputated—Gertie's daughter, Cassie, ends up having her feet chopped off too. Cassie is run down by a train, blocked from being helped by a fence, kept from being warned by the roar of a jet: capitalism does her in. With Cassie goes her imaginary friend—and imaginary charge—Callie Lou, who has been an even better bulwark against commodification and the stifling of individual expression than has Gertie's man-in-the-wood, since Callie Lou lacks even material substance. When Cassie dies, Gertie is smashed to pieces by her loss (386), and this is just some of the fragmentation that capitalism seems to have wrought:[5] Gertie was already "torn to pieces" by the noises and smells of the city (238), much like workingmen and women who are routinely "blown to bits" and "chopped to pieces" (287). The cityscape is compartmentalized by the busy roads and by fences, a fence to separate the railroads from the residential alley, a fence around the steel mill, and a fence built by Enoch to protect the meager garden that the Nevelses are finally able to plant.

Personalities are fragmented too in order to cope with capitalism's and urbanization's divorce of work from leisure and its division of labor and consequent alienation. Most notable is the wife of a rich Detroit industrialist, Mrs. McKeckoran, whom Gertie's friend Mrs. Anderson has already met as a gospel woman who travels around their alley, a woman named Mrs. Bales. She never lets on, never alludes to her split personality. One personality is for her wifely place, presumably in the scheme of capitalist efficiency; the other is for religion.[6] Others also have alter egos: Victor, the man next door who works in the steel mill, is a gentleman who looks after Gertie and pays her for a whittled cross, and an enraged worker trying to sleep during the day. Mrs. Daly is a humanitarian who cares about the Japanese woman crying after the Hiroshima blast and a racist who distrusts all who are not Her Own. Cassie's alter ego is Callie Lou. Gertie's is the Man in the Wood. Even the Man in the Wood has two potential identities once he is definitely a he: Jesus and Judas. This reflects Gertie's own divided self, and maybe it also suggests that Gertie has discovered something about a more fundamental split in the nature of our sacrificial figures.

So capitalism's icy heart commodifies relationships and fragments people. And so maybe the book is not that complicated. Certainly it is easy to see Arnow's intentions in some of the ironies of the plot and character interactions. For example, we know that Gertie Nevels is naive in her rejection of unions, a rejection that arises from her belief that they don't allow a place for the free will of the worker (292). In this belief she agrees with Mr. Daly across the alley. Mr. Daly's racist invective, his belief that all sympathy for workers must be communist, is enough reason to distrust this view, and favor instead the goodwill of the tool-and-die man who recruits Clovis to the Union. The tool-and-die man has suffered for his beliefs. Meanwhile, Clovis's beliefs and practices are equally criticized by the text's ironies. His embrace of buying on credit, his dismissal of Gertie's decisionmaking role in the family once he is the sole breadwinner, and his lack of understanding of anything off the market grid are all too clumsy to seem credible and they are, besides, mostly held in the hopes that the neighbors will think better of him. Another of the text's messages is equally clear; Mrs. Anderson is correct in her conviction that capitalism is growing smoother, that its discrimination will not be so overt in the future, its cops will not be shooting dogs nor will its owners be roughing up labor organizers (if they can somehow cause labor organizers to rough each other up). This new smoothness is paralleled by the replacement of the rough-hewn edges of Gerties's whittling by the smooth edges made by the machine-run jigsaw. (The mass production is enhanced with a little whittling, since deception is central to marketing strategy.)

But the big question for the reader of this novel is whether one is better off, as Clovis says to Gertie, "the sooner [one] learn[s] the beaten path" (332). I would argue that the novel does counsel some kind of surrender to circumstance, though perhaps without the emphasis on the urgency or conformity Clovis's articulation implies.

The slightly smoother formulation of Clovis's pragmatic recommendation would be something like "It takes some of capitalism's tricks to survive under it," or "A man oughtn't to have to . . . belong to a union to get a decent wage—but the way things are he's gotta" (486). The novel's position on this attitude toward life and history is difficult. There is certainly not much affirmation. Gertie still feels as if she has not stood up for herself at the end. Her world has been taken away, and the men returning from the war will finish the task of seizing all social power from women.[7] That is, the sacrifices that the women are asked to make are greater.

But Gertie finds out that the schools are not like factories. She finds, for example, that Miss Huffacre remembers Cassie, and had developed a relationship with her, in spite of crowded conditions. This is important. Mass society has benefits. Cassie gets glasses that help her see; we should consider the import of this new vision—and she reads too. The school's casual approach to dances seems much preferable to Gertie's own country upbringing which taught her that dancing was a sin. And the community of the alley—a discussion of which is going to bring me back to gift exchange—is not at all an utter failure.[8]

It is important for us to make a judgment about the success or failure of the community in that alley in Detroit, with no Blacks or Jews but with Catholics and Protestants, Southern, Eastern, and Northern Europeans, Kentucky Hillbillies, and a Japanese woman. After all, the total impression of the book for most readers is apt to be the many scenes, many scenes, in which one person peers into another's business, nose against screen, say, or in which heads are craned because there is something going on over there—a police car is arriving or a fight is breaking out. Did anybody hear what happened?

Such a scene does not indicate participants' control over events, but there is about these scenes some of the same qualities as there are in the scenes in Kentucky, before the Nevelses move North, when the women crowd around the post office waiting for word about their men overseas. We should not overlook the similarities, morally speaking, between Detroit and Kentucky. When the Nevelses were in Kentucky, their troubles had begun. Maybe troubles already evident in Kentucky were brought about by market forces and world wars, or maybe they were functions of the struggle for survival of all humanity. But moving North is not necessarily a wrong choice for Gertie. Its threat to her social standing as a woman is significant, and its requirement that she give up some of her cultural heritage is tragic.[9] But Arnow does not say that Gertie could have done otherwise, she does not present resistance to the move as a real choice.[10]

The fragmentation of urban life is the obverse of the individualism that Gertie and Reuben held so dear. Fragmentation already pervaded the Nevelses' life before they left Kentucky. Cassie's alter ego, Callie Lou, was at the most active down in Kentucky. Gertie already had the Man in the Wood there too. Why would such splitting be needed? Arnow showed a rural world in her previous novel, *Hunter's Horn*, in which fences were already necessary to cordon off parts of the land in Kentucky. There were snakes in the grass, children dying in infancy and mothers in childbirth, and individual personalities influenced in large part by fear-inducing folklore. At least from the beginning of *The Dollmaker*, Gertie has been *in* history, affected by the World War especially. The Nevelses have regularly given up half their crop, since they do not own their land. Gertie's brother has died in the war. It is true enough that she looks to the North Star for her bearings, she takes consolation from Ecclesiastes, and later on in Detroit, she sees the "steel pour" in terms of the Apocalypse (323). But if we take her back to Kentucky, she will be pursuing individual projects, and even rejecting Ecclesiastes' view of a world where nothing fundamental ever changes, because now she is in a world where she wants change, where the repetition of the sunrises and the seasons is an insufficient consolation and, well, things ought to change: they're too harsh for her to bear as they are. (She reveals to Cassie her disillusionment with the perspective of the Ecclesiastes' preacher—see 303). If Gertie's family had been insulated somehow from history back in Kentucky, she would not have had a concept of the individual, nor such an orientation toward the future.[11] Gertie needs a car to get her to the doctor, and even wants to free herself from the obligation of owing the military officer for the ride by paying for it.

And when the family does come North, not everything shifts to the coldness of the cash nexus. Far from it. Inside the family, the exchanges may be *worse* than cold, but they are certainly not sterile. It is especially the inside-family gifts that pulse with unspoken resentments. Gertie gives her long-saved money to Clovis to spend on a refrigerator and on Cassie's funeral. And Clovis gives the jigsaw to Gertie. Clovis becomes the bearer of almost all the gifts, since now he is the sole money earner (again, almost) in the household. Clovis believes he is being unselfish; he yells at Gertie that "all our life together I've wanted to make more money so's we could live better, so's you and the kids could have it kinda nice" (243). And later he claims that he would have come back to the farm if Gertie had bought it, since he has always wanted what she wanted (390). Gerties's acquiescence is attributable in part to her sensitivity to his concern, but in any case it is difficult to gauge whose wants are being honored. Are either Clovis or Gertie freely doing anything for each other?

Outside the family, people's teeth are not clenched quite so tightly when they give or receive gifts. The list of favors that neighbors do for one another in this small community on Merry Hill goes on and on. Neoclassical economists often assume there is altruism inside of the nuclear family and selfishness outside of it. In this section of 1944 and 1945 Detroit, altruism reaches far further than the edges of the family, and even some of the cash interactions are tinged with it. So, for instance, gifts are as common as they ever were in Kentucky (where the bequest from Henley that would enable Gertie to buy the old Tipton place [at a price that John Ballew had probably already reduced for her] might be an exemplar). The gifts are ambiguous, of course, but that is precisely why they create bonds. Gertie gives her scarf to a stranger in the taxi stand line as soon as she arrives in Detroit. Partly as a signal of superior status, a Daly boy gives grapes to Amos the first day the vegetable-and-fruit truck comes into the alley. Later, Gertie whittles two dolls for the Daly kids: a chickadee for Maggie, the oldest, and a bald-headed wooden doll for the newborn child. The fruit-and-vegetable man gives Gertie free spring flowers. Mrs. Anderson gives Gertie Phenobarbital. The bubble gum boy gives Cassie gum on her first day of school, and takes his nickname from the gift. Sophronie Whitaker gives Mrs. Daly a green sweater for her new child. The mother of Clytie's classmate makes Clytie's graduation dress. Victor's wife Max gives Gertie $20 for watching her money. Child care is constantly exchanged.[12] The drain-pan cover of the refrigerator that little John Daly pulls off is referred to as a gift that he gives, just as Mrs. Bales's gospel literature is a "gift—for those who will take it. Even the purchases and donations are complicated by feelings quite separate from economic self-interest: Gertie washes Homer Anderson's shirts as a favor, and carves a few too many thorns in some of the Christ dolls she intends to sell; the neighbors who buy jumpin' jack dolls partly do so to reward Enoch's budding entrepreneurial initiative, and Gertie makes donations to the sisters because she wants to make friends. The McKeckorans are doing a great favor for the Andersons by having them over for dinner.

Many of these transactions are specifically described in terms of gifts and obligations, and some show their complicated calculus on the surface. If Gertie stops secluding herself, then Max will do her this favor: prevent Victor's mother from conferring upon her a different favor, making her—Gertie—galombkis. Max will also prevent Victor's mother from staying to make sure Gertie enjoys them. Max's favor enables Gertie not to have to be under obligation and not to have to express gratitude, and Max's favor itself is accomplished so brusquely as to make its main selling point the fact that it is given with a certain amount of disgust and even coercion, so what could it mean to repay it? (392). Similarly, on the way up to Detroit on the train, the black woman whom Gertie has talked to wants to buy a doll that Gertie has carved, and Gertie won't sell it until the woman insists that Gertie would be doing her a greater favor to sell it than to give it.[13]

Clearly the gift is a paradox wherein both giving and receiving can be sacrificial. When Gertie looks at her half-carved figure in the cherry wood, she knows it is either taking or giving something. It may be Jacob stealing his brother's birthright, Judas taking money to betray Jesus, Judas rejecting the money. "Who's giving?" she wonders. "What gift?" (405) In a thorough and complex study of *The Dollmaker*, Kathleen Walsh says that Gertie's obsession with Judas shows her guilt at key points in her passage from Kentucky to Detroit: she has failed to stand up for herself and for human compassion during Reuben's crisis, during Cassie's ordeal, and at the time she realizes that Clovis might murder a man. Walsh says that Gertie needs to learn more forcefully what she has sensed all along: that "no further giving can gain her what she wants. In fact, she lost it by giving" (197).

In Arnow's world, the paradoxes do not stop at the realization that receiving a gift is sometimes itself a gift, or that gifts drive the commodity economy. We also see that the most heated conflicts are between people with similar interests, and we are made aware of that most weighty and telling paradox that the proto-Christian was a Jew. The contraries Arnow presents are better addressed by a dialectical logic than by a logic of simple oppositions. If we reflect on the conditions of possibility for the existence of any simple state of affairs or ideology, we see that each implies and in some ways resembles its contrary. For example, the boy who helps to beat up Clovis, also known as Joe's nephew, is a person who does industry's bidding, much the way Clovis does. Similarly, Gertie has to oppose the willfulness of both Reuben and Cassie, but her opposition is required in exactly the proportion that these two children are similar to her. Cassie's similarity to Gertie does not reside simply in her creativity in creating Callie Lou, but in her raising and disciplining the mischievous Callie Lou. Gertie exercises discipline more than she at first intends to; like Joe's nephew, she becomes the enforcer of industrialisms's edicts. These paradoxes multiply, and usually we have a glimpse of previous conditions that have been canceled and yet preserved. For example, we are told that the intensity of hatred is a mirror-image of the previous intensity of love. In a conversation with Mrs. Bales, the gospel woman who visits the alley, Gertie's neighbor Max reveals that she burns with hatred for her husband Victor because she loves him too much. Gertie's feelings are similar. She says, presumably in regard to her relationship to Clovis, or even to her mother, that "when we've changed to try to please em, we hate em worse than ever" (208). Some of Gertie's sacrifice, as I have suggested, has been in her reasonable gracious acceptance of Clovis's gifts. Since Clovis must give the gifts to fuel the new commodity economy, we can hardly consider gifts and commodities as opposites, after all. The irony of their juxtaposition becomes most apparent around Christmas. It is Gertie who hopes to preserve some ritual around the holiday, but she believes that Jesus's sacrifices are subject to the same paradoxical calculations as other gifts. Jesus sacrifices his life, but Judas's betrayal is required for Jesus's sacrifice, and he is scapegoated even more than Jesus was. The logical puzzle that most shows history's role in changing the terms of an opposition is that of the relationship of Jew and Christian, the Old Testament and the New. The Catholics in this Detroit housing project almost forget that Christianity is founded upon an internal dissent among Jews. A Jew in America is noteworthy for being a non-Christian, and Gertie is sensitive to the fact that this reasoning makes Jesus a non-Christian (273).

Arnow's interest in this logic of similarity of opposites and the transcendence of past oppositions can be applied to the choices offered between rural and urban values. The opposition between an agrarian existence not governed by time and an urban existence dominated by industry is itself governed by time. The implications might be several: that history cannot undo what it has done, for even in the undoing there would be a new voyage that lived on in collective memory; that the rural ways persist in the urban environment, inasmuch as they could not simply disappear; that the rural has been defined, at least for some time, by opposition to the urban, and as such contained some of the same qualities or at least answered differently some of the same questions. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke points out interesting shifts in "nature" as it is incorporated into the term naturalism: "Whereas 'naturalism' in its beginnings was a consistent title, referring to man in *nature*, it gradually became transformed into a surreptitiously compensatory title, referring to technological methods and ideals that are almost the antitheses of nature, with nature itself seen in terms of technology and the monetary: (53). The complicated, historically sensitive awareness that the novel shows, and requires, prompts me to agree with Dorothy Lee's verdict about the ending of *The Dollmaker*: that Gertie loses innocence but broadens her understanding of suffering, and that any journey toward awareness is painful. "To transcend Hell, one must first know it" (98).

The Dollmaker's contrasts and similarities between the rural world of Kentucky still resistant to the commodity and the urban world of Detroit, embracing an assembly-line mentality, is striking for some of its differences from U.S. society now, at century's end. People don't know their neighbors as well now, so the congregation of many people in one place says very little about the extent of community or communication. Another difference is the scope of economic considerations: Arnow's novel, with its huge canvas, is noteworthy for showing how *few* commodities there were in 1945: one could still, perhaps, have envisioned a centrally-planned economy because coal and steel and cars and refrigerators and couches and dwelling units, while complex and quite difficult to enumerate, were still able to be comprehended, even if with a significant effort. Now we have many more necessities, and many more choices. This means greater diversity, and it is an important diversity since people express themselves so much through their consumer decisions. Primitive societies, in fact, could never have achieved such diversity. Even if there were *more* distinct societies once upon a time, they could never, individually, offer the kind of cosmopolitanism or the important individualized results of niche marketing that large urban societies have. So the end of the century features more diversity in our U.S. society, greater possibilities for individual expression both in comparison to the Detroit of the 1940s and to the preindustrial and primitive societies that may once have depended on nature and corresponded better to the Preacher's vision in Ecclesiastes.

But since the diversity is all presided over by capitalism, since there is no anti-consumption choice, it is a rather shallow diversity. The decline in the number of world languages demonstrates how much the world has lost, even if no single existing society has lost it.

The Dollmaker tells an oblique progress narrative, but that narrative is undergirded and undermined by a strong nostalgia. Arnow believes there was in the old Appalachian way of life "a richness of human life and dignity seldom found in the United States today" (Introduction to Arnow's *Mountain Path*, reprinted in Chung 243). When hill life was destroyed, "a personal dream of community," for Arnow, went with it (Arnow interview with Barbara Baer, qtd. in Griffin 109).

Urbanization is not the biggest story in the United States any more. But it is still the biggest story in the world. *The Dollmaker* is a splendid social history that shows the issues faced by people whose world is changing, who have to give up some of their culture in order to survive, and who have some choice[14] in the creation of the new and more cosmopolitan culture that will replace it.

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NOTES

1. For Marx a commodity is not only an "object outside of us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another," but a good whose value must be achieved socially, in the marketplace. And so "all commodities, when taken in certain

proportions, must be equal in value." That is, they are trade-able, and any uniqueness or aura they seem to have disappears into their status as a commodity. Since the whole market system determines the exchange value of a commodity (average labor for the society at the time, not the passion of the labor, is what matters), a handmade article will be valued only at the rate of labor required to make its machine-made equivalent, if their utility is really identical (Marx 47). For me, this means that one cannot, by one's own strength, get off the market grid: it determines exchange value, the laborer does not, nor even does the purchaser.

2. Kathleen Parker cites this line to show that the "values of industrialism do not allow for unique artistic creativity, nor do they accommodate the spiritual side of human life" (210). Her essay tellingly enumerates the contrasts between Gertie's experience of Kentucky and her experience of Detroit. She starts by citing Arnow's detailed descriptions of Tipton Place and then of Merry Hill in Detroit. She also discusses the meals, which until the move were wholly supplied by Gertie's farming, the expansiveness of Kentucky versus the crowding of Detroit, and finally, the rigidity of the schooling in Detroit as it contrasts with "intergenerational lessons" of their Kentucky education (205). Rodger Cunningham sees this line as evidence that Clovis is unable to appreciate the "interiority" of art (137). He also notes that here, Clovis encroaches on Gertie's economic space: this is one area where she, conceivably, could be the provider.
3. The icy heart freezes butter, incidentally, in the middle of a kitchen overheated by the cooking stove and a central heating stove, which in turn keeps the cold out of the apartment. Pointing out the paradox of this little bit of inefficiency, which we all live, is one of the assets of this book. Its defamiliarization shows us some of capitalism's wonders and absurdities. The Nevelses are surprised that the gas stove does not need an exhaust pipe, and have to learn to push the button on their stove before turning it on. Gertie has never eaten a hamburger, has never seen a traffic signal; Cassie has never seen a bubble gum bubble.
4. Schwartz's essay, along with excerpts and essays by Claude Levi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, Aafke Komter, Amartya Sen, and many others, appears in *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Aafke Komter (Amsterdam University Press, 1996).
5. Dorothy Lee says that the Nevels family is unified by mutual need in Kentucky and fragmented in Detroit. (95).
6. Like Allen Tate's "Religion of the Half Horse" in the agrarian manifesto called *I'll Take My Stand*, capitalism has broken everything, including people, into components in order to use each piece more effectively.
7. Arnow herself says that Gertie's economic contribution should compensate a little for the apparent sadness of her decision to split the almost-carved cherry wood: "once again she would be helping her family" (Chung 268). Elizabeth Harrison says that Gertie's self-development is furthered rather than hindered by her decision to destroy the block of wood" (97). She can "provide for the welfare of others, and her act shows that art need not be static and preserved. Parker says that Gertie's capitulation is "on terms she defines" (213). (though that is not the gist of Parker's argument).
8. James Seaton believes that a superficial reading of the book leaves us with a harsh picture of Detroit, but a more patient reading reveals a humanity and complexity in the new urban setting. Charlotte Goodman emphasizes the bonds of the women. Women band together, sometimes without the knowledge of their men, to help each other. Goodman allows that Jews and Blacks are excluded, and concedes that the relationships depicted are not very intense or long-lasting. But she thinks they transcend some of the narrow parochialisms by which different ethnic groups tend to judge each other, and she sees the competitiveness and the violence of the men to be starkly different.

9. Elizabeth Harrison says "Role specialization in industrial society makes it impossible for [Gertie] to be both breadwinner and mother" (91).
10. Harrison's essay says that "Gertie's autonomy in the rural world [is]...aberrant" that those critics are correct who suggest that the war is responsible for Gertie's illusion of freedom (87, 88). Both in terms of Arnow's artistic vision and in terms of our country's history, the vision of the pastoral could not be sustained. Harrison says that Kentucky life is not idealized, but suggests to me that its idealization has happened retrospectively by selective memory on the part of characters in the novel and readers of the novel.
11. In *Cosmos and History*, Mircea Eliade argues that only a minority of modern men make history, over the heads of, and with the labor of, those who have to bear its consequences. Because archaic people experience this so-called progress as terror, a cyclical view of history has helped them—tens of millions of people—to "endure great historical pressures without committing suicide" (152).
12. Harrison mentions that the women"watch each other's children and offer condolences and food during illness and unemployment" (93). She also cites an Arnow interview that calls attention to Maggie Day's gift of kindling and grease for starting a fire on Gertie's first day in the project.
13. A scene in Arnow's *Hunter's Horn* features Milly accepting chewing tobacco from her husband Nunn: she says "You just pretend not to like it so I'll have it all" (11). Nunn is doing Milly a favor of making the gift seem like it's not a gift, and Milly is scolding Nunn for placing her under obligation for the meta-favor. I think.
14. Joan Griffin says that Gertie loses all control in the industrial context; her essay is titled "Geography as Destiny." Walsh's reading is a bit of a reversal on the standard naturalistic paradox: that the characters feel themselves to be free, but are not. Walsh thinks Gertie's perspective suggests futility, but that Arnow's vision emphasizes "the necessity of assertion despite overwhelming odds" (186). Harrison says this novel shows that "poor white women need no longer be victims...but can...pursue their own destinies: (99).

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JIM HARRISON, WILLA CATHER, AND THE REVISION OF MIDWESTERN PASTORAL

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Critics have discussed the work of Jim Harrison, contemporary poet, novelist, and essayist, in relation to many other writers, including Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner. Such comparisons derive from the epic sweep of his fiction, his descriptions of wild and rural landscapes, and, especially, his experience as an outdoorsman. Willa Cather is not commonly associated with Harrison, who for many years was stereotyped as a hyper-masculine writer of outdoor romance. But close reading of Harrison's pastoral fiction reveals that he shares Cather's Romantic spiritual quest and concern with Midwestern culture and landscape. In fact, Harrison's novels *Farmer* (1976), *Dalva*, (1988), and *The Road Home* (1998) respond directly to Cather's novels of pioneer Nebraska. Parallels of characterization, setting, and plot between these novels and Cather's, particularly *O Pioneers!*, show that Harrison's version of Midwestern pastoral both honors and calls into question Cather's vision of the region's natural beauty and human history.

Cather and Harrison figure in a regional tradition that includes writers as wide-ranging as ecologist Aldo Leopold, poet Theodore Roethke, and essayist Scott Russell Sanders. While working in different genres and styles, these authors resemble one another in crucial ways. First, they all value the work and wisdom of farmers, horticulturalists, and naturalists. They all express spiritual understandings of nature strongly influenced by Emerson and the other Transcendentalists. And, Midwestern pastoral writers critique the culture of their home region, which they find too often dominated by materialism, provinciality, and lack of appreciation for the subtle beauty of Midwestern landscape. Drawing lessons from history and, increasingly, ecological science, they have challenged and revised

Midwestern pastoralism, the dominant cultural myth and vision of the region as the nation's garden space or middlescape.

Essential to Midwestern pastoral is a dual understanding of place, both practical and spiritual. On the one hand, Cather's Nebraska novels celebrate the hard work and foresight needed to succeed on a small farm. In terms of Midwestern cultural myth, this is the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer as a steward of nature and paragon of civic virtue. Characters such as Cather's Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!* and Ántonia Shimerda in *My Ántonia* fit this convention of resourceful and intelligent landowners whose individual success is given meaning by their participation in democratic communities. At the same time, Cather characterizes her protagonists as Romantic visionaries who appreciate their home places not only as productive but also as beautiful, meaningful, and numinous. Such a centering in the landscape occurs when Alexandra returns from a research trip in *O Pioneers!*. Having seen economic and horticultural trends afoot in the more developed river country, she returns to her family's homestead, determined to retain the property despite her brothers' desire to sell. The decision comes to her in an ecstatic moment, a Romantic epiphany of place recalling passages in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. In that moment, Alexandra realizes that the Divide is her home, and that by trusting her imagination, instinct, and aesthetic sensibility she will succeed as a farmer and landowner.

Jim Harrison also writes about rural landowners using pastoral conventions established by Cather, the Romantics, and by precursors going back to Virgil. These are best seen in *Farmer*, a portrayal of Harrison's own people, Swedish-Americans who "moved into Northern Michigan because it was a beautiful place" (126). Like Cather, who meditated on the pioneer experience on the Great Plains, Harrison portrays the twilight of an era. *Farmer* is set in the 1950s, a period of school consolidation, migration to urban areas, and the industrialization of agriculture on ever-larger farms. The novel may be described as a pastoral romance, a story of lovers torn by circumstances and by conflicting responsibilities and desires.[1] The main character, Joseph Lundgren, is a "gimp forty-three year old schoolteacher farmer" who must choose between his love for one woman and sexual attraction to another (131). As the inevitable decision draws near, Joseph must face a larger issue: his prolonged inaction after the deaths of his father and best friend Orin, a casualty of the Korean War. He has allowed grief and his physical limitations (a serious childhood injury left him with a permanent limp) to interfere with his passions and commitments: his love for Rosealee, Orin's widow, and his long-deferred dream of traveling to see the ocean. The crisis, naturally, occurs in a setting of farms and semi-wilderness where Joseph acquires greater consciousness and resolve.

Literary precedent plays an important role in *Farmer*. One of the first things we learn about Joseph is that he loves to read. Books stand in for the adventures he has missed, much as an inappropriate relationship with Catherine, one of Joseph's senior students, compensates for his mundane sexual history. After their first tryst, Joseph goes hunting but is distracted by thoughts of his new lover. Sitting in "his favorite place, a hillock in a grove of oaks overlooking a creek," he contemplates the affair with difficulty because his only points of comparison are literary. Catherine "turned him into a lunatic making him think of the hundreds of novels he had read, written he always believed by liars because he had never until Catherine experienced anything remotely similar except in his imagination" (12).

Authors who have fired Joseph's imagination include Faulkner, Lawrence, and Hemingway. Late in the novel, while driving to Chicago with students on their senior trip, Joseph contemplates Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa* and *Farewell to Arms,* "the Hemingway novel about the love affair with the nurse named Catherine who was so unlike the Catherine he had dallied with. The book had upset him terribly and the night he had finished it he had had trouble sleeping" (151). The allusion simultaneously invites and negates comparison of Hemingway, Harrison, and their fictional characters. Harrison's Catherine resembles Hemingway's in name only, just as his fiction shares little with Hemingway's beyond northern Michigan settings and scenes of fishing and hunting. Harrison writes of nature in terms of social affections rather than fantasies of masculine adventure and self-sufficiency.

Catherine's name, however, does evoke a more accurate association among American Modernists: *Cather*. It is Cather, not Hemingway, who provided Harrison with the type and pattern of his novel. *Farmer* closely resembles Cather's *O Pioneers!* in many aspects of characterization and pastoral convention. Both novels portray Swedish-American farm families on the margins of the

Midwest: Harrison's Lundgren's reside in Michigan, just north of the transition between Eastern hardwood and pine-oak forest, Cather's Bergsons in south-central Nebraska, just east of the 100th meridian in the transition zone between tall and short grass prairies. Both protagonists cope with the narrow-mindedness of some in the provinces: Alexandra with her crassly utilitarian brothers, Joseph with the ignorant and racist parents of some of his students. Each misses someone who has moved to the city; Joseph's twin sister Arlice and Alexandra Bergson's friend Carl represent, as Harrison writes of Arlice, "both the treachery and glory of what he [Joseph] thought of as the outside world" (133). Joseph and Alexandra both face the death of a parent, after which they must make crucial decisions regarding the disposition of the land they have inherited. Joseph's closest friend is Dr. Evans, a Welsh immigrant many years his senior who provides him with sage advice and company on fishing trips, Alexandra relies on Ivar, an old Russian, to speak frankly about family problems as well as livestock. Both novels pivot on stories of troubled love: Joseph's destructive triangle with Rosealee and Catherine, Marie Shabata's with Emil Bergson and her husband Frank in *O Pioneers!*. For all these reasons, the consonance of "Catherine" with "Cather" is not mere coincidence. In its Virgilian concern with love, aging and death, desire for wider knowledge, and intense awareness of local geography, *Farmer* adapts Catherian pastoral to a northern Michigan setting. It reads as a homage to Cather and to the farm community of Harrison's youth.

One important pastoral convention that Harrison shares with Cather is a spiritual apprehension of place. Like Cather's protagonists, Joseph in *Farmer* intensely appreciates special places on his property and in the surrounding countryside. The "safe place of his youth" was "a corner of the mow in the barn [where] he had made a rude house.... When he was unhappy he would hide there with his pile of rabbit and raccoon skins, two sets of deer antlers, the dried head of a large pike he had tacked to a board, and his favorite blanket from his early childhood" (98). Favorite places outdoors include the hillock he visited after beginning his affair with Catherine, "a small grassy clearing which was thought of as an Indian graveyard by hearsay," and a "narrow valley at the end of which was the beaver pond and the beginning of the marsh" (123-24). Joseph's motivation in visiting these places is not escapist, but aesthetic and philosophical. Much like Alexandra, Ántonia, and other characters in Cather's fiction, Joseph approaches self-transcendence and reassessment in personally sacred places. "An idea that fixed him to one spot," Harrison writes, "was that life was a death dance and that he had quickly passed through the spring and summer of his life and was halfway through the fall. He had to do a better job on the fall because everyone on earth knew what the winter was like" (14-15).

Joseph's eventual action necessarily encompasses love and place. He takes the advice his mother gives him before she dies of cancer, to sell the farm, marry Rosealee, and honeymoon at the ocean, before returning to cultivate the land Rosealee inherited from her first husband. The novel has two endings. One occurs in the novel's final pages, as Joseph sleeps with Catherine one last time during the senior trip to Chicago. Harrison places the novel's second ending at the beginning, "a late June evening in 1956 in a seacoast town" as a couple enters a restaurant (1). It is Joseph and Rosealee on their honeymoon, very much in love. Like Cather's Alexandra on her projected honeymoon in Alaska with Carl Linstrum, Joseph has reconciled with his home and his past by traveling, not to escape but to explore and then return with a more open heart.

After *Farmer*, Harrison's fiction of the 1970s and early 1980s received mixed reviews. While many critics praised his poetic style and feeling for nature, others tagged him as a "macho" writer for his portrayal of fishing, drinking, sexual misbehavior, and violence. Not until 1988 did a literary scholar effectively challenge this dismissal of Harrison's work. In his essay "'Macho Mistake': The Misrepresentation of Jim Harrison's Fiction" William H. Roberson demonstrates that "Harrison consistently deflates the super male animal," portraying the "macho pose" as "sentimental and ultimately self-destructive" (236). Many protagonists in the early novels exhibit an inability to cope with social commitment, a flaw Harrison turns as much to tragedy as to comedy. This was particularly true of *Legends of the Fall* (1978), a trilogy of novellas that became Harrison's most popular publication to date.

Harrison's 1988 novel *Dalva* extends pastoral conventions and themes developed in *Farmer* and parts of other novels, while both continuing and transcending the men-at-loose-ends motif. The middle section of the book is narrated by Michael, another dissipated Harrison male whose self-absorption and misbehavior provide

Falstaffian comic relief. While many reviewers agreed with Jonathon Yardley that "the book runs a bit off course while [Michael] is at center stage" 163), most felt that Harrison had succeeded with the voice and character of Dalva, his first female narrator. Critics have been hard put to marginalize Harrison's fiction since the publication of this novel, praised by Louise Erdich for its "fascinating mixture of voices that cut through time and cross the barriers of culture and gender to achieve a work in chorus."

Harrison crosses barriers of gender not only in assuming a female voice for two-thirds of the novel, but also in his use of Cather as a major literary source. An obvious parallel is to *My Ántonia*, the first novel in which Cather employed a male narrator. As in *Farmer*, however, Harrison creates Dalva's world in intertextual relation to Cather's *O Pioneers!*. *Dalva* resembles *O Pioneers!* in its Nebraska setting and portrayal of an independent land-owning woman. Like Alexandra Bergson, Dalva (who is mostly of Swedish descent) is generous, imaginative, and sensitive to the subtle beauty of the prairie. Her relationship with Lundquist, an elderly Swedish-American farmhand who also worked for her grandfather, is analogous to Alexandra's with Ivar, the old Norwegian who looks after the Bergson farm. Like Ivar, the eccentric Lundquist is protective of his employer, good with animals, and decidedly unorthodox in his religious beliefs. Dalva recalls his mystical behavior on a horse-buying trip to Montana, when Lundquist talked to "three ranch dogs about Nebraska, as if to explain why he was there." When asked why the normally unruly dogs had sat so quietly, Lundquist explained that he was being courteous and that "he had never met an animal that didn't know if your heart was in the right place. Humans could develop this ability with each other if they would only study the works of Emanual Swedenborg," the Swedish mystic who influenced Emerson (245). Lundquists' solicitude and propriety extend to social relations as well as to the natural world. The reluctance with which he enters Dalva's house demonstrates the same Old World decorum attributed by Cather to "Crazy Ivar," the barefooted mystic of the Divide.

Dalva also resembles Cather's Alexandra (and Ántonia) in her spirituality of place. Her landscape is storied, full of historical and personal resonances. At times she has felt as if "previous thoughts were hanging on the phone poles and power lines—even sexual fantasies from the distant past...lie in wait along creek bottoms and ditches, the village limits of no longer occupied crossroads, the name announcing nothing but itself and the memory of what you were doing and thinking other times you passed this way" (292). While significant locations sometimes disturb Dalva, they also reassure her and ease her sorrows. One such place is "the upper end of a small box canyon" across the Niobrara River from her grandfather's ranch. She first visited the place as a teenager, accompanied by her lover Duane, a half-Sioux boy who was trying to recover his heritage. Duane "announced that this was a holy place" and to "prove it he found several arrowheads, and sat on the flat rock for a full hour in silence, facing the east." The following year, after Duane's disappearance and the adoption of their child, Dalva returned to the spot, where she sat for a day meditating and watching animals. "Mostly," she remembers, "I had a very long and intensely restful 'nothing.' I had the odd sensation that I was understanding the earth. This is all very simple-minded and I mention it only because I still do much the same thing when troubled" (55-56).

Such epiphanies, occurring in non-dramatic, non-sublime Midwestern locations, are consistent with transcendental moments in Cather's Nebraska novels. Harrison shares Cather's Romantic sense of place, her land aesthetic of pastoral subtlety, and her dismay at the dominant utilitarianism of American society. Like Cather, who wrote of prairie remnants in cemeteries, he looks for wilderness in places most people overlook. An example of this is what Michael refers to as "Dalva's airplane theory":

> The upshot was that from an airliner the entirety of the United States, except for a few spotty wilderness areas, looked raked over, tracked up, skinned, scalped—in short, abused.... {But] in out-of-the-way places there's still a certain spirit, I mean in gullies, off-the-road ditches, neglected creek banks and bottoms, places that have only been tilled once, then neglected, or not at all, like the Sand Hills, parts of northern Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, or the untillable but grazed plains of Wyoming, Montana, Nevada, the desert, even the ocean in the middle of the night. (123)

Dalva's thoughts are Harrison's own on the spirit of place. "I prefer places valued by no one else," he writes in an essay that lists "gullies, hummocks in swamps, swales in the middle of large fields, the small alluvial fan created by feeder creeks, undercut river banks, miniature spring, [and] dense thickets at the tops of hills" as some of his favorite landscape features (*Just Before Dark 263*). Such topography, which appears throughout Harrison's prose and poetry, links him to Cather and other Midwestern writers who follow Thoreau in finding the preservation of the world not in wilderness, but in wildness , a quality to be valued in domesticated as well as uninhabited landscapes.

Where Harrison's spirit of place diverges from Cather's is in his understanding of the social and natural history of Nebraska, the Midwest, and the United States. A passage from *O Pioneers!* worth quoting in this context is Alexandra's epiphany on the Divide:

> For the first time , perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning. It seemed beautiful to her, rich and strong and glorious. Her eyes drank in the breadth of it, until her tears blinded her. Then the Genius of the Divide, the great, free spirit which breathes across it, must have bent lower that it ever bent to a human will before. The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman. (64)

It's a beautiful moment, one that recalls Emerson's "transparent eyeball" experience in *Nature* and more than one passage in Whitman's "Song of Myself." Cather has rewritten the pioneer myth to privilege place over process, sympathy over domination. Yet the passage raises troubling dimensions of American pastoral myth that Cather does not resolve or even challenge. The problem is simple: Alexandra's is not the first "human face set toward [the land] with love and yearning"; Nebraskan history did not begin with Swedish farmers. Cather not only ignores ten thousand years of Native American inhabitation of the Plains, but also turns her back on what was to her recent history. The violent displacement of the Sioux and other tribes does not appear in *O Pioneers!*, though the novel's narrative timeline (1883-1900) overlaps with the Plains War (1862-1890). That painful reality interfered with the story Cather wanted to tell, of a peaceful domestication of a vacant region, the transformation of "The Wild Land" to "Neighboring Fields," as she titled the first two parts.

This kind of analysis is characteristic of recent Cather scholarship that reexamines her work in relation to imperialism, race, and social class. Even the title of Mike Fisher's 1990 article, "Pastoralism and Its Discontents: Willa Cather and the Burden of Imperialism," bespeaks the new spirit of ideological deconstruction. Fisher argues for *My Ántonia* "as a story of origins for whites only" that "ignores the most significant other in Nebraskan history: the Native Americans" (31). That argument has also been made about *O Pioneers!*. Sara Farris, in a 1998 article that cites Fisher's, characterizes Alexandra Bergson as a land speculator and beneficiary of class hierarchy. "With the problem of indigenous cultures and ecosystems solved through simple sleight-of-hand erasure," she writes," Cather's pastoral must next account for the presence of the working class and working poor in the land of plenty." Cather does so, Farris argues, by marginalizing their story and revising it "to reflect favorably on the farmer hero at the head of the dinner table" (31-32). *O Pioneers!*, she concludes, is consistent with a reading of American pastoral—*all* American pastoral—as hegemonic and anti-ecological. Her condemnation is sweeping: "conquest will always make pastoral a destructive, even *self*-destructive endeavor..." (46).

There is another reading, however, that acknowledges the revisionist critique while recognizing progressive dimensions of pastoral. As Lawrence Buell argues, "pastoral is best understood in terms of a set of ideological motifs too complex to permit monolithic categorization of most texts either as consensual or anticonsensual documents..." (5). In this regard it is worthwhile to reconsider Alexandra's epiphany, Cather's phrasing of which reveals authorial uncertainty. "For the first time, *perhaps*... a human face was set toward [the land] with love and yearning" (64, emphasis added). The word "perhaps" carries a great moral weight; it betrays Cather's suppressed conscience, which must have suggested the falsity of the sentence. Though Cather's Nebraska is largely a *tabula rasa*, "not a country at all but the material of which countries are made" (*My Ántonia* 7), her equivocation in *O Pioneers!* opens the way for the revision of Midwestern pastoral in light of new historical understandings. *Perhaps* there is more to the story than the Euro-American point of view; *perhaps* the sense of time needed to appreciate Nebraska is deeper than Cather acknowledges.

Jim Harrison has such a sense of time in *Dalva*, a novel that revises the pioneer story to emphasize the legacies of conquest. Dalva is not only a landowner and descendant of Swedish pioneers, but is one-eighth Lakota Sioux. Having spent many years wandering the world, working in various capacities much in the manner of Cather's Carl Linstrum, she has returned to inherited wealth, a substantial ranch, and unresolved conflicts related to family history. On a personal level, she wishes to find the son she gave up at birth, and to cope more effectively with the loss of her lover, the child's father, and with her father's death in the Korean War. The larger context of Dalva's return is her family's role in Plains history. She has agreed to let Michael, a historian and her current lover, read the diaries of her great-grandfather John Wesley Northridge, an agricultural missionary to the Sioux in the late nineteenth century. In return, Michael has offered to help Dalva find her missing son. These stories converge in the novel's climax, when Dalva faces her own past and that of the nation by descending into the cellar of her home, which holds Northridge's secret collection of Indian artifacts.

An important inspiration for Harrison in creating this narrative is the work of contemporary Native American writers who have shown the American land from the viewpoint of dispossessed and defeated peoples struggling for cultural survival. As a pastoral novel, *Dalva* responds to Louise Erdich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor and others who have caused Harrison to reconsider the relation of his own writing to history and landscape. In his essay "Poetry as Survival," Harrison observes that these writers are often "ignored by readers because they represent a ghost that is too utterly painful to be encountered":

> Actual readers of literature are people of conscience...but conscience can be delayed by malice, stereotypes, a natural aversion to the unpleasant.... Publishers come largely from the East and anything between our two dream coasts tends to be considered an oblique imposition. There's also the notion that the predominantly white literary establishment idealizes a misty, ruined past when life held unity and grace.... [For] Native American poets the past isn't misty...the civilization that was destroyed was a living memory for their grandparents, and thus the Indian poet is a living paradigm of the modern condition. (*Just Before Dark* 300).

The idea of a "misty, ruined past" is of course one version of pastoral myth, best represented in Midwestern fiction by Willa Cather. While she overcame the regional bias against writing from "between our two dream coasts," Cather did not transcend pastoral distortions of American history. However sensitive to the natural beauty of the prairie, her pioneer novels disregard Native Americans and the violence of their displacement. In *Dalva*, Harrison creates a version of Catherian pastoral, one modified by the lessons of Native American literature and history and motivated by his hope that "these people might clarify why I had spent over forty years wandering around in the natural world" and that "the two cultures had more to offer each other than their respective demons" (*Just Before Dark* 298).

The historical context of Dalva's self-transcendence encompasses literary precedent for Harrison's narrative strategies. In *My Ántonia*, Willa Cather assumed the voice of a male narrator, a character credited with a leading role in the development of former Indian lands in Nebraska. By speaking as Dalva, a woman of partial Sioux descent, Harrison rectifies Cather's effacement of Native Americans from the Plains. Furthermore, his pairing of Dalva and Michael as dual narrators serves more that the pastoral convention of paired rural and urban characters so often employed by Cather. Despite his limitations and faults, Michael represents historical consciousness and conscience. Though he uses Michael to "poke fun at a tradition of scholarship," Harrison stresses in the novel's "Acknowledgements" "that without this tradition we are at the mercy of the renditions of political forces which are always self-serving and dead wrong" (n. pag.).

The truth that Michael uncovers is the role Dalva's family played in the Plains War, documented in the diaries of Dalva's ancestor John Wesley Northridge, who arrived in northwestern Nebraska in 1865 as an agricultural missionary to the Sioux. In this regard Michael cites fellow historian T. P. Thornton's argument that "the cultivation of fruit and other trees before the Civil War in New England and New York was considered to be morally uplifting, an antidote to the rapacity of greed that was consuming the nation" (125). Northridge's journal bears out Thorton's thesis; he writes in 1876, just before the nation's centennial celebration and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, that "the Anti-Christ is Greed" (198). In this way Northridge represents Jeffersonianism and Christianity, major components of Midwestern pastoral ideology, at their best, as opposed to "the inanity of the 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' attitude that propelled millions of nitwits westward, utterly destroying much of the earth and all of the Native cultures." As his son John Wesley Northridge II observes in *The Road Home* (1998), Harrison's sequel to *Dalva*, Northridge "was knowledgeable of the sound agricultural practices and the true Christian virtues that would have made the western movement other than the prolonged tragedy it became" (107). A friend to the Lakota and a staunch advocate of their political and cultural autonomy, he is, in the best sense, a yeoman farmer, an exemplar of Midwestern pastoralism in service of nature and humanity.

History, however, was not on Northridge's side. Even so-called benefactors of the Indians were working for their complete assimilation and the dispersal of tribal lands. Then there were the Indian haters in high places as well as on the Plains. Speaking to the Rotary Club in Dalva's hometown, Michael describes western expansionism as "a nasty pyramid scheme concocted by the robber barons of the railroads and a vastly corrupt U. S. Congress.... The settlers came out and swindled and swiped the land treatied to the Indians, protected by a government drunk on power, money, and booze. When the settlers needed more fuel for their greed they used Christianity, and the idea that the Indians weren't using their land" (202). Michael goes further, comparing American expansionism to Nazi Germany's. "[H]istory teaches us," he tells the Rotarians, "that your forefathers behaved like hundreds of thousands of pack-rat little Nazis sweeping across Europe" (204). His comparison extends to the Holocaust, which makes Northridge a nineteenth century counterpart to German industrialist Oskar Schindler, who saved Jewish workers from death camps. "Northridge is interesting," Michael concludes, "because of his consciousness and his conscience, just as Schindler alone is fascinating while millions of Germans who didn't give a fuck are lost to history" (147-48).

Harrison, however, avoids a sweeping condemnation of all settlers, immigrants, and their descendants. Near the end of his research, Michael has "extended his sympathies somewhat beyond the Indians to all those involved in the financial hoax of the westward movement. It was the unimaginable bleakness of being stranded in Cheyenne County during the drought of 1887 with a wife and children, the deaths by exhaustion and malnutrition: (266). (In *O Pioneers!*, Alexandra and her brothers just manage to subsist during that difficult period). A descendant of immigrant farmers, Harrison refuses to dismiss pastoralism, at its best, as a valid philosophy and way of life. His implicit argument is that history could have been otherwise if Americans and their government had actually lived up to Christian and republican ideals in dealing with the Indian nations. Harrison suggests as much on two occasions in *The Road Home.* During an argument with his great-uncle's girlfriend, Dalva's son Nelse "rattled on rather listlessly about how the theology of land rape seemed to be a cornerstone of the Christian religion and she answered rather sharply that you couldn't blame that on Jesus" (351). On another occasion Dalva's half-Sioux grandfather observes that his "mother's people were sacrificed, in toto, for cows when they happily could have lived among them if the land had been shared rather than seized" (99-100).

There are, then, two kinds of Midwestern pastoral ideology. There is the dominant version, which both Cather and Harrison excoriate as utilitarian, monocultural, and violent toward land and people. Then there is the alternative, which contains but is not contained by the value for private property. Cather, like other notable writers of her time—Sherwood Anderson, for example—enriched the Jeffersonian inheritance with Romantic senses of place, aesthetic and spiritual. That Harrison cherishes his precursors' vision is apparent in the intertextuality of his works with theirs, and in his similar admiration of rural life and inhabited, agrarian landscapes. That he has brought to the surface Cather's historical and ecological subtext testifies to the revisability of pastoral ideology and myth. Cather herself anticipated such revision in a 1923 essay "Nebraska—The End of the First Cycle," in which she called for "revolt against...machine-made materialism." Such a change, she believed, depended on a return to "old sources of culture and wisdom" (2238). Culture for Cather meant the Old World of the immigrant pioneers. But her perspective can and has been extended to include aboriginal cultures and the deep history indicated by ecologists. Harrison does as much when he describes Dalva sitting "on the porch on a hot afternoon in June," thinking of how "on hundreds of June afternoons Sioux girls looked for birds' eggs, buffalo whelped, prairie wolves roamed, and far before that—in prehistory we're told—condors with wingspreads of thirty feet coasted on dense thermals in the hills along the Niobrara" (*Dalva* 281). Such passages show Midwestern pastoral, far from confinement to nostalgia for a lost garden, as a self-conscious myth, one that artists and intellectuals have continually reassessed and rewritten. "It is in that great cosmopolitan country known as the Middle West," Cather wrote, "that we may hope to see the hard molds of American provincialism broken up; that we may hope to find young talent which will challenge the pale properties, the insincere conventional optimism of our art and thought" (Nebraska" 238). Harrison, among others in Cather's tradition, fulfills that hope.

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NOTE

1. Virgil's second *Ecologue*, concerning the shepherd Corydon's unrequited love for Alexis, is the prototypical pastoral romance. The tragic love affair between Emil

and Marie in *O Pioneers!* follows the Virgilian pattern, as do tragic romances in Harrison's pastoral fiction.

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, in 1997. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence in the Midwest; fiction with Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including locale designations withing square brackets where applicable at the end of each citation. Secondary sources are listed by subject.

New periodicals that in some way relate to Midwestern literature, either in content or locale, are listed alphabetically by title in the third and last section of this bibliography.

Citations for novels, poetry, short stories, etc.—as well as critical articles about them—should be sent to the Annual Bibliography's editor: Robert Beasecker, University Library, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, 49401.

The editor and members of the bibliographic committee continually seek names and addresses of living Midwestern writers and poets, and readers are encouraged to submit names of individuals whose work may be eligible for inclusion in future compilations of this bibliography. Persons interested in becoming members of the bibliographic committee should address queries to the editor.

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