MidAmerica XXXVIII

The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

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In Honor of
John Rohrkemper

PREFACE

On May 12, 2011, members of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its forty-first annual meeting. Highlights included panels on young adult Chicago literature, the Midwest Fantastic, the fiction of Gene Stratton-Porter, and the poetry of the late Rane Arroyo. Paul Stebleton received the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize, James Marlow won the Paul Somers Prize for Creative Prose, and Andy Oler was the winner of the David Diamond Student Writing Prize.* The Mark Twain Award went to Louise Erdrich, and MidAmerica Award winner John Rohrkemper put on a staged reading of his play, *God Bless the Shadows.*

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

*The 2009 winner of the David Diamond Prize was misidentified in *MidAmerica 2010*. He is Richmond B. Adams, for his essay, "'Holy Moses!' : *The Pit,* Curtis Jadwin and the Documentary Hypothesis." We apologize for this error.

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CATCH UP ON MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

FICTION

Airgood, Ellen. *South of Superior.* NY: Riverhead Books, 2011. [Michigan]
Beard, Jo Ann. *In Zanesville.* Little, Brown, 2011. [Illinois]
Campbell, Bonnie Jo. *Once Upon a River.* NY: Norton, 2011 [Michigan]
Coake, Christopher. *You Came Back.* NY: Grand Central, 2012 [Ohio]
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Hamilton, Jane. *Laura Rider's Masterpiece.* Grand Central, 2009. [Wisconsin]
Harrison, Jim. *The Great Leader.* New York: Grove Press, 2011 [Michigan]
Just, Ward. *Rodin's Debutante.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. [Chicagoland]
Kasischke, Laura. *The Raising.* Harper Perennial, 2011. [Michigan]
Keillor, Garrison. *Pilgrims.* Penguin, 2010. [Minnesota]
Lasser, Scott. *Say Nice Things about Detroit.* NY: Norton, 2012. [Michigan]
Marshall, Brenda K. *Dakota, Or What's a Heaven For.* ND Institute for Regional Studies. 2010.
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Palmer, William J. *Wabash Trilogy.* Parlor Press, 2010 [Indiana]
Paretsky, Sara. *Body Work.* G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2010. [Chicago]
Rhodes, David. *Driftless.* Milkweed, 2009. [Wisconsin]
Smiley, Jane. *Private Life.* Random House, 2010. [Missouri]
Somerville, Patrick. *The Cradle.* Little, Brown and Company, 2009. [Wisconsin]
Thompson, Jean. *The Year We Left Home.* Simon & Schuster, 2011. [Iowa]
Vivian, Robert. *Another Burning Kingdom.* U of Nebraska P, 2011.

POETRY

Davis, Todd. *The Least of These.* Michigan State UP, 2010.
Knoepfle, John. *Shadows and Starlight.* Indian Paintbrush Poets, 2012.
Heller, Janet Ruth. *Folk Concert: Changing Times.* Anaphora Literary Press, 2012.

The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
congratulates

William Barillas

Winner of the 2013 MidAmerica Award for
distinguished contributions to the
study of Midwestern literature

and

Ted Kooser

Winner of the 2013 Mark Twain Award for
distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature

These awards will be presented at noon on May 10th 2013 at the Society's 43rd annual meeting, Michigan State University Union, East Lansing, Michigan, May 9-11, 2013.

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

Send your proposal for a paper, panel, roundtable or reading of creative work with a Midwestern emphasis for the 2013 annual symposium to Dr. Margaret Rozga at margaret.rozga@uwc.edu by February 1, 2013.

Call for papers for the SSML Symposium in May 2013 and possible publication in a noir genre issue of *Midwestern Miscellany.* Papers on books and authors that deal with Midwestern noir of all sorts, such as Elmore Leonard, Craig Rice, and Garrison Keillor's radio detective, Guy Noir. Another form, "country noir," a Daniel Woodrell coinage, includes dark tales on rural life often involving lower-class economic difficulties, crime, drugs, and general skullduggery. A fairly new phenomenon in Midwestern writing in the last decade, "country noir" might also include three earlier authors: Jim Tully, Jim Thompson, in *Heed in Thunder*, and Mari Sandoz in *Slogum House*, as well as some others; and contemporary writers such as Frank Bill, Bonnie Jo Campbell, Donald Ray Pollock, Daniel Woodrell, and some of the Dan Choan, Laura Kasischke, and Robert Vivian. Presentations on Midwestern noir film—such as *Winter's Bone* and *Boys Don't Cry*—are also encouraged. Contact **Joe Wydeven. (aliceandjoe@cox.net)** by January 1, 2013 if you are interested.

OPEN TUNING[1]

CHRISTIAN KNOELLER

for R.B. and J.P.

What you are watching is light
unlearning itself, an infinite
unfrocking of the prism.
Eavan Boland

Strummed in an otherworldly key
from strings of a hand-crafted,
hollow-bodied instrument:

resonance of the same note
played across the octaves—open
tuning—the place

music's long division
approaches unison
why the Enlightment relied

on intervals and algebra
to account for heavenly bodies
marching to some ultimate drum.

Who said watercolors happen
all at once as if there were no
going back in going on,

as if there were no returning,
as if no circle were
ever whole, wordless

waiting. She is giving
away every secret:
the way a river emerges

from darkness each morning
beginning with mottled limbs
of sycamores silhouetted

against false dawn, doves
cooing from the spruce
where every day ends

with the same song
and then silence, unless
startled into flight.

As a musician retunes
each string, the painter
watches colors bleed

into a world we've always known.

Purdue University

NOTE

[1]On the occasion of a watercolor landscape painting demonstration by Hoosier artist Rena Brower at the Delphi Opera House Gallery of Contemporary Art accompanied by Indiana singer-songwriter Joe Peters.

A BRIDE OF THE GREAT WAR

DAVID B. SCHOCK

This is a story about love, death, loveless parents, a loveless marriage, and hate. Lots of hate.

But it's also about peanut butter cookies.

And it's all true.

Let me tell you about the cookies. We—my late wife and I—moved into a decaying house in the wreck of a small village called Millbrook. At one time there had been the only gristmill within forty miles. And that was a long distance in the days of oxen, horse, or mule-drawn transport. Then, too, it was a commercial center of some standing. But when the city fathers wanted too much money for their land, the railroad skirted the village by a mile to the west and the town began to die. By the time we moved in, there was a furniture store and a struggling food cooperative, and it was just a matter of time for both of those.

The little United Methodist church had been closed for more than a decade when a retired teacher with a missionary bent reopened it for Sunday worship. When we joined, my wife and I were the only two under sixty-five. Most Sundays fewer than twenty people sat in the pews and sometimes a third of those were from a local nursing/foster-care home.

But the stalwarts of the congregation were people who had endured two world wars, a Great Depression, and just about anything the times could throw at them. They all remembered the impact of the arrival of electricity to each home and farm. They had seen their dirt roads, some mostly sand, paved and regularly plowed in winter. As children of the land, they had come up knowing that the help of a neighbor could save their lives or their crops. They knew the power of working together. They knew from all their lives' experiences that they had to get along, whether or not they liked each other.

They also understood just getting together . . . for worship, for cards in the converted chicken coop, for pancake suppers in the old

Odd Fellows Hall above the food co-op, for sit-down meals around their dining tables.

There was a lot that wasn't talked about when they gathered. One safe topic was food, especially during Sunday dinners. I cooked my share along with my wife, Jo, although our fare was a little less sumptuous then that of the women who were used to feeding threshing crews.

There was always plenty and it was good. Real mashed potatoes, beef from the herd. Venison frequently enough. Parsnips. Butter beans. Canned everything, supplied anew on a yearly basis from the stately gardens laid across the rolling farmyards.

The desserts were a little less wholesome and tended toward things whipped with Jell-O. It was the only slight disappointment in the meals. But there was another sweet standby, the peanut butter cookies that Hilda Capen made. They were moist, delicious. She also made molasses cookies that rivaled, but I especially liked the peanut butter cookies.

And Hilda knew it. She also liked me, and often sent home a plate of her finest. She was kindly, a widow and childless.

Probably she'd never been a beauty or even handsome, but there was about her an energy, a drive to get things done. It was that determination that had led her so far . . . from the sheltered home of her youth to her life as a schoolteacher and even, for a time, as a principal. She'd been retired for years, but her former students were deferential.

As a widow of the village postmaster (and self-appointed leading citizen), she held a certain prestige. Her husband, Lew, had been the grand *senex*. I had actually met him a time or two before his death, even before we moved to the community. Little Millbrook was a point on the coverage map of the rural tabloid weekly I edited. And Lew once summoned me to make sure I understood his importance in the area and to acquaint me with his views.

After he died—as was customary—there was an auction. Lew had been a prodigious collector. A highlight of the sale was a handbuilt, boat-tailed roadster body on a Model A frame. He also styled himself a writer and historian and had claim to recognition as a photographer. His postcards went for high prices at the auction, something I covered as a matter of course as the journalist of record. I didn't buy anything but chronicled the two days as his possessions went

on the block. Hilda was there, watching, and we spoke. This was actually the first time that I'd met her.

The amount of stuff was dizzying. Where had all this been kept?

"He had an office behind the house. Added on to the garage. It was floor to ceiling and then some. And the attic. And he rented part of a barn. And there would have been more if he hadn't been so stubborn."

I wondered aloud. "More?"

"He took it in his fool head the week before he died that he was going to burn everything. Everything! For four days he stood out by the burn barrel and burned box after box. It was probably lifting all those boxes that killed him. He just gave out."

"What sorts of things?"

"Letters and more photos, and collections of this and that. I don't know what all."

I found out later she did know what all, and there probably was a reason for his action. Perhaps death intimated it was near, and Lew wanted to clean house of certain reminders of his past. In particular, I found out later that he had been the head of the local Klan in the '20s and '30s, and used his position of leadership in the Odd Fellows to cover Klan activity in the community. Ours was not the only village or small town thus afflicted.

Somehow three of the photos he intended to destroy came into my possession later. They show a young Lew Capen, in full regalia, by what I think is a '32 Ford. In one of the photos he is saluting in a manner that would become known before the Second World War: arm stiffly raise and palm outward. The face in the robes is pugnacious, truculent.

And there is no reason to suppose Lew was ever anything else than what showed in those photos. As we grew to know and to know of Hilda in the years that followed, we understood that her marriage to Lew was pretty much a business deal. There wasn't any report of warmth or affection.

But Lew was the man her parents wanted her to marry . . . and she had, but only after a long spinsterhood, the village schoolmarm. By that time she was past her longing for romance, and perhaps a husband—any husband—was better than none at all. Understand, that's what we'd been told.

I had felt a pity for her that she had to settle, and to settle for such a man! Well, that just shows you what I knew.

We had been living in the village five or six years when we first learned that Hilda had taken up with a man friend. She'd been keeping pretty regular company with him for some months before we became acquainted with the fact. About as soon as we got used the idea of seeing her with him on occasion came the news that they'd married. Hilda's new husband, Frank, came from the other side of the county. He was short and stocky, like Lew, but had a perpetual smile and was always wheezily singing or humming. I remember one Christmas when he stood up at the church to offer a solo of "We Three Kings." He took breaths as he needed them, pretty much all in unconventional places. Oh, but he enjoyed that! And he enjoyed Hilda's cookies, too, but had to go easy on them; he explained he had a touch of the sugar. And as a retired plumber with lots of mechanical ability, he found plenty to do in the community and he never stinted his aid. He turned out to be cheerful AND generous, kindly, friendly. He took to calling me to help him once in a while, especially if something heavy—like a Rapid Dayton pump —needed to be lifted or moved into place. And I learned a lot from him. He and Hilda were happy. I kidded them shortly after their marriage that they might want to move closer to a school . . . you know, for the little ones that might be coming? Ah, well.

Things went on well for a couple of years, but bit by bit Frank slowed down, breathing harder all the while. And then my wife got sick. Which of the two died first? I can't remember now; Frank, I think. But in the aftertime, Hilda and I would speak about the sorrow of being widowed.

"You've gone through it twice," I said one day. She looked at me, tearing up. But she didn't say anything more just then.

It was another day that the rest of the story came out.

"I have never told another soul," she said, meanwhile arranging cookies on a plate. "And I know you'll keep this silent until after I'm dead. But it wasn't just twice that I was widowed. There was also my first marriage.

"I was young and there was a boy from Mt. Pleasant . . . I'd gone there to finish high school. This was maybe 1914. I'd finished the tenth grade and then gone to board in Mt. Pleasant the next two school years so I could graduate. I did that in the spring of 1916. My high school diploma plus a session at the Normal was all I'd need to begin teaching out here.

"And the boy was going to high school, too, to be a teacher. We liked each other. After we graduated and I finished up he came to call on me and he asked me to marry him. My parents were dead set against it . . . Well, my father, really. But my mother went along. I told them I was going to do it, and they locked me in my room. That was on the second floor and I didn't think I could get out the window alive.

"He had come to call and my father told him he wasn't welcome . . . that probably was in the second week I was confined. And he didn't come back to the door, but when he'd heard that I was locked away he waited.

"They kept me there for probably six weeks, and all that time my mother carried my meals, my wash water, and my slops. She was wearing out. So, finally, I said I wouldn't marry him and they let me out.

"He heard all about it and afterward came over and watched for me to be out and away from the house. That wasn't the first or second time I was out . . . but he showed himself to me and I understood. With all my heart I understood. And we found a way, just for a quarter of an hour.

"That kiss was like all of summertime. My knees were shaking. And what he told me next was even more disturbing. Oh, yes, he still wanted to marry me but it might have to wait: he was joining the Army to go France and fight the Hun.

"One thing led to another and we made a plan. He'd actually signed up as a part of the Michigan 32nd Infantry Division—they eventually were part of The Red Arrow—and he was scheduled to go to training in Texas. At the end of training they would all go to New York City. He thought he'd get leave there. I wanted to be married to him before he left to fight. So, we planned that I would somehow get to New York. I don't even know what I was thinking, except I had to get there or die.

"He would write to my best friend . . . another Hilda, but we called her Tilly. And Tilly would give me the letters. And then Tilly and I planned a trip to go to Lansing on the train for a three-day Sunday School convention; we'd leave from the station in West Millbrook . . . That was when there was still a train.

"And the plan worked. When she came back and I didn't, Tilly had to tell her parents and my parents something, of course, but she told them she didn't have any idea that I had planned to leave; she

was surprised when I told her I was going to Philadelphia. I didn't want my parents telegraphing the New York Police.

"He met me at the train station and we went from there to City Hall. In those days there was no waiting and I had my birth certificate. I'd taken it from the deed box; my father was a real stickler for paperwork. Fifteen minutes and we were man and wife. We only had three days before he had to report for duty to be shipped out. Three days. But it was enough.

"He left. I came home. I told my parents that I had liked Philadelphia very much and had stayed at a residence for young women. My father was so angry! But I never told them that I was a married woman and my return to my room for a month or so was much easier to endure. I knew that someone loved me.

"And then the news came: He was killed at Coblenz, May 28, 1918."

I bit into a cookie and waited but there was nothing more just then. Another bite and I asked, "How did you hear?"

"The newspapers were delivered here every day on the train. My father always bought a copy. I read it in his."

"And your parents never knew?"

"Never. I'd never tell them."

"And no one else?"

"Well, Tilly knew . . . she knew. She was still the go-between for his letters. And she was as much comfort as I got, but it wasn't like she could . . . That was the problem: it had to stay secret."

"And she kept it?"

"Yes. But she died early, only a year or two after. Tuberculosis. And she took that story to her grave. She was as good a friend as I ever had."

"And no one else knew?"

"No, not until today."

"You never filed for a widow's pension?"

"No, I just kept quiet. I didn't want anyone to know. They didn't deserve to know."

"How did you . . . ? How did you grieve if it had to be so silent?"

"I don't know. I just did it. But there is a lot I don't remember about what happened after. It was that way for a couple of years."

I waited until the question fully formed in my thoughts. I knew everything had to be related.

"And Lew? How did he figure into this?"

"I'd known him ever since we were kids together even though he was a few years older. But I knew the kind of person he was from watching him on the playground: a bully. Oh, my parents went on and on about him for what seemed like forever. They didn't lock me up again, but in the end I figured that the best I could do was to keep them all together. They deserved a son-in-law like Lew. I didn't care. So I married him."

"And they got along?"

"Oh, famously."

"And after your parents died?"

"It didn't matter. Lew always thought he was the boss. He wasn't squat and he wasn't hard to manage; I just let him think he was bossing me into doing something. Hunh!"

"And Frank?"

"Now, that was different. As mean as Lew was, Frank was sweet. Always asking me what I wanted to do or what I thought. That man was maybe the best man I've ever known. He even called me Ma and I was nobody's mother, except maybe in a way to his daughter. She had the sugar real bad and just liked it when anybody'd do for her. And that's what I liked doing, especially because it made Frank so happy."

"And your first husband? Was he sweet?"

"Oh, I suppose. But we never got the chance to find out. I loved him like everything, and when he died . . . . But here I am . . . still."

"You never told me his name. What was his name?"

"Jim. And when I'm gone my nephew, Ed, will find the marriage certificate, and he'll have to wonder . . . unless you'll tell him.

"Do you want me to?"

"Won't matter; I won't care."

I never told Ed. He might have been curious. I don't know. But he never asked me and we never were together to speak in a casual way after Hilda died.

Oh, yes, she died. Broke a hip, laid up in a nursing home, then an adult foster care home. And then she died. I had visited her but we never spoke of it again.

You can more or less gauge the age of this tale . . . our conversation would have been in the early 1990s. Now here it is some two decades later. And everything I've told you? It's true. Every bit.

Grand Haven, Michigan

OLD BLUE HAT

SCOTT MICHAEL ATKINSON

Look, I didn't mean to *steal* the hat. I mean, yeah, I took it on purpose, but it's not like I thought of it as stealing, okay? I just thought of it as . . . I don't know what I thought of it as.

What I do know is the next day I was in the parking lot of the union hall, Local 659, which was empty except for a few other cars. I thought maybe they were there from the day before, left by people who'd found designated drivers. I hoped that was the case. I hoped the place was empty. I thought I might just drop the hat on the little cement entranceway, maybe kick some snow on it so it looked like it had been dropped there the day before on accident. That seemed better than the original plan, the plan I'd driven there with, which involved hoping I'd find some nice old lady behind a desk somewhere inside who would believe me when I told her I must have picked it up by mistake. Then she would put it in a lost-and-found box and that would fix everything. But it was a stupid story, even to tell an old lady, and it seemed even more stupid when I pictured myself saying it out loud. I mumble a lot and look down when I talk. And besides, it wasn't the kind of hat you pick up by accident.

I was probably overthinking the whole thing, but I'd never stolen anything before and I felt bad, like Dad watched me do it from wherever he was, making that face he always made when I used to mess up. But like I said, at the time it didn't feel like stealing. It had just been left there and, this might sound weird, but it was almost like it was left *for* someone. And why not me?

The invitation to the Fisher Body reunion had been for my dad, obviously, just like half the crap I got in the mail. General Motors, along with the US Postal Service, didn't seem to realize that Rod Gutierrez was dead. Two years now. No one knew they had the wrong Rodney. They always called him Rod, but I ve always been Rodney —which sounds like something you'd call a kid, even though he was the one with the nickname.

I didn't tell Shelly I was going to the reunion. I wasn't even sure why I was going. I never worked in the shop and the only time I'd been in there was on a take-your-kid-to-work day with Dad. I wish I remembered more of it. He always said I'd have a job there waiting for me if I wanted, but he never sounded real happy about it. Then he died. And then the shops died.

I just sort of farted around after that and no one really said anything, but I knew I needed to get it together. Not that I'd be completely broke. I had an offer from a local pizza place to be a driver, but the idea of slinging pizzas just made me feel worse. I kept having this vision of knocking on the door of a nice house in a subdivision somewhere and it being opened by someone I knew from high school. I could just picture us standing there, acting like it wasn't weird before I had to count out his change, maybe apologize for forgetting the extra sauce, taking his tip. One of the guys at the pizza place told me it wasn't bad money, and Shelly was all ecstatic about it—not about the money, just that she thought it would make me feel better. She kept saying she was proud of me and things like, "See, I *told* you you could get a job. I told her thanks, though, because it's not like I wanted her to *stop* saying it.

On the day of the reunion I told her I was playing poker with some of my buddies from high school, which I still do sometimes, so she believed me. See? The whole day was a mistake. I tell one lie to my wife and then I start stealing things. I needed to get rid of the damn thing, if I could. I was lucky she believed me. I play poker less these days. My friends all have jobs and want to play for more money. "Real money," they say. Lately they've been wanting to play for twenty dollars at least. Shelly wouldn't tell me no if I asked— I know it's not *that* much money—but it feels wrong to gamble her money away, even twenty dollars of it. *Our money* is what she'd say if I said this to her, but it doesn't feel like our money, or our apartment, or our anything. The only thing that feels like both of ours is the little baby on the way. I didn't see that one coming. Not that it's a bad thing. I just didn't expect to be a husband, let alone a dad this soon. I did expect to be able to afford it, though.

My biggest fear once I got to the reunion was that somebody would call me out. I pictured someone checking IDs at the door and throwing me out, calling me a faker or a liar, that I didn't belong. I also saw them maybe welcoming me like family, like a nephew or something. Rod's son. They would tell me stuff about my dad I didn't know, and then maybe one of them would say they had a cousin or somebody who worked at the UPS place loading trucks or making hotdogs at Koegel's. I'd applied both places, and had heard good things about Koegel's. It was factory work, and good money, and it's not like people were going to stop buying hot dogs anytime soon. Sometimes I thought it was funny that I was praying to come home smelling like wieners every day but was so embarrassed to come home smelling like pepperoni. But then it really wasn't funny, especially since the pizza place was the only one that called back.

But no one at the union hall asked me for an ID or anything. I just walked in, like everybody else. It looked like a family reunion—it just wasn't my family. I felt invisible next to the long tables filled with people laughing and potluck food and cans of pop and beer. The only thing people said to me was "excuse me" when I was in their way, and I'm kind of a big guy, so I get in the way a lot.

At first I thought I'd just leave. I even walked outside. But then I thought I didn't want to go home this soon and have to tell Shelly another lie, so I just stood there wondering if it'd be okay if I went back inside and made myself a plate.

"Hey, I know that hat," I heard someone say. I was wearing a Red Wings hat, so I thought they were talking to me. But the guy who said it, an older black man walking up to the entrance, wasn't talking to me. He was talking to the younger white guy who was leaning over the steel railing and smoking a cigarette. He smiled back with the cigarette still in his lips.

I'd noticed his hat when I came outside but didn't think much of it. It was blue and had a short bill, and the cloth top stretched back all the way to his neck. The older guy pulled one just like it, all rolled up, out of his back pocket. He put it on and they both laughed. I laughed too, but I didn't know why. I figured they must have worked together, but then they asked each other their names.

I tried to figure how old the young guy was. He didn't look that much older than me, but I was born the year Fisher Body closed — Dad always said that whenever he talked about getting transferred—so he had to be older. I wanted to go back inside, but they were blocking the way and I was stuck in the corner between the railing and the wall. I tried to look like I was just enjoying the fresh air, and wished I smoked or at least had a cigarette so I could pretend.

Another guy showed up. He was definitely about my age and he reminded me of someone I used to work with in high school. I

remembered that guy because he was the one who asked me what I was going to do after I graduated, and when I told him probably take a year off and then go into the shop he just sort of sat there and said, "Oh, that's cool." I didn't get that he was really asking me what college I was going to.

This guy had a nice coat like Shelly always wanted me to wear and a tag around his neck that said *The Flint Journal*. He asked the guys about the hat.

"This is what the welders and painters wore," the older guy told him. He turned around to show him the back. "This one's been keepin' me warm since 'sixty-seven."

"We all had them," the younger guy said. "You just grabbed 'em. I worked on the line but I had to hide all the rock star hair I used to have back then." They all laughed, even the reporter, like they all remembered.

"Yup, that's how it used to be," the older guy said. "You see someone with one of these, you know where they worked."

That was when I said something like "excuse me" and went inside. I made myself a plate. No one said anything, and I saw that the beer at the bar was free. I don't really like beer, but I felt like I needed one. Then I decided I needed another. And another. Then I just sat there, my face feeling all warm and watching the people hug and talk. There was a group nearby and they were all talking about how they used to stay after their shifts and play cards all night. They kept laughing like crazy. They talked about the time that this happened or that happened. After a while I decided to leave, and that was when I saw the hat, just sitting there on an empty table by the door. *You just grabbed 'em*, I heard the guy say again, and so that's what I did. Then I walked out the door and got in my car and concentrated on keeping it between the lines all the way home.

When I was sitting in my car the next day outside the hall, I worked the thing over in my hands. I thought it would have been thicker, and maybe it had been years ago, before the canvas was soft and worn down. There were little holes in it that looked like tiny cigarette burns, but these had come from the hot metal of a factory that now sat frozen somewhere. I never even tried it on.

I got out of my car and walked up to the entrance. I could hear voices inside, and started thinking about what I would say. I reached for the door but it swung open and hit me in the nose. The cold made it sting even more and then some guy was asking me if I was okay.

"Yeah," I said, which wasn't true, but I'm always telling people I'm okay.

"Didn't expect anybody to be out here. I'm sorry," he said again. I looked at him and didn't recognize him. Then we just stood there until he thought of what to say next. "Hey, you still got one of them hats, too?" He laughed. "I got two of them. Left one up here yesterday. That's why I came up here, but they don't have it."

"This, um ... I mean, this one isn't mine. I think I grabbed it by mistake. Maybe it's yours." I gave it to him. He looked at it.

"Yup. That's it."

I grabbed my nose again. It hurt like hell.

"Tell you what," he said. "Why don't you take this one? Like I said, I got two and I don't really need two. And they don't have yours inside. I asked. You take this, then if yours ever turns up, I can take it."

I thought maybe he felt sorry for me. I let go of my nose.

"No, I couldn't. I mean, that's okay."

"You sure?" He held it out to me.

I thought about taking it then. It wouldn't be stealing now. I thought of going home and showing it to Shelly and telling her the story. I thought about how the older guy had said how warm it was, and I thought maybe I would wear it on my deliveries, and every now and then someone would recognize it as I handed them their pizza and we would laugh and talk about the way things used to be, before it all changed.

University of Michigan—Flint

UP IN MICHIGAN: A REVIEW ESSAY

MARCIA NOE

Airgood, Ellen. *South of Superior.* New York: Riverhead Books, 2011.
Campbell, Bonnie Jo. *Once Upon a River.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.
Harrison, Jim. *The Great Leader.* New York: Grove Press, 2011.

Up in Michigan, Ernest Hemingway tells us, "You could look out across the woods that ran down to the lake and across the bay. It was very beautiful in the spring and summer, the bay blue and bright and usually whitecaps on the lake out beyond the point from the breeze blowing from Charlevoix and Lake Michigan" (*Complete Short Stories* 60). Three excellent Michigan novels, recently published, offer a more complex construction of that state's natural environment than does Hemingway's picture postcard description and demonstrate, as Jim Harrison observes in *The Great Leader,* that character emerges "from the landscape of our early years" (228).

Harrison has been writing about the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for decades; his most recent novel, *The Great Leader*, tellingly contrasts the U.P. with more exotic and less spine-stiffening western locales as he relates the adventures of Simon Sunderson, a newly retired Michigan State Police detective, who perseveres in hunting down and putting out of business a pedophile and extortionist masquerading as the leader of a religious cult. Born and raised in the U.P., Sunderson has been toughened by sixty plus years of experience with brutal cold, punishing wind, and blinding snow that stand him in good stead as he pursues his quarry through the Midwest and into Colorado and Nebraska. Along the way Harrison rounds up the usual female suspects: the ex-wife who's too good for Sunderson; the bodacious secretary, regularly available for romantic encounters; the sexually precocious teenager who lives next door; the slut with whom Sunderson misbehaves at his retirement party. Harrison cleverly deflects the charge of gratuitous bimbo proliferation by having these

women provide crucial information that enables Sunderson to track and close in on his perpetrator.

Poet, essayist, and author of sixteen previous novels, Harrison is a master prose stylist, offering incisive and pithy commentary about the vicissitudes of contemporary life, as when he tells us that "when you looked into the history of religion, those in power generally devised a way to get at the young stuff" (22) and "a central fact of our time was the triumph of process over content" (229). But the pleasures of reading this book derive not only from making contact with a lively and articulate intelligence but also from experiencing an unfamiliar and intriguing place. Harrison masterfully evokes the U.P. as his protagonist moves from backwoods bars to hunting camps to brook trout streams and ponds, encountering snowmobilers, grouse hunters, Indians, and loggers. As he nears the end of his quest, Sunderson meets an Arizona drug lord who asks him what he's doing there; he replies that he is trying to discern the relationship among sex, money, and religion. The drug lord says that they are one and the same, but this book shows that each can be a means to the other two. Although by no means a new one, this theme is skillfully executed with a winning combination of humor and insight in this well-crafted and engaging novel.

After spending her youth in Chicago, Ellen Airgood's protagonist in *South of Superior* returns to her native U.P. to take care of some unfinished business and, in so doing, finish growing up. Madeline Stone finds the U.P. to be a "foreign, otherworldly place, complete with magic and perils and tests" (11) when she returns to McAllaster, Michigan, to learn more about the mother who deserted her and the grandfather who then refused to take responsibility for her care. As she surveys the town from atop a hill, she reflects on this very different environment, foreshadowing the development she will undergo: "[t]his was a wide, wild quiet, so spacious it seemed endless, and she wondered how it might change a person" (12).

And change her it does. Through caring for a five-year-old boy with an irresponsible young mother, she is able to heal the psychic wounds she received when she was abandoned at the age of three by her own teen-aged mother. Madeline further matures as she cares for two elderly sisters to whom she is tangentially connected, buys and re-opens an old hotel, and strives to learn more about her maternal relatives, meeting successfully the challenges of a demanding locale, difficult people, and her own emotional needs that have been com-

plicated by a murky past. Her small triumphs and the rough patches she negotiates as she tackles the rigors of U.P. living and comes to terms with her unstable identity and shadowy parentage are rendered convincingly and movingly.

Airgood knows that less is more when it comes to character development; she has learned how to create a three-dimensional character with a few key details and some terse dialogue. Mary Feather, Emil Sainio, Gladys Hansen, and other characters come to life on the page, distinctive and authentic, enlisting the reader's empathy for the emotional, financial, and physical problems faced by the elderly rural poor that are complicated in the U.P. by a harsh winter environment and the challenges to a community ethic of caring and compassion presented by newcomers committed to materialism, commercialism and might makes right.

Like *South of Superior, Once Upon a River* focuses on the existential crisis that abandonment presents its protagonist. Bonnie Jo Campbell tells a coming-of-age story that recalls that most American of coming-of-age stories, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Like Huckleberry Finn, Margo Crane is suddenly orphaned and thrust upon her own resources. Like Huck, she takes to the river, assuming different identities as she grows up quickly by having to deal with deception, violence, betrayal, greed, cruelty, thievery, and murder. Also, like Huck, Margo is on a quest; as she puts it, "I've been trying to figure out how to live." (263). But while Huck reaches the end of his river journey determined to light out for the territory, Margo makes a different decision, although for much the same reasons as Mark Twain's protagonist.

Margo exemplifies Harrison's dictum that our early experiences with our environment shape our character. She learns to fish, trap, and hunt at her grandfather's knee, not merely living in harmony with Nature but becoming a part of it, as seen when she shoots a deer and crawls underneath it to drag her quarry home. Although the skills her grandfather taught her have equipped her well to survive on her own as she travels down the Stark River in western Michigan to try to find the mother who abandoned her, this kind of upbringing has not taught her how to interact effectively with people.

Margo's first attempt at learning how to live is modeled on her mother's *modus operandus*: she goes from man to man, hooking up with an outlaw, a power company employee, and a native American professor. Each offers Margo a negative model of how to live: the outlaw, Brian, is violent and anarchistic; the power company employee, Michael, is cautious and conformist; and the Indian is feckless and irresponsible. Eventually she comes to understand that depending on a man to tell you who you are and how you should live will only complicate your life and make it more difficult; she ultimately concludes that only solitary life on the river can offer her the kind of freedom she needs to be who she is. Moreover, her relationship with Smoke, an elderly paraplegic whom she meets at the end of her journey, teaches her that caring and doing for others is a more fulfilling route to self-actualization than depending on others to care and do for her.

Campbell's no-holds-barred realism is at times painful to read, but her tale of a young girl who has to grow up before she should is no less poignant and engrossing. Like Airgood, she writes empathetically of the travails of the elderly poor, but the main focus of Campbell's social criticism is on the sexual demands made on inexperienced young girls today by adult men who should be protecting them, not preying upon them.

In Hemingway's "Up in Michigan," the deceptively crisp beauty of the lakeshore frames a brutal sexual encounter between a waitress and the town's virile blacksmith. Similarly, in the books under discussion here, the characters must come to terms with the beauty and the brutality of Michigan's natural environment. Harrison's protagonist is a man in the autumn of his life; Airgood's is a young woman, and Campbell's is a teen-aged girl. While they all face different problems presented by their respective stages of life, they must all, to one degree or another, cope with the challenges of the Michigan wilderness to accomplish the tasks they set for themselves. Like the characters in Hemingway's stories that take place up in Michigan, they strive, suffer, endure and prevail in a northern paradise that is at the same time Eden and Hades.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

MENTORING AMERICAN RACIAL IDENTITY: SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S LESSONS TO ERNEST HEMINGWAY

MARGARET E. WRIGHT-CLEVELAND

Ernest Hemingway arrived in Chicago in October of 1920; in mid-January of 1921 he met Sherwood Anderson. What Hemingway needed at this point in his life "was someone to influence his reading and someone to tell him how the literary life was conducted, someone who knew about publication pitfalls, contracts, translation rights, someone connected with the leading edge of the literary scene." (Reynolds 182). Sherwood Anderson was that person. Following Jean Toomer and paving the way for William Faulkner, Hemingway would engage Anderson as a mentor as he entered the profession of American letters. Though Anderson would provide many practical aspects of mentorship like reading lists, letters of introduction, and encouragement, his greatest legacy to Hemingway may have been his flawed understanding of Primitivism and its role in American identity. Hemingway rejected Anderson's attempts to align blackness and Primitivism as a means to salvage and correct whiteness, just as Toomer had and Faulkner would, but he did not forget Anderson's lesson that race and American identity are intricately intertwined. As with Toomer and Faulkner, the very act of rejecting Anderson's ideas was formative for Hemingway, pushing him to understand better the value of, as well as to construct and employ, a nuanced articulation of racial hybridity as part of American identity. Ultimately, Anderson's interest in the connections between race and national identity was of lasting importance to the development of Hemingway's writing.[1]

Anderson exposed Hemingway to the idea of literary nationalism. Trained in Oak Park to read British writers, Hemingway learned from Anderson which Americans to read and what was distinctive about *American* writers. Anderson helped Hemingway reorient his

focus from the immediacy of journalism to the potential immortality of literature, and he gave Hemingway a reading list that demonstrated how contemporary and avant-garde writers established their place within a tradition. Anderson's reading list included both American and European writers: Twain, Whitman, H.L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank (who worked closely with Jean Toomer), Van Wyck Brooks, Turgenev, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and D. H. Lawrence (Reynolds 183). At Anderson's suggestion, Hemingway also began to read *The Dial, American Mercury,* and *Poetry.* Anderson verbally critiqued several of Hemingway's stories[2] and, perhaps most famously, told Hemingway to go to Paris. Anderson did not, however, introduce Hemingway to Toomer's work or discuss the primitives or race in any correspondence with Hemingway. It was Anderson's insistence on the connection between literature and national identity, combined with his embrace of Primitivism, that made clear to Hemingway that race was a force shaping American identity.

As Faulkner would later, Hemingway debuted his understanding of the profession in various published critiques of Anderson's work. In March of 1925, *Ex Libris* published Hemingway's review of Anderson's *A Story-Teller's Story.* This review, written before Hemingway had read *Dark Laughter*, demonstrates what Hemingway had learned from Anderson. First, Hemingway was beginning to articulate what made a writer "American" and he marked Anderson as such: "For Sherwood Anderson, unlike the English, does not quote you Latin in casual conversation" (Bruccoli 7). Second, Hemingway understood that no level of skill could salvage faulty vision; inaccurate reality marred even excellent technique. He claimed *A Story-Teller's Story* was "a good book," one that showed Anderson at the top of his form: [there are] "very beautiful places in the book, as good writing as Sherwood Anderson has done and that means considerably better than any other American writer has done" (8). Hemingway even discounted the critics who thought Anderson could not write by claiming Anderson's craftsmanship was so adept it was invisible to the reader (9). However, in the same *Ex Libris* article, Hemingway claimed repeatedly that *Many Marriages* (1923) was a "poor book" because Anderson wrote it to please the critics and sell books. Hemingway claimed Anderson's dismissal of the interdependency between craft and truth caused his failure; he will castigate that disregard in *The Torrents of Spring* (1926).

A popular success, Anderson's *Dark Laughter* received mixed critical response. It was Anderson's first work written after he had lived in the American South and his first to contain elements of Southern culture and mythology (Taylor and Modlin ix). However, *Dark Laughter* is not set in the American South; instead, its primary setting is the American heartland: Old Harbor, Indiana and Chicago, Illinois. Additionally, Anderson overtly used the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to place his characters' stories in line with Huck Finn's, making *Dark Laughter* an epic American story that crafts an American identity. In this "American" novel, Anderson's representations of African Americans are in every instance limited to stereotype, whether they are citizens of the Midwest, the American South, or Paris. It was this violation of truth created through sloppy craft that Hemingway could not abide.

In 1926, Hemingway wrote to Anderson: "You said I was all wrong on *Many Marriages* and I told you what I thought about the *Story Teller's Story.* All I think about the Dark Laughter is in this Torrents book. It is not meant to do any of the things I see the ad writers say it is, and the great race I had in mind in the sub-title was the white race. It is a joke and it isn't meant to be mean, but it is absolutely sincere" (sic) (Hemingway Collection, JFKL).[3] The subtitle to which Hemingway referred, "A Romantic Novel in Honor of the Passing of a Great Race," immediately places the focus of the parody on race by connecting both Anderson's novel and Hemingway's parody to Madison Grant's eugenics text, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). That Hemingway mentioned the subtitle specifically to Anderson confirms that Hemingway intended a major focus of his parody to be constructions of race.

Biographers and critics have argued that Hemingway used *The Torrents of Spring* to distance himself from his mentor and break with his publisher, Boni & Liveright; none has seriously considered the book a parody of American constructions of race. Yet beyond the subtitle, Hemingway organized his book so that Part One is titled "Red and Black Laughter" and Part Four "The Passing of a Great Race and the Making and Marring of Americans," decidedly placing the focus on race and its role in national identity, not just on Anderson's style.[4] Anderson would, of course, have known that Hemingway's "great race" in the subtitle referred to Grant's text, for it was immensely popular by 1925.[5] By making the connection overt in his letter to Anderson, Hemingway made it impossible for Anderson to deny that

The Torrents of Spring critiqued both his romantic notion of African Americans and his attempt to redefine whiteness.

In *Dark Laughter*, Anderson uses racial stereotypes as uncritical representations, romanticizing the appearance of Southern blacks. As Bruce contemplates what it means to be an American, he admits to himself that he has "half friendships" with many nationalities, but that African Americans are "more willing to come, more avid to come than any Jew, German, Pole, Italian. Standing laughing—coming by the back door—with shuffling feet, a laugh—a dance in the body" (74):

> Nigger girls in the streets, nigger women, nigger men . . . The men who work on the docks in New Orleans have slender flanks like running horses, broad shoulders, loose heavy lips hanging down—faces like old monkeys sometimes—bodies like young gods—sometimes. On Sunday—when they go to church, or to a bayou baptizing, the brown girls do sure cut loose with the colors—gaudy nigger colors on nigger women making the streets flame —deep purples, reds, yellows, green like young corn-shoots coming up. They sweat. The skin colors brown, golden yellow, reddish brown, purple-brown. When the sweat runs down high brown backs the colors come out and dance before the eyes. Flash that up, you silly painters, catch it dancing. Song-tones in words, music in words—in colors too. (77)

Hemingway focused his own stylistic concerns on precise representation, and Anderson's book contained the most disdained of portrayals,—those overdrawn and under-developed. Following his mentor into American literature and letters, Hemingway was adamant in holding the art to a standard of precise representation. When Anderson failed in style and substance to present modernist precision about race, Hemingway subjected him to ninety pages of satirical review.

Whereas Anderson used stereotypes to romanticize African Americans, Hemingway used stereotypes in *The Torrents of Spring* to expose the absurdity of white privilege and white superiority, perhaps the two most powerful constructions of whiteness. Scripps O'Neil, the central character of *The Torrents of Spring*, is a white man who has lost his way. His wife has left him and he is unsuccessful in his career, neither of which he fully understands. He represents the variety allowed whiteness by having an Italian immigrant mother, and a Southern, Irish-American father who was a general in the Confederate Army. Through these parents, Scripps inherits several mythical experiences of the American underdog: poverty, stolen

wealth, homelessness, and the defeat of war. He is a white everyman, a representative of ethnic assimilation into whiteness. Yogi Johnson is Scripps's mentor. His encounters with Native Americans are, perhaps, the finest examples in *The Torrents of Spring* of Hemingway's use of stereotype to advance critique. After giving a long, unsought speech on "the war" to two Indian acquaintances, Yogi asks how they liked the speech: "'White chief have heap much sound ideas,' the Indian said. 'White chief educated like hell'" (57). Yogi felt "touched. Here among the simple aborigines, the only real Americans, he had found that true communion" (57). Yet Hemingway does not let this romantic notion hold for even one page:

> "Was white chief in the war?" the Indian asked.
> "I landed in France in May, 1917," Yogi began.
> "I thought maybe white chief was in the war from the way he talked," the Indian said. "Him," he raised the head of his sleeping companion up so the last rays of the sunset shone on the sleeping Indian's face, he got V.C. Me I got D.S.O. and M.C. with bar. I was major in the Fourth C.M.R.'s."
> "I m glad to meet you," Yogi said. He felt strangely humiliated. (57, 58)

Hemingway's satire is relentless in undercutting any romantic notion of the primitive and any claim to superiority by whiteness. When Yogi refuses to play pool because his "right arm was crippled in the war," he changes his mind after meeting an Indian pool player who "got both arms and both legs shot off at Ypres" (59). Ultimately, Yogi's encounters with the Indians in Petosky lead him to re-evaluate white privilege and superiority:

> He was a white man, but he knew when he had enough. After all, the white race might not always be supreme. This Moslem revolt. Unrest in the East. Trouble in the West. Things looked black in the South. Now this condition of things in the North. Where was it taking him? Where did it all lead? Would it help him to want a woman? Would spring ever come? Was it worth while after all? He wondered. (74)

Hemingway parodied Anderson further in his use of the laughter of African American characters in *The Torrents of Spring*. The first sound of their laughter ends chapter eight, right after the white drummer mentions that he has a story to tell—some other time— "about a beautiful thing that happened to me once" (41). Readers learn later that this is not a beautiful thing, but a time when the drummer's

romantic notions were shattered. The black laughter sets up the African American characters as wise to the pitfalls of romanticism, aware the "beautiful thing" is really a joke. The second sound of African American laughter comes from the bartender, Bruce, as the Indian orders two beers for Yogi and him. The bartender explains his laughter is because he knew the Indian would "ordah dat Dog's Head all the time" (62). Indeed, this line directs readers to notice all that Bruce knows. When it is discovered Yogi is not Native American and he is kicked out of this exclusive club, Bruce responds: "'I knowed it,' he laughed. 'I knowed it all de time. No Swede gwine to fool ole Bruce'" (66). Of course, a Swede would not have fooled anyone into believing he was Native American. Bruce has no mystical gift; he is an observer and he applies his observations more astutely than any white character in the book. Hemingway's African American Bruce, presented through uneducated dialect and in a subservient role, is actually as astute as Anderson's self-reflective, educated, white Bruce inaccurately thinks he is. Hemingway used the racially insensitive, stereotypical characterization of Bruce to exemplify that wisdom is based on accurate vision and is therefore a learned skill, not a racial trait. Hemingway has written "primitive" blackness as superior to whiteness without inverting or reinforcing a racial hierarchy as Anderson did.

The Torrents of Spring was not Hemingway's first attempt to write characters of color. At least two high school writings show Hemingway exploring relationships and social expectations built around race.[6] His first published work proves he could craft complex characters of color who challenged the status and ethics of white privilege in America. *In Our Time*, written the same year as *Dark Laughter*, contains two stories with Native American characters ("Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife"), one story with an African American character ("The Battler")[7], and one chapter with African American characters (Chapter XV).[8] Indeed, the breadth of racial and national variety in Hemingway's first collection is dramatic: Native Americans, White Americans, African Americans, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Spaniards, Germans, Swiss, Mexicans, Belgians, English, and Irish people the pages of *In Our Time* and each is carefully identified not by stereotype but by name, locale, skin color, and behaviors that reflect a relationship to established whiteness.[9] Such careful craftsmanship of race and ethnicity, coupled with his strong reaction to

Anderson's sloppy racial representation, suggests Hemingway found the precise representation of race an essential part of American modernism. One excellent example of Hemingway's racial precision is his much misunderstood "The Battler" from *In Our Time.*

"The Battler" begins with white Nick Adams believing he can, and should, control his world: "Nick stood up. He was all right . . . That lousy crut of a brakeman. He would get him some day. He would know him again" (Hemingway *Complete Stories* 97). Nick blames the brakeman for knocking him off the train, and he only blames himself for falling for the brakeman's ploy; Nick takes no responsibility for riding without paying fare. Nick vows that "[t]hey would never suck him in that way again" and believes the black eye was "cheap at the price," indicating that the lesson learned and his sense of tighter control in managing his world was worth it. "The Battler" opens demonstrating Nick's sense of white privilege—belief in his own power to choose and direct his own fate; belief that others, regardless of their race, should not get in the way of his goals—and then continues to mark a focus on white privilege through his portrayal of Ad.

Ad is a white boxer with a "misshapen" face, a "sunken" nose, "queer-shaped lips," and a missing ear (99). Ad's body reflects his troubled spirit and violent past. However, Ad's face is also described as "like putty in color. Dead looking in the firelight" (99). Despite boxing's responsibility for Ad's overall ill health and sick-pallor, Hemingway's description places an additional and decidedly negative emphasis on whiteness. The only other mentions of Ad's color come during his assault of Nick: "The little white man looked at Nick . . . . He glared at Nick, his face was white and his eyes almost out of sight under the cap" (101). Hemingway included Ad's whiteness with each mention of abuse and craziness, but never with a description of his successful boxing career. Like *The Torrents of Spring, In Our Time* presents whiteness as a flawed and damaging social construction. This idea World War I demonstrated, but Sherwood Anderson articulated first for Hemingway. However, Anderson and Hemingway disagreed dramatically over the causes and cure for American whiteness.

Bugs's characterization is one of Hemingway's stronger arguments against Anderson's Primitivism. During Nick's first encounter with Bugs, the narrator refers to Bugs as "the negro" and Ad as "the prizefighter" (100), suggesting that the labels are somehow equal,

one attribute of each character but not the defining attribute. Bugs is introduced to Nick by Ad as his equal, both as Ad's "pal" and as "crazy, too," a descriptor Ad has already used about himself (100). Bugs then directs Nick to treat him as an equal, asking Nick where he was from and reminding Nick that he didn't catch his name (100). It isn't until Ad chastises Bugs for an answer that Bugs's demeanor of equality changes.

> "Are you hungry, Nick?"
> "Hungry as hell."
> "Hear that, Bugs?"
> "I hear most of what goes on."
> "That ain't what I asked you."
> "Yes. I heard what the gentleman said." (100)

Immediately after this exchange, the narrator refers to Bugs's legs as "nigger legs" (100). Hemingway's precise use of "negro and "nigger" follows throughout the rest of the story. When Bugs instructs Nick to not let Ad have the knife, the narrator calls him "the negro" (100). This descriptor continues until Bugs must calm Ad:

> The little white man looked at Nick.
> "Will you have some, Mister Adolph Francis?" Bugs offered from the skillet.
> Ad did not answer. He was looking at Nick.
> "Mister Francis?" came the nigger's soft voice. (101)

It is significant that Hemingway begins this section reminding readers that Ad is a "little white man" (101). The emphasis comes again as Ad loses control: "He glared at Nick, his face was white and his eyes almost out of sight under the cap" (101). It is Ad's distorted whiteness that causes Bugs to put on his "nigger" face and voice. Throughout the story Bugs is referred to as "the negro" whenever he is in charge and speaking to Ad and Nick as subordinates or equals. This nuanced presentation of Bugs demonstrates Hemingway's clear understanding of how social constructions of race in America create and then reinforce stereotypes.

The labeling of Bugs as both "negro" and "nigger" reflects not only Nick's application of standard racial categories, but the necessity for new language to delineate race in post-World War I America and a clear connection between craft and truth. Nick recognizes that Bugs behaves in ways made distinct by culturally assigned racial designations, but he has no language for the new category of man he

finds in Bugs. That racial minorities are capable of acting outside of societal norms is not new to Nick. Dick Boulton was his earliest example of this in *In Our Time*'s "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." However, Hemingway gives us no evidence Nick ever thinks of Bugs as simply a man, as he does Ad. Nick struggles with inadequate racial terminology and understanding, exiting the woods of "The Battler" in a silence richly void of the voiced bravado with which he entered. There is no inversion of racial hierarchy in "The Battler," but Hemingway did establish "nigger" and "negro" as constructions commonly transgressed and therefore essentially meaningless. That Anderson's fiction did not demonstrate the futility of constructed race and instead embraced and championed the value in perceived racial distinctions was, for Hemingway, proof that Anderson's writing had breeched the maxim connecting truth and craft. The complexity of racial construction in America is the truth Anderson's craft ignored and the one Hemingway's craft championed.

Through his mentorship and his writing, Sherwood Anderson taught Jean Toomer, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway that American letters played a pivotal role in forming American identity. Anderson's interest in primitivism taught them that race was central to national identity; his conception and application of primitivism, however, demonstrated for each that race in America was misunderstood and must be redefined. Toomer, Faulkner, and Hemingway explored and championed the reality of racial hybridity in the Americas and used it to defeat Anderson's sense of racial hierarchy.

Anderson's interactions with Toomer and his limiting of Toomer to the category of Negro artist affirmed Toomer's desire to redefine the meaning of race and national identity. After experiencing firsthand Anderson's benevolent and yet rigid understanding of race in America, one that honored the contributions of African Americans as it simultaneously secured the established hierarchy, Toomer articulated and began to advocate for a new hybrid racial identity he named simply "American."[10]

As a Southerner, William Faulkner understood better than Anderson how central racial identity was to American identity. However, his disagreement with Anderson over primitivism confirmed Faulkner's interest in moving away from the biological destiny heralded by the Southern Apologists who preceded him.[11] Faulkner consistently demonstrated the racial hybridity of those identified by society as white, those "passing" in society as white, those with white skin marked as black because of the infamous "one-drop" rule, and those identified as black. This more nuanced understanding was a far cry from Anderson's primitivism but still one that sought to articulate a meaningful connection between blackness and whiteness. Moving beyond Anderson's ideas, Faulkner argued the salvation of a damaged, stultified whiteness could only come through recognizing its interdependency with blackness. In Faulkner's presentation, the benefits of blackness resided not in a primitivism that would be destroyed after its absorption into whiteness; instead, Faulkner presented blackness and whiteness as currently and historically interdependent. Such an understanding disputed the racial hierarchy required by primitivism.

Ernest Hemingway's earliest writings demonstrate an awareness that in America race is defined by whiteness. After World War I, Hemingway was forced to reconsider all social paradigms, and he found Anderson's use of primitivism simply an old and disproven idea restated. Because the reader's experience of truth was so important to Hemingway, he saw that Anderson's primitivism was corrupting his style, and he not only challenged Anderson for not seeing clearly, he pushed himself always to question accepted perceptions.[12] Hemingway never became an advocate in the political sphere for racial equality or any other cause; instead, throughout his career he crafted characters who pushed the limits of the social constructions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

Sherwood Anderson's mentorship of Jean Toomer, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway was more than the passing of the torch from one generation to another. By engaging these young writers in conversations about race and national identity, by writing of the American heartland and the America South in prose that caught their attention, and by advocating for value in primitive blackness, Anderson brought attention to whiteness as a racial construction and demonstrated ways that racial constructs could shape prose form. Anderson's angst over the hollow life of civilization pushed him to explore how society uses race to define personal identity and social roles. Though Anderson could not unlearn all he was taught about blackness, he earnestly attempted to articulate the value he perceived in it, a value he could not find in civilized whiteness. Anderson misunderstood the relationship between blackness and whiteness, but his intuition that some relationship between races was fundamental to American identity proved pivotal for American modernism. Toomer, Faulkner, and Hemingway took this better lesson from their mentor.

Experiences with race vastly different from Anderson's obliged the three young modernists to reshape Anderson's ideas about blackness and whiteness; however, each would imbed in the heart of American modernism Anderson's understanding that race is a cornerstone of national and personal identity. Anderson's mentorship was formative and provoked Toomer, Faulkner, and Hemingway to faithfully interrogate race and to consistently present an American identity historically and ineluctably shaped by racial hybridity.

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NOTES

[1]For a fuller analysis of the role of race in Anderson's mentorship of Jean Toomer and William Faulkner, see my earlier article, "Sherwood Anderson: Memoirs of American Racial Identity" in *MidAmerica* 36 (2010): 46-62.

[2]See Hadley Richardson's letter to Ernest Hemingway dated April 8, 1921, Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, Bostson, MA.

[3]Hemingway was a notoriously bad typist; most of his typed letters contain errors similar to the ones found here.

[4]In 1925, Hemingway worked diligently to get Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* published in Ford Maddox Ford's *transatlantic*. Hemingway's intimate involvement with Stein's text during its serial publication makes it almost certain *The Making of Americans* was the second referent in the satirical title of part four of *The Torrents of Spring*. (See Daniel-Pollack-Pelzner for an analysis of Hemingway's spoof of Stein's style in *The Torrents of Spring*.) I would argue, however, that Hemingway satirized more than Stein's style in *Torrents*, attacking specifically her construction of national identity and the role of history in *The Making of Americans*.

[5]In *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant,* Jonathon Peter Spiro claims that *The Passing of the Great Race* received laudatory reviews from such national forums as the *New York Herald, Nation, Science, Journal of Heredity,* and *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (159), though it had only moderate sales in the United States (161). It was perceived a success and entered its second printing only two months after the initial publication (162). In 1918, marking the entrance of the United States into World War I, Scribner's published a revised edition (162). In 1920, Edgar Lee Masters, the most popular poet in America at the time, published "The Great Race Passes," a poem that "reflected the public's growing appreciation of Grant" (164). In 1921, Scribner's published a fourth edition (165). The influence of *The Passing of the Great Race* was broader than a decent publication record and multiple editions would suggest. Major biologists were influenced by Grant's work, as were scholars at Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and Stanford. Likewise, popular writers, public speakers, and politicians were influenced by Grant (See Chapter 8, "Grant's Disciples" in *Defending the Master Race).*

[6]One early story may be found under its first line, "You think it is pretty hot playing football . . ." as item number 859 of the Manuscripts series in the Hemingway Archives at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. The pencil manuscript is signed "Ernest Hemingway" on page 1 and continues for 14 pages. The manuscript also contans some lined-out poetry with several false starts. The second story is titled "Sepi Jengan" and was published in

1917 in *Tabula*, the Oak Park High School literary magazine. Both stories develop non-white characters as superior or equal to white characters in morality, intellect, and skill.

[7]Amy L. Strong offers a smart reading of these three stories and their role in outlining "not only the formation of manhood, but the formation of manhood within the context of racial difference" (46). See *Race and Identity in Hemingway's Fiction* (2008).

[8]Because "Big Two-Hearted River" Part I and Part II are considered together the capstone story of *In Our Time*, the chapter that interrupts them, (Chapter XV) takes on more significance. Traditional readings that accept the hidden presence of World War I in "Big Two-Hearted River" suggest that other "hidden presences" may be considered. Philip Melling argues for the importance of Native American history in Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River" *(The Hemingway Review* 28.2 [Spring 2009]: 45+). The not-so-hidden presence of race, class, and ethnicity in Chapter XV suggests the balance between history and the present, including historical and present racisms and identities, is a focal point of Hemingway's capstone story and his attempt to articulate the ever-present hybridity of American identity.

[9]Throughout history, immigrant ethnic groups have entered America excluded from whiteness. Many eventually worked their way from partial to full membership in whiteness. Africans and African Americans have, of course, been the exception. Hemingway portrays his ethnic characters at various stages in this assimilation process; thus, each character's understanding of personal power and his or her relationship to established gender, racial, and class roles reflects positioning within a social construct.

[10]See Toomer's 1934 essay "On Being an American," located in the Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Libray, Yale University.

[11]William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870), Thomas Nelson (1853-1922) and Thomas Dixon, Jr. (1864-1946) were apologists for the antebellum period in the American South and were immensely popular novelists. Mark Twain (1835-1920) and Kate Chopin (1851-1904) were Southern writers who challenged the Southern apologists and experimented with ways to represenet the limitations of the social constructions of race and gender in the American South. Twain and Chopin set the stage for Faulkner's work but in no way anticipated the changes he would make to racial presentation in American letters.

[12]Hemingway wrote more than once about the necessary connection between truth and writing. One relevant example is this: "All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstacy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was" (*By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*18).

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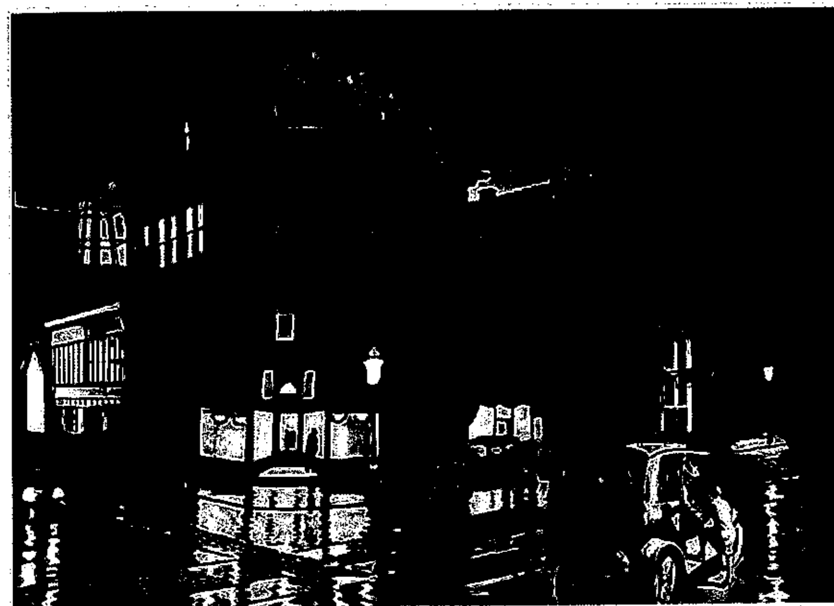

Plate 1: Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967), *Rainy Night*, 1929-30, watercolor over graphite on paper, 30 x 42 in., San Diego Museum of Art, Gift of Misses Anne R. and Amy Putnam, 1939:97 *Reproduced with permission from the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation*

Plate 2: Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967), *Church Bells Ringing, Rainy Winter Night*, 1917, watercolor and gouache over graphite on paper, 30 x 19 in. (77.2 x 50 cm), The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Louise M. Dunn in memory of Henry G. Keller, 1949.544 *Reproduced with permission from the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation*

Plate 3: Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967), *The Insect Chorus,* September 5, 1917, opaque and transparent watercolor, with ink, graphite, and crayon on off-white paper, 20 x 15 7/8 in. (50.8 x 38.1 cm), Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, New York, Edward W. Root Bequest, 1957 *Reproduced with permission from the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation*

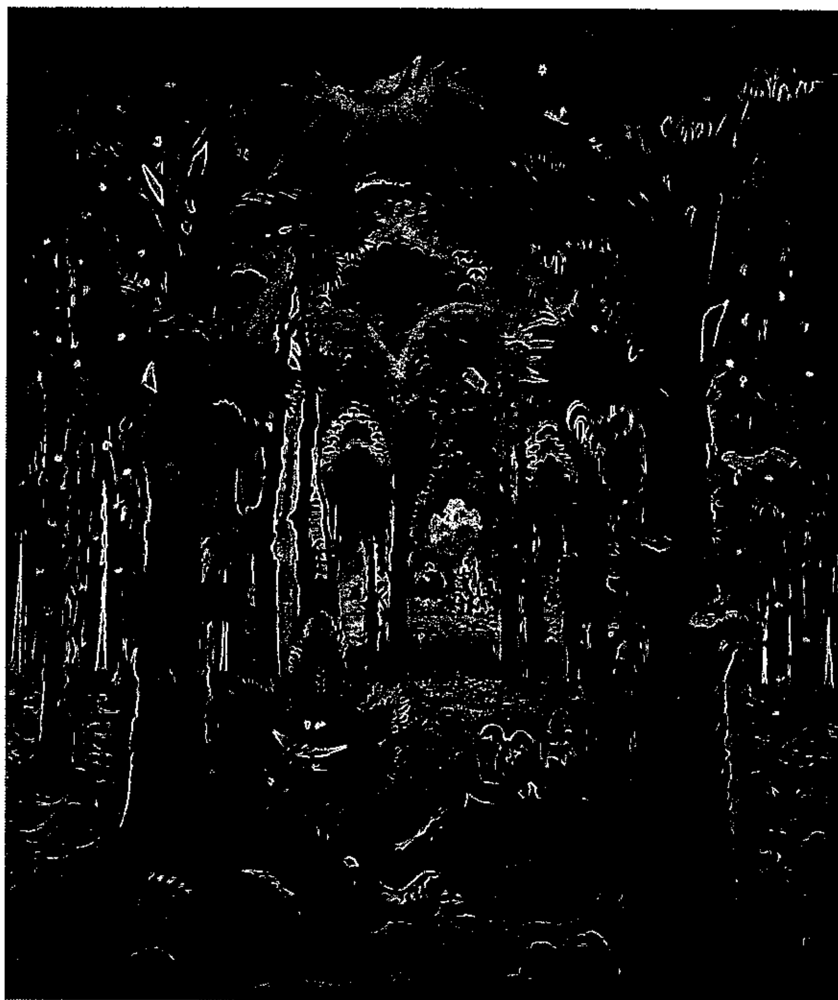

Plate 4: Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967) *The Four Seasons,* 1949-60, watercolor on pieced paper mounted on board, 55 7/8 x 47 7/8 in. (139.7 x 119.4 cm), Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaigh, Festival of Arts Purchase Fund 1961-2-1 *Reproduced with permission from the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation*

Plate 5: Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967), *Pussy Willows,* 1936, Watercolor on paper mounted on heavy cardboard, 32-15/16 x 25-1/4 in., Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, New York, Edward W. Root Bequest, 57.104 *Reproduced with permission from the Charles E. Bruchfield Foundation*

THE NARRATIVE IMPULSE IN THE WORKS OF CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD

JOSEPH J. WYDEVEN

Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul . . . then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.
—Ishmael, in Melville's *Moby-Dick*

And when on all sides I am beset with palaver and artifice, I feel the need of drawing a long breath, I ramble the fields.
—Charles Burchfield, *Journals,* qtd. in Weekly, *Sacred Woods* 14

Visiting almost any Midwestern art museum, the art enthusiast is hardly surprised to come across at least one of Charles E. Burchfield's distinctive paintings. These paintings, mostly watercolors, have an urgency and a vibrancy about them. Typically the paintings show the kinds of activity associated with nature in one of its many phases: cold winter scenes depicting cowering houses and scudding winds, summer scenes with a glowing sun transfixing brilliantly lit trees, night scenes with stars ablaze, scenes showing transitions between seasons. Throughout his fifty-some-year career, despite changes in subject and style, Burchfield produced watercolors that are almost instantly recognizable as his work.

Burchfield was born in Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio, in 1893 and grew up in Salem, Ohio —with four years of art school in Cleveland from 1912-1916; thus, he lived most of his formative years in Ohio. This Midwestern background is crucial, for even after he moved to Buffalo, New York, in 1921, Burchfield typically painted scenes from his youth in Ohio, and many paintings are dated from the 1915-

1918 period —even when Burchfield returned to them and finished them, sometimes with paper sizes enlarged, in his later career. He considered 1917, when he was in his early twenties, as his crucial creative and productive year.

In this essay I want to explore Burchfield's work in both painting and writing. He was prolific in all his creative work—but readers may be at first astonished by the written record of his activities, emotional states, artistic developments, and responses to all variety of stimuli —particularly literature and music. In their handwritten form, Burchfield's journals run to over seventy volumes, some 10,000 pages; as edited by J. Benjamin Townsend in *Charles Burchfield's Journals: The Poetry of Place*, the text runs to nearly 700 pages. Townsend sees in the journals a strikingly late culmination of two major literary genres: the capture in journal form of a vanishing native landscape and the nineteenth-century spiritual autobiography (xvii). We learn a great deal about their author by perusing these journals carefully. One thing we learn is that Burchfield was an incipient storyteller —not only in prose but also in his paintings.

I want to focus on Burchfield's penchant for storytelling, his interest in narrative throughout his work. Early in his career, he was divided between urges to become a nature writer and a painter. He read avidly in Thoreau, John Muir, Burroughs, and Audubon throughout his life; in fiction he was influenced for a time by Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, and Zona Gale; and he read widely in the Russians and Scandinavians. In his paintings, Burchfield frequently pictured nature perched upon obvious narrative thresholds: nature is often shown in process, duration, and synesthetic gesture. The evidence of examples suggests that Burchfield was indeed compelled to narrative expression.[1]

PROSE

Burchfield's journals are accepted by most commentators as the crucial document charting his development, the source of our knowledge of his day-to-day activities, his sometimes paranoid dreams, his beliefs regarding philosophies and principles in the making of art, his often agonized accounts of struggles with the conflict between organized religion and his own spiritual ideals, his observations on writers and composers, and accounts of the production of his own works. Burchfield's journals are prolific and wide-ranging in their interests

and concerns —their extent showing a near obsessiveness to explore all aspects of his life on an almost daily basis for over fifty years.

If, as Anthony Bannon succinctly states, "So much of Burchfield's life was a struggle to free himself from time" (5), Burchfield's very productivity as a journal writer suggests paradoxically that escape from time may have required of him extreme immersion in time's byproducts and settings. He seems at times obsessed with narrative description and detail. Often it is not sufficient for him to mention that an event took place; he must explore its essence and duration. Thus, we get a detailed account of his wife's lying-in and delivery of their first baby (133-34); a warm and amusing account of being helped and fed by a woman on a day of unaccountable exhaustion, while riding his bicycle (157-58); a narrative of a dead mule, complete with dialogue, from his army days (160-61); the story of "A day of such deep peace and happiness, that I find it difficult to put down on paper . . . without degenerating into a series of mawkish superlatives" (492-94), and many other experiences he seems compelled to recount in depth. This makes for very interesting reading while raising the question: who are the journals' ultimately intended readers?[2]

On a more literary plane, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, given him shortly after its publication in 1919 by Richard Laukhuff, a bookstore-owner friend, was quite influential; indeed, according to Mary Mowbray-Clarke, in her introduction to a 1920 exhibition booklet of Burchfield's watercolors, if one wanted "to understand the inner growth of the Burchfield boy" it was necessary to read Anderson's book (qtd. in Kendall 94). *Winesburg* appears to suggest the tone of Burchfield's account of some of the more tormented inhabitants of Salem: "a funny old man entirely out of place in the age of industry & automobiles"; "Bobby Kerr, both mentally & physically deformed, who was chided at odd times for his lack of interest in sexual activities"; Delos Hanna, who had no personal friends but who boasted of having a large correspondence with people from other towns; Frank Bosten, "a boy rendered disagreeable because his mother still talked baby talk to him when he was sixteen"—and a variety of others. Something of his rationale for these sketches sounds particularly like Anderson: "Perhaps there is more cruelty among small town inhabitants than those of the city, for in the town, anyone of peculiar appearance, or unbalanced mind, is more easily picked out by the wits, which form nine-tenths of a town's people" (*Journals* 29-32). Perhaps Burchfield, who claimed to have few friends and suffered his own conflicts with the narrowness and prejudice of small-town life, considered himself one of Anderson's grotesques—certainly reason to employ narration of his own life story in the journals.[3]

Burchfield's narratives of his travels into nature are ubiquitous in the journals. If sometimes these entries seem emotionally intense, this may be due in part to what J. Benjamin Townsend describes as Burchfield's "frank, unabashed romanticism":

> Burchfield employs in the journals the figurative language and in his nature paintings the iconography of the pastoral tradition. The pastoral's devices of personification, the pathetic fallacy and apostrophe, absorbed from his early reading, lent themselves to his romantic pantheism as well as to an innately poetic sensibility. Habitual solitude and the relentless search for a spiritual center prompted him to anthropomorphize a nature that he found more accessible and trustworthy than humanity. (Townsend, *Journals* 243)

Some of Burchfield's entries suggest that nature for him had more of the romantic sublime than the beautiful within it. Many excursions that he narrates evince a cold fear of what he encounters—which does not stop him from his quest for experience and clarity. Walking through Bentley's Woods on an evening in 1912, he fears for his life: "Every step I took sounded to me like the galloping of horses . . . I came upon a stump . . . Instantly the thought that it was a crouching man or dog assailed me and, if such a thing is possible, I believe my heart stopped beating" (337). Sometimes the entries appear impatient, providing only a frenzied outline. On January 18, 1917, for example, he writes: "Night for walk—a wild night—luminous zenith, black horizon, roar of wind & sound of sifting snow—a bird is startled in a field, a dk [dark] vision melting in the brush—black frightful north; Post's woods a black blue over a strangely lit up field—I enter—blurred trunks—I am fascinated & terrified—I flee in fear from the place, roar of wind in tree tops; blurred dk houses with windows lit . . ."(342).

If questions about nature are at the center of Burchfield's concerns in the journals, a struggle regarding his own place in nature evinces itself through bouts of self-doubt, often with extreme swings from one mood to another. Henry Adams believes that Burchfield was bipolar, having an outlook on reality in which "the worlds of hope and despair

constantly battle with each other" (Adams 111, 113). Passages such as the following are found frequently in the journals. In this instance he has been sketching, apparently productively and happily, with a friend; but: "All this was suddenly lost as my mind without warning turned to a most materialistic worry & haunted me—all the wonderful poetry of the day came crashing down and was gone—and afterwards . . . a sense of frustration came over me and I felt that all my idealism of art and love of nature were hollow shams, that I was only pretending to be something better than I really was" (77).

Many of these questions ultimately hinge on his personal struggles with religious ideas and convictions. Enough passages of this kind occur in the journals to suggest that he was beset with these conflicts throughout his life, though they seem to have abated somewhat after his belated conversion to his wife Bertha's Lutheran faith in 1944. Some of these are similar to what Townsend describes as symptoms of "autoconfessional writing" from John Bunyan to T. S. Eliot. "[C]ertain psychosomatic symptoms are especially peculiar to the Protestant purgatorial experience. The temptation to blaspheme, panic and involuntary flight, fear of insanity, algolagnia, animism, and hallucination are often mentioned in the literature of Protestant dissent" (Townsend 82). Expressions of many of these symptoms are found throughout the journals.

NARRATIVE IN BURCHFIELD'S PAINTINGS

In his book of narrative theory, H. Porter Abbott speaks of pictures depicting "action in progress," and states that the human tendency to insert narrative time into static, immobile scenes seems almost automatic, like a reflex action" (7). Although it may be true that the potential for narrative inheres in *every* picture, some pictures tend more toward narrative than others. We think of a picture as tending toward narrative when it seems to suggest, illustrate or otherwise invite illumination through story. It seems to be incomplete without recourse to the use of language to provide essential explanatory material to give it full life. When a picture raises questions about origins, causation, duration, motivation, process, purpose, or sequence (to name a few characteristics), it may be said to perch on a narrative threshold, to beg for narrative fulfillment.

Not all of Charles Burchfield's works tend toward narrative, but so many of them do that it seems natural to think of him as frequently a narrative painter. Burchfield's paintings procure this effect through

any number of means: through nature paintings that suggest duration —those many, for example, that show seasons in the process of changing from one to another; paintings that incorporate agitrons, doodles, and other devices intended to evoke motion or sound; paintings that picture events *in medias res*, incorporate the pathetic fallacy by giving nature human qualities, or urgently call up the befores and afters in time's flow.

In this section I want to illustrate Burchfield's tendency toward narrative by closely examining several paintings that clearly achieve these effects. This inquiry is not intended as—or to suggest the possibility of—a full taxonomy of Burchfield's works. If my examination is convincing, viewers may find these narrative effects multiplied in many other Burchfield paintings. Obviously by references to duration or sequence I am not referring to the temporal process by which viewers examine and interpret a painting. All pictures require this process if they are to be understood properly. Rather, it is the static pictorial elements themselves which call up narrative explanation or fulfillment. Also, just as in the interpretation of language texts, paintings may be under- or overread for any number of reasons.[4]

Perhaps the most common way for narrative to show itself in a still image is to have that image represent an action in process of taking place *in medias res*. Simple cases are found in Burchfield's paintings *Rainy Night* (1929-30) and *The Builders* (1931). *Rainy Night* (Plate 1) pictures a city scene with several four- and five-story buildings, lit from within by electric lights inside several buildings, and from without by street and car lights, backgrounded by a lightened sky which dramatically illuminates a tall water tower and highlights the top floors of buildings. The street in front of the buildings reflects the lights in the rain. But what most suggests narrative is the automobile in the right foreground: a man inside is handing up a woman into the car, and she is pictured with one foot in the street, the other on the car's running board. The viewer of this action is led to ask what their relationship is: who are they and where are they going? What has occurred in the immediate past, and what is about to take place in the immediate future? Pictures of this *in medias res* type typically require the presence of human subjects.

A second example, *The Builders,* is an odd and interesting work that shows us a group of men tearing down a house. Only the gabled front of the house and the porch still stand; we can see through the windows in the wall structure to the spaces beyond. Off to the left a

bonfire consumes those parts of the house that have already been dismantled. The gabled front wall, standing on its own without benefit of back support, suggests a precarious and possibly dangerous condition. Immediate questions are likely to occur to viewers. Why are the "builders" tearing this house down, and why are they doing it in such a potentially hazardous way? Why has the painter chosen to show this particular view? What social decisions have preceded this picture—in the world of the picture, in the institutional life of the community, and in the life of the artist? Most important, perhaps, why has Burchfield entitled the painting *The Builders* when the work itself appears to contradict it?[5]

A second mode of narrativity in Burchfield's work is suggested by a system of symbols that Burchfield designed in 1917 and entitled "Conventions for Abstract Thoughts." These rough-hewn visual conventions represent mostly morbid or fearful emotions and come into play in many paintings when Burchfield desired to implement a subtext—without being too obvious and with some economy of expression. (How the artist expected unsuspecting viewers to comprehend his meanings with the use of these conventions is a question worthy of further inquiry.) Paintings employing these conventions require careful analysis and call up desire for narrative explanation.

The conventions "explain" a painting like *Church Bells Ringing, Rainy Winter Night* (1917, Plate 2), a work which is a veritable lexicon of some of Burchfield's more egregious conventions. This very expressionistic painting pictures two houses flanking what appears to be a church steeple. The steeple includes the representation of a birdlike face with abstracted eyes and beak, and where the belfry would normally appear there is an abstract design; further, surrounding the steeple are a series of swirls and exaggerated symbols for falling rain. It is a disquieting work—its subject is the First Baptist Church near Burchfield's home—one that allows the artist to be critical of organized religion. An atheist or agnostic during this period, Burchfield used the painting to express his disdain with the ways he thought organized religion provoked fear in people, leading them into false beliefs. If nothing else in the painting suggests this, the shuddering houses certainly do.

But for those who know and understand Burchfield's conventions, the symbolism insists on a wider and deeper range of emotional impact. Among the conventions which convey this impact are the bird's blank eyes, signifying "Imbecility," its eyebrows symbolizing

"Aimless Abstraction" or "Hypnotic Intensity," and rounded commalike symbols at the very top of the steeple where the cross might ordinarily appear, and in the belfry, representing one version of "Fear." In the houses below, conventions are found illustrating "Morbidness," "Fear," "Insanity," and "Fascination of Evil." The only elements which give relief from this barrage of negative symbolism are the Christmas tree and the burning candle in the windows of the house on the left, suggesting some comfort and hope—and fulfilling what some commentators believe is Burchfield's psychological need to include almost obligatory pictorial elements showing his personal conflict between despondency and hope.[6]

Another interesting example, but free of social critique, is *The Night Wind* (1918), depicting several houses below a black and yellow cloud-tossed night sky. The fierce wind is a nearly visible force, and several of Burchfield's conventions suggest that the storm causes versions of fear, imbecility, and morbid brooding. Again, relief is found in the yellow lighting from inside the house in front, suggesting warmth and safety.

Another method that Burchfield used to suggest pictorial narrativity is similar in kind to the conventions for abstract thoughts, but it is considerably more intuitive and often borrowed from American cartoonists. This is the employment of devices deliberately—and broadly—employed to suggest movement, sound, and the vibrancies of nature. They occur in many of the early watercolors depicting scenes from nature—and then again in the later, more visionary works of Burchfield's career. Often the paintings employing these effects have titles drawn from music, of which Burchfield was always particularly fond (his favorite composers included Beethoven, Dvorák, and Sibelius). This is a particularly typical approach for Burchfield—as can be evidenced from many passages of the journals, such as this one: "After supper I started out for a walk . . . The crickets [sic] pulsing chorus had commenced . . . I heard some grasshoppers singing. I noticed two distinct kinds—one that gave a continuous song—a steady monotonous ztitzen sound; the other a more varied song—Tzt Tzt Tzt Tzt—Zeeeeeeeeee" at intervals. There was a whole fiendish chorus of them in an uncut hayfield near the orchard (*Journals* 224).

These effects often include doodles, which Burchfield defined as "a form of subconscious thinking in visual terms" (qtd. in Johnson 35), elaborately stylized drawing effects, and agitrons, cartoon-borrowed

devices intended to suggest motion. Obviously, any element suggesting motion or the carrying of sound necessarily employs the idea of duration, and hence temporal directionality. Relevant agitrons—the cartoonist Mort Walker also calls them "emanata," something emanating from an object—include spurls (lines formed as spirals), direct-a-trons (showing motion in a given direction), and blurgits ("a kind of stroboscopic technique to show movement") (28-29, 33, 37).

There are many rich examples of this methodology in Burchfield's work, including *The Insect Chorus* (1917), *Autumnal Fantasy* (1916-1944), *Song of the Telegraph* (1917-1952), *Cricket Chorus in the Arbor* (1917), *The Moth and the Thunderclap* (1961) and *Fantasy of Heat* (1952-1958). Nature is especially vibrant and loud in *The Insect Chorus* (Plate 3); Burchfield has employed every possible device to suggest this cacophony. Among other effects are the blurgits in the top left, emanating from the vibrant doodling at the top of the pictured foliage; a full-scale doodle at top right suggesting range of sound and motion coming from a tree there; zigzag lines and elaborate curved line shapes (sometimes even employing the Convention of Fear at right side center, lurking in the bushes); and abstracted giant insect shapes which creep in the grass at lower left and center.

In *Autumnal Fantasy* we are presented with a richly imaginative nature scene in which, as Roald Nasgaard observes, "no silence reigns." The air is as crisscrossed with visual hums, beats, and chatters as the spaces are complex . . ." (36). Perhaps most obvious are the six direct-a-trons, illustrating the directions of sounds emanating from tree and branches. In the top center is the sun, in blue, white, and yellow, and on either side of the sun, directed towards the edges of the painting, are shapes suggesting heat waves or breezes. To the left of the sun, between two trees, are autumn leaves elegantly spiraling down to the ground. In another painting, *Song of the Telegraph*, Burchfield animates the scene by incorporating the sounds of the humming telegraph wires, the vibrations from the telegraph pole and the trees on the left, and birdlike shapes giving the sky vibrant life—while a lone bird, bathed in yellow, suggesting warmth and tranquility, surveys the scene. The birds in both of these paintings seem to echo passages from the *Journals*, such as the following: "It was a real pleasure, after traversing silent fields and woods, merely to stand here and listen to the many sounds of cosey [sic] activity—the tapping of the nut-hatches, warblers and downy woodpeckers, the rattling whirr of the black and white creeping warbler in flight from tree to tree, accompanied by the various cries" (219).

A fourth method that Burchfield employed to suggest narrative pictorialism is quite an obvious one, developed from his early interest in compressing time, but which he developed much further later, when he felt he had the requisite skill to pull off the effects: "My purpose then, as it is now, was to try to compress into one picture the time-lapse of several hours, days, or even seasons." Further, he writes, "My great idea was this: to show in continuity the transitions of weather and of the seasons; such as the development of a thunderstorm from a calm, clear day, and then its passing and perhaps a moonrise following. I termed them "All-day Sketches" (*Fifty Years* 100). He could be describing *Moon and Thunderhead* (1915-1960), something of a triptych in one panel: at bottom it shows atmospheric effects in the wild swaying of trees in the wind, at top right the depiction of a daytime moon and blue sky, followed on the left by rising thunder clouds, which pass further to the left, showing finally the aftereffects of a peacefully cloudy night sky with a bright star. The afternoon of storm has passed into tranquility.

Excellent examples of seasonal changes in process of taking place are found in *Retreat of Winter* (1950-1964), *Gateway to September* (1946-1956), *Oncoming Spring* (1954), and most dramatically in *The Four Seasons* (1949-1960). The first three paintings have to do with one of his favorite themes, the transition between seasons. But perhaps the most startling is the symmetrical *The Four Seasons* (Plate 4), in which all four of the seasons are represented, along with some minor transitions between them. At the center of the painting is spring, surrounded by summer, bathed in yellow sunlight. Birds flock in the spring and summer skies. Further out from the center is autumn, and the struggle between autumn and winter is seen in the sun-struck trees with both autumn leaves and branches covered with snow. Winter is found framing the painting on the far left and right, as well as on the bottom, which is covered with snow. Nancy Weekly speaks of these kinds of painting as employing "surreal sequencing of elements" ("Conventions" 21); Michael Kammen uses the expression "sequential simultaneity" (47) and suggests that Burchfield borrowed from Japanese art to achieve these effects. Townsend believes that "Burchfield's concept of embracing a whole day or sequence of days or a transitional season in a single work may have been unique in Western art" (*Journals* 361).

A final example of Burchfield's pictorial narrativity is the most dramatic, particularly because it appears to contain a symbolic psychodrama—of conflict in the artist's own life. This brown-toned painting is entitled *Pussy Willows* (1936, Plate 5), and according to Henry Adams's thorough and insightful interpretation, it depicts a corner of Burchfield's studio; it is Burchfield's painting smock that is hanging from the hook in front of the window, which provides the only source of light. But it is the smock—and its juxtaposition with the pussy willows—which must be understood as the essential key to an analysis of this painting. According to Adams, Burchfield has painted the smock in such a way that it appears to depict a suicide. The smock is cut off on the top of the painting, at about the line where a rope would suspend the body. If there is reluctance to accept this interpretation, one may interpret the "legs" below the coat as simply folds in the smock.

Adams understands Burchfield as being manic-depressive or bipolar, and as noted before, evidence from the journals suggests that Burchfield's psychological conflicts were intense and lasted in varying degrees throughout his life. It is nevertheless startling to see him deal with his despair in such a directly symbolic way as to represent himself as a hanged man. But the suicide is only potential, as it is offset powerfully by the pussy willows found in the vase to the right — and just barely touching the coat, providing a dramatic counterpoint. The pussy willows animate the painting by symbolically countering death and despair with life and hope—Adams calls the pussy willows "an apt symbol of the joy of artistic creation" (110), Burchfield's lifelong activity, which gave his life such intense meaning. A balance in the psychodrama is enacted, with nature's light falling dramatically on both the coat and the pussy willows in their vase.

It is not too much to say that most of Burchfield's paintings enact a kind of drama, of one sort or another. This drama is central to the narrative emphasis that I have insisted upon in Burchfield's work. Given the intensity of his temperament, it seems natural that Burchfield saw nature, and life itself, as a series of stories that were best fulfilled in prose and paintings. He was not deterred by anthropomorphism and what Ruskin called the pathetic fallacy. The result is an extremely dynamic, dramatic, and moving collection of paintings and writings accumulated over a long lifetime of artistic activity.

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NOTES

[1]In his appreciative essay on Burchfield, his friend Edward Hopper—a narrative painter if there ever was one—interestingly employs the language of writing occasionally to discuss the paintings. He speaks first of all of Burchfield's frequent "humorous anecdotes, which seem to be...firmly kneaded into the picture's plastic qualities"; later he writes of Burchfield's perceptions: "The thing was seen. Time was arrested...A simple writing down of that which most moves him. No time wasted on useless representation...This writing has called for a simplification that has taken precedence over any academic appreciation of the value of simplification" (7-8).

[2]In "Burchfield on Burchfield: An Artist's Journal Reconsidered," Nannette V. Maciejunes suggests that the journals are self-mythology, depicting him as he wanted to be seen by others rather that the way he really was. "Our continued complicity in allowing the artist to constantly interject himself verbally into the meaning of his work...ultimately undermines the work itself" (108), she writes.

[3]Burchfield's footnote on Anderson in "Fifty Years as a Painter, 1965" is of interest: "I wrote to Anderson about Winesburg, and received a very cordial answer from him, saying that he had been a short time in Salem, as a helper to a house painter. He could not help adding that the house painter's wife had run off with another man" (49).

[4]On "under-reading" and "over-reading" of literary texts, see especially Chapter 7, "Interpreting Narrative," of J. Porter Abbott's *The Cambridge Introdcution to Narrative*, 83-99.

[5]In an email message, Nancy Weekly informs me that Burchfield initially entitled this painting *House-Wreckers,* but suspects that an art dealer may have given the "ironic title" *The Builders* to the work.

[6]There are a number of good analyses of this painting to be found. Nancy Weekly's superb, succinct version is in her "Conventions for Abstract Thoughts," 26. More of Burchfield's Conventions are pictured and briefly discussed in Robert Gober's "Conventions for Abstract Thoughts," in his *Heat Waves in a Swamp,*" 46-55.

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OPPOSITION OVER HERE: WORLD WAR I FICTION IN *THE MIDLAND*

SCOTT D. EMMERT

In 1917, as the United States prepared to enter the Great War, already in its third year, composer George M. Cohan wrote "Over There" to voice America's martial spirit. The song was hugely popular, throughout the war and in the decades after.[1] Even today the tune and refrain may be familiar: "We'll be over, we're coming over,/And we won't come back 'til it's over, over there." Unabashedly, "Over There" seeks to inspire confidence and optimism through an appeal to national unity. The "Yanks are coming," it insists, and "every son of liberty" is prepared to "[m]ake your mother proud of you and the old Red White and Blue."

By contributing to a national sense of purpose, "Over There" may have functioned like popular war literature to foster a consensus on nationhood. This popular literature, according to Jonathan Vincent, sought to turn Americans away from local concerns and toward a national commitment to the war and its international aims: "Overcoming outmoded allegiances to autonomy and isolationism, numerous authors worked to detach the political imaginary from local centers of meaning—the family, the farm, the saloon, the church —and 'mature' orientations more adapted to an international, militarized era" (557). By dramatizing sacrifice as spiritually transcendent and by insisting on national preparedness to defend America from foreign invasion, "[e]arly war writing, aside from being simply patriotic or nationalistic, was involved in the more specific cultural work of shedding insular affections for locality and attaching public sentiment to an abstracted national aggregate" (557). In this interpretation, by helping to create a view of the United States as one nation instead of a blend of distinctive regions, popular culture during and after America's involvement in World War I completed an ideological process that historians trace to the American Civil War.[2]

Although this process is apparent, it should not be seen as uncontested. In actuality, the American reaction to World War I was "fractured and unsettled, more a matter of competing versions of the war . . . than a single, culturally pervasive construction of the past" (Trout 2). As Steven Trout demonstrates, various strands of memory weave through America's response to the war. One strand in this response is literature that endorsed and justified America's participation in the First World War, a body of work that now enjoys critical attention.[3] Remaining most recognizable to scholars, however, is the antiwar literature produced in the 1920s and 1930s. Writers such as John Dos Passos, E. E. Cummings, and Ernest Hemingway are considered canonical both for their experimental, modernist literary styles and for their critiques of the war in which they served. It is now clear that in the postwar period, writers and artists who saw the war as a validation of American national unity were as vocal as warfare's critics. Likewise, within the nation's fractured memory it is possible to discern various strands of antiwar literature. While writers like Hemingway and Dos Passos focused on the disillusion of the individual soldier to condemn the First World War, lesser-known writers publishing in the literary journal *The Midland* participated in the antiwar conversation by dramatizing—in stories that insist upon the local and distinctively regional—the effects of the war on the people "back home." They are cosmopolitan[4] in their antiwar themes and regional in their privileging of Midwestern home life, even if war has violated the normalcy of that life.

In life and in literature, the American response to World War I was complex and multifaceted. It was not necessarily the case that Americans abandoned an allegiance to their local communities in order to support national war aims and ideologies. A compelling instance of this appears in Gordon L. Iseminger's study of one group of Midwesterners that reveals their dual allegiance to the national and the regional. Writing about McIntosh County in southern North Dakota, Iseminger demonstrates how German-Russian immigrants in this mostly rural area embraced the war effort. Opposition to compulsory military service in Germany motivated the immigration of their forebears to Russia, but in the United States in 1917 most of the eligible men in the county registered for the draft while many others enlisted before being drafted. Parades and celebrations sent these men off to the army and welcomed them home after the war. Throughout the war years, residents of McIntosh County maintained their patriotism by, for example, purchasing Liberty Bonds in large numbers. Most of the county's soldiers shared this nationalistic fervor. One enthused in a letter from training camp that he "was eager to fight for the Stars and Stripes and for the people back home" (34). This enthusiasm continued after the war as two posts of the American Legion were quickly established in the county. Clearly, residents of McIntosh County supported America's involvement in the Great War; however, they did so while adhering to their particular heritage. For example, after immigrating to the United States, a significant number of these residents spoke German exclusively. The Liberty Bonds they bought with faithful relish were advertised in local newspapers in both English and German. American Legion posts bear the names of area soldiers, names that often proclaim a distinct ethnic heritage. In McIntosh County the American Legion post in Wishek, for example, is named for Fred Kelle; in nearby Logan County, the post in Lehr is named the Klauss-Becker. Then and now in the rural Midwest, national identity and local pride intertwine.

A candid pride in Midwestern literature was a hallmark of one of the best literary magazines of the early twentieth century. Founded in Iowa City, Iowa, and published from 1915 to 1933, *The Midland* was among a number of "little magazines" begun at this time to promote literature from a particular region. Considering these magazines, among them *Prairie Schooner, The Southwest Review*, and *Southern Review,* critic Tom Lutz concludes that *The Midland* was "the most important" (129). Its excellence was recognized by H. L. Mencken, who wrote in *The Smart Set*[5] that *"Midland"*. . . is probably the most influential literary periodical ever set up in America though its actual circulation has always been small" (qtd. in Reigelman 20). Notable Midwestern writers who published in *The Midland* include Maxwell Anderson, August Derleth, Loren Eiseley, Paul Engle, James T. Farrell, James Hearst, Josephine Johnson, MacKinlay Kantor, and Ruth Suckow (Reigelman xiii, 103-116). John T. Frederick managed the magazine throughout its run and followed a consistent editorial policy: *The Midland* would publish the kind of literature that Eastern publishers would not. It would accept "art unfettered by the standardizing and commercializing influences of New York" that depicted "varied regions of the country" in a "native, natural and genuine" manner (Reigelman 45).

Offering a distinctive thread in America's memory of World War I, a number of regional stories in *The Midland* consistently questioned

America's involvement in the war. These stories often did so by dramatizing the adversity the war brought to the Midwest. In his study of the journal, Milton M. Reigelman details *The Midland's* frequent portrayals of an enduring rural Midwest and of the mostly positive depictions of families and older people in its fiction.[6] Yet in a number of stories families and older people most suffer the effects of the Great War. While these stories may valorize the Midwest, they also depict the war's violations of the ideal Middle American home life. As daughters, sons, mothers, and fathers suffer in these stories, readers may sense an objection to the war as it was experienced over here.

Four of these stories evoke antiwar sentiments by depicting a range of disruptions in Midwestern family life. The mildest of these stories is "The White Wake" by Edna Tucker Muth. Published in the first issue of 1919, "The White Wake" portrays the anxiety of a young woman who waits for news of her fiancé, an army lieutenant who recently shipped for the front. When Beth Sanders learns that her fiancé's transport ship has been torpedoed, she recalls "[o]nce, on the screen . . . a periscope cutting across the water—the white wake of it —[and] she began to moan" (5). Beth's father and mother respond to her grief by insisting on their ordinary routine. Her father leaves the house to attend a board meeting; her mother asks Beth to help choose yarn to knit socks for the soldiers. Her much younger brother annoys her by cajoling money to buy white rats. The ordinary home life around Beth reinforces her sense of isolation. Later, after her father shakes her and tells her "to buck up," Beth thinks, "No one understood. Very well. She wouldn't give way. She would show them" (12).

Although here the story reveals Beth's immaturity—her adolescent insistence that no one can understand her feelings—throughout it gently suggests how the war abroad has troubled the peace at home. Beth recognizes that her life is different from that of her parents whose courtship had been different because "[t]here hadn t been any war" (8). Later, she acknowledges that despite the war her life will nonetheless be easier than her grandmother's—a grandmother, she learns, who "'found her husband dead in the field, an arrow through his heart, and herded her five little children twenty miles to the fort, living on nuts and berries'" (14). Beth matures in the short space of the story by coming to accept that the man she loves may already be a victim of the World War. In the end—after she learns that her fiancé is alive—she accedes to her family's selfless affection. "The White Wake" depicts a stable Midwestern family suffering from the emotional

strain of a daughter's anguish. Although the story ends placidly, the distant war has nonetheless threatened domestic harmony.

A later story depicts the displacement felt by certain men who served in World War I and poignantly illustrates a mother's self-sacrifice. Published in 1924, "The Freight Whistles In" by Frank Luther Mott features a war veteran who has become a tramp instead of "settling down" in his Midwestern hometown. The story's focus, however, is the veteran's mother, Mrs. Baines, a woman of "sweet grandmotherly kindness" (81), who moves near the railroad tracks to accommodate better the drifters whom she regularly feeds. When a nosy neighbor calls to object that "[f]eeding the tramps" has "got to be a public nuisance—and a disgrace" (83), Mrs. Baines confesses that she hopes one day one of the "boys" will turn out to be her son, Tommy. Always restless, Tommy enlisted in the army at the start of the war to get out of a town he hated. After the war, he did not come home, preferring the vagabond life.

Tommy's dissatisfaction with small-town life is emphasized when he appears in his mother's house. Mrs. Baines recognizes him, but realizing that he does not wish to be identified, she treats him—kindly—as just another tramp. Without admitting his identity to his mother, Tommy claims to know "Thomas Baines" from riding the rails, and he insists that Thomas has "thought about" his mother often and has wanted to "take care of" her, but "he hates [this] cussed town" (94) "where the' ain't nothin' but gossip and aid societies" (93). Magnanimously, Mrs. Baines gives her son permission to continue his wandering. After Thomas leaves, Mrs. Baines tells Mrs. Shultz: "*[H]e* didn't *want* me to know him, so it was all right. And he had a perfect right to go! I don't blame him! I know how he felt! I wouldn't hold him!" (99). In this postwar story, the sacrifice belongs to a Midwestern mother who generously bears the absence of a son taken away by the war and held aloof by an unwillingness to reintegrate into settled society.

Two other stories[7] feature fathers estranged from sons to dramatize the First World War's adverse effects on Middle American families. In the May 1924 issue of *The Midland* appeared two stories by George L. Stout. The first of these, "Dust," is set at Camp Dodge in Iowa.[8] While in the August heat men train for war, David Calvers, a middle-aged civilian employee, meets an old man tramping through the dust. The man is looking for his son, Howard Lucas, who has run away from his Nebraska farm to join the army. The only son of the

old man's second marriage, Howard was inspired to enlist by stories his father told about serving in the Civil War. But he could not tell his father that he was joining the army; instead, he wrote a simple letter: "I'm in the army at Camp Dodge. I couldn't stay away any more. I guess George can come over and help on the place though he like enough won't want to. They say here we're going over to France before long. I haven't anything against you" (216-217). Calvers helps the old man find someone who can locate Howard, but after waiting three days, the father learns that his son has already shipped for France. At hearing this news, the old man betrays a single sign of emotion: his "head sank" (222). Then, stoically, he resigns himself: "Now I better go back to the place. Howard will know where to come" (223). The dust that enveloped him upon his appearance follows the old man out of camp, and it is possible that neither he nor his son will outlive the war and see one another again.

One of the most vivid antiwar stories to appear in *The Midland* was published in August 1920 by Ema S. Hunting, the older sister of Iowa writer Ruth Suckow.[9] Exhibiting deft shifts in point of view, "The Soul That Sinneth" is an astute portrait of parental grief. The story opens with the thoughts of Iowa farmer Henry Schultz, a taciturn man who resents his only son's enlistment. Henry has bought a farm for Johnny to run, and he is bitter about having to work alone: "[H]ow could he manage one hundred and sixty acres, and the cattle and the pigs, and the cream to haul, and the repairing, and all? How could any man?" (129). Though he derides Johnny for being "short in the legs" and for wanting to go to school instead of farming, Henry nonetheless blames the army for taking him away: "But of course they would take him, take *his* boy, the only one he had to do anything" (129). Skillfully, Hunting presents these thoughts while revealing Henry's limitations and possessiveness, for if other men wanted to go to war, Henry thinks, "Well, let them go, the thousands, if they wanted to be fools: but let them let *him* alone, him and his, his acres and his barns and his boy" (130).

The point of view shifts when Henry reads a telegram that brings news of Johnny's death from pneumonia while in training camp. Henry's wife, Carrie, is then shown capably carrying on. As Henry grieves in isolation and drives himself at his work, Carrie takes care of her elderly mother, communicates with her married daughters, and prepares the house for Johnny's funeral. When the coffin comes, "driven down the long lane between the cottonwoods" with a single officer as honor guard, an enraged Henry appears in his work clothes: "He tore the great flag from the coffin and trampled it and threw it away. And then he went back again to his field and ploughed all day until dark" (134).

Again the point of view changes, this time to that of Art Feddermań, "the insurance man from town," who comes with a check for a thousand dollars. Mistakenly, Henry believes the money is from the government when it is really payment on a life insurance policy Henry purchased when Johnny was young. Art meets Henry in the barn before taking a meal in the house with the young lawyer who has accompanied him. Later in the car, Art tells the lawyer about meeting Henry, shakily speaking of how Henry "raved around about Johnny's being murdered" (135-136) and insisted that the money was the army's reparation for his son. "'Two weeks they had him,' he says, 'and it cost 'em a thousand dollars! And it's not for his mother,' he says. 'Don't you believe that'" (135). "'Oh, he's a bug all right!' Art concludes. 'And yet, you know—poor old nut—a man feels sorry for him'" (136).

In the end, however, the story returns quietly to its sympathy for farm women. Henry, the story suggests, possesses the "soul that sinneth," for his sorrow focuses vainly on the loss of his own ambitions for Johnny. Johnny's mother, in contrast, is afforded neither outward grief nor the comfort of an egotistical madness. As Art and the lawyer drive away, it is Carrie they think of, "going back and forth, back and forth, between the table and the kitchen stove: and of the grandmother mumbling in her corner. And of the silence in the house, and the long cold winds in the cottonwoods" (136). The story is a devastating portrayal of war's effects on the home, and it suggests that Ema S. Hunting, like her better-known sister, may have opposed her father's staunch prowar attitudes.[10]

These four *Midland* stories, like those by Hemingway and other high modernists, question a romantic view of war.[11] For writers who served at the front, scorn for this idealism was directed most vehemently at those who did not face combat. Hence, Hemingway's caustic dismissal, in a letter to Edmund Wilson, of Willa Cather and her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *One of Ours*: "[p]oor woman had to get her war experience" from "[t]he battle scene in *Birth of a Nation*" (Baker 105). H. L. Mencken went further in a scathing review in the *Smart Set*,[12] insisting that the war in *One of Ours* is "at bottom . . . fought out not in France but on a Hollywood movie-lot" (12). Hemingway and other male writers may have been embarrassed that

Cather's protagonist, Claude Wheeler, dies with his romantic vision of war intact, for it was precisely that vision that sent them to war in the first place. Cather may have reminded them of their youthful illusions.

These criticisms of *One of Ours* also ignore the novel's anguished ending in which Claude's mother, still at home in Nebraska, suffers from her son's death. For Cather, who could imagine the naíve but stirring emotions that would encourage a young man to enlist, the enduring pain of war is borne by those who remain behind.[13] Back home in the Midwest, the war's toll persists, and *One of Ours* is both antiwar and regional in its sentiments. Moreover, its ending places the novel within a particular cultural memory. Cather joins certain writers publishing in *The Midland* in remembering the Great War as neither national triumph nor masculine disillusionment but as a palpable misfortune for ordinary Americans "over here."

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NOTES

[1]In 1940, on the eve of America's entry into the next Great War, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented Cohan with a medal in honor of his mort patriotic song. See John Howard Tasker (710) and Sigmund Spaeth (341). Spaeth insists that "[b]oth the words and the music of *Over There* were created for the express purpose of helping the Allies win the First World War," noting that President Wilson called Cohan's song "a genuine inspiration to all American manhood" (341-342). The song was published on June 1, 1017, and "[t]he verse ... is adapted from *Johnny Get Your Gun*," which was copyrighted in 1886 (Fuld 346 and 259). Norman Rockwell illustrated a cover for the sheet music that featured doughboys happiily singing "Your Son—My Song—Our Boy's Song!" (Crawford 531).

[2]Garry Wills sums up this changed: "Up to the Civil War, 'the United States' was invariably a plural noun: 'The United States are a free government.' After Gettysburg, it became singular: 'The United States is a free government'" (145). For Wills, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address fostered national unity, in part, because it did not mention individual states or even the Confederacy. In his most famous speech, "Lincoln eschews all local emphasis" (37).

[3]See, for example, Patrick J. Quinn and John T. Mattthews.

[4]I use "cosmopolitan" here in its ordinary sense and in its theoretical formulation by Tom Lutz. In *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*, Lutz argues that the most ambitious regional fiction is devoted both to national literary values and to depictions of a particular locality. For Lutz, "cosmopolitan" literature upholds a dual commitment to the aesthetic ideals established by a national literary culture and to the preservation of distinctive regional attitudes and subject matter. Although "[t]his doubleness can be found across the regional little magazine movement" (135), Lutz singles out *The Midland* for consistently publishing cosmopolitan literature. *The Midland's* editor, John T. Frederick, maintained this cosmopolitan "doubleness" throughout the long history of the magazine: "Midwestern authors have something important to say about the Midwest, Frederick suggested, but they have something to say about the rest of the world as well" (Lutz 134).

[5]July 1923.

[6]For example, Reigelman notes that in most *Midland* stories the point of view of young characters, common in stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sherwood Anderson, is not the norm. Instead, "we see things from the parents' perspective, and it is they, rather than their sons or daughters, who are the real protagonists" (81). Discussing the small-town settings found in most *Midland* stories, Reigelman discerns that rural and small-town life is often seen as "more *stable*" (original italics) in contrast to stories that feature urban settings in which "images of notion" and constant change contrast with a slower pace that rural characters find more satisfying (86). In his review of *The Midland's* fiction, Reigelman finds few stories that depict rural despair and stultification (88). Most of these stories are not of the Revolt from the Village type.

[7]Other antiwar stories published in *The Midland* include "Medals" by Kate Buss, which appeared in May of 1917. Set in a small village in France, "Medals" is unlike stories by Dorothy Canfield and Edith Wharton with similar settings. Instead of valorizing the sacrifice of the French, Buss employs an acidic irony to expose the hypocirsy of the viillage priest, who cannot tell a woman that a medal she received means her son was killed in action. "How the War Came to Big Laurel" by Ruth McIntire appeared in the January/February 1918 edition of *The Midland.* Set in Kentucky, this story depicts a woman who remembers the Civil War and grimly predicts a bloody outcome for the World War that has recently excited the area's young men. Other stories feature war-front settings. "Remembrance" by Canadian writer Walter McLaren Imrie relates the experience of a man who cannot prevent his brother from being killed in a transport accident. And William March upblished two stories in *The Midland* that portrayed front-line soldiers. One of these, "Fifteen from Company K," was incorporated into his searing antiwar novel *Company K* (1933).

[8]"Plumes," the second story by Stout, is set in a field hospital near the front.

[9]Reigelman identifies her as "Hunting Ema Suckow" in his list of *Midland* contributors (109), and Ema Suckow Hunting is shown as the author of "True Love" published in *The Midland* in June 1922. Ema S. Hunting is the author of one other *Midland* story, "Dissipation," published in May of 1920. Barbara Lounsberry, president of the Ruth Suckow Memorial Association, confirms that Ema Suckow Hunting (or Ema S. Hunting) was most likely the pen name for Ruth's sister Emma who is known to have been a "gifted" writer in her own right.

[10]In her memoir, Ruth Suckow writes of estrangement from her Congregational ministter father due to their differing voews of the war. In contrast to Ruth's opposition to the war, her father "became one of those preachers who ardently presented arms" (81) and supported the war from the pulpit. Professor Lounsberry does not know that Emma shared her sister's antiwar views, but "The Soul That Sinneth" implies strongly that she did.

[11]Hemingway, of course, does not participate in this lamenting of the cost of the war back home. Significantly, "Soldier's Home" (1925) is in many ways a depiction of the alienating "home" that grates on the soldier-protagonist's nerves, nerves frayed by war. That rural or small-town values give rise to romantic views of war is suggested by William Dean Howells in "Editha" (1905).

[12]October 1922.

[13]Of Mrs. Wheeler's reaction to her son's death in battle, Cather writes: "As she read the newspapers, she used to think about the passage of the Red Sea, in the Bible; it seemed as if the flood of meanness and greed had been held back just long enough for the boys to go over, and then swept down and engulfed everything that was left back at home" (458). Later, Mrs. Wheeler feels grateful that Claude did not survive the war only to return and, like many other soldiers, commit suicide. Further evidence for Cather's interest in the home front during the war can be found in her essay "Roll Call on the Prairies," in which

she praises the heroic self-sacrifice of rural women in "the Middle West and prairie states" (27) while countering suspicions held against German Americans and other European immigrants.

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CRAIG RICE'S CHICAGO AND J. J. MALONE

GUY SZUBERLA

Between 1939 and 1942, Craig Rice (1908-1957) published an even half-dozen J.J. Malone mysteries, turned out three other novels, and, for good measure, wrote two screenplays and a fair number of radio scripts. Though Jeffrey Marks, her principal biographer, disputes it, many fans and some reference works contend that in the same years she ghostwrote the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee's mystery novels: *The G-String Murders* (1941) and *Mother Finds a Body* (1942).[1] Perhaps she did. Rice lived hard, wrote at a furious speed, died young, and can still be read today, for a typical J.J. Malone mystery is not just a period piece, a great read, or a window on 1940s-style Cook County politics and police procedures; in these novels Rice simultaneously creates and parodies genres such as the mystery story and the romantic comedy, adding a level of complexity to her novels that lifts them above that of the popular mystery novel and makes them readable today.

She was born in Chicago, 5 June 1908; her birth name, Georgiana Anne Randolph Craig. From her first days, her life spun out, tangled, and snarled into as much complexity as the plots she was to string through her fiction. To travel and continue a bohemian life, her parents—Harry "Bosco" Craig and Mary Randolph—soon abandoned her, handing her over to Bosco's family in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, a small town about a hundred miles north of Chicago. When in 1919 her mother at long last tried to reclaim her, the eleven-year-old Georgiana told her to "go to hell" (Marks 8). Her Aunt Nan and Uncle Elton Rice formally adopted her at age thirteen. She would marry four or five times (the count's uncertain), give up her own children to Nan and Elton Rice or to foster homes, and throw off names and husbands with ready abandon. Working the crime beat for Chicago papers in the 1930s, she started using the byline of Craig Rice, presumably to disguise her gender.[2] The name carried over to the short stories and novels she began to write in the late 1930s. From

time to time, she wrote mysteries under the pen name of Michael Venning. As Daphne Sanders, she wrote one novel, *To Catch a Thief* (1943); for the actor George Sanders, she ghosted *Crime on My Hands* (1944).

Of all her work, the Malone series proved to be the most durable and profitable. Twelve novels, dozens of short stories, four film adaptations, several radio programs, and a short-lived television series sprang out of the adventures of "Chicago's famous criminal defense lawyer," John Joseph Malone (*The Wrong Murder* 15). His first appearance in *8 Faces at 3* (1939) casts him as a lawyer who "did not look like a lawyer": he is described as "short, heavy," and sloppily dressed (53). He practices law out of a dusty downtown office and lives alone in a hotel apartment in Chicago's Loop. Day or night, though, he can more easily be found drinking in Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar. Having grown up in Chicago, having gone to night law school and driven a taxi there, he holds a close knowledge of the city's nightclubs and dives, knows its petty thieves and criminal bosses, bartenders and chorus girls, political hacks and police captains. He regularly shows himself to be quick-witted, street smart, and something of a *raisonneur.* From the fifth novel in the series, *Trial by Fury* (1941), we learn that Malone grew up in the "city's lower West Side shanty town," but Rice, here and in other Malone stories, tells us little more about his ethnic roots or his childhood neighborhood (181).

The two most important critical studies of Rice—the 2001 biography by Jeffrey Marks and Peggy Moran's essay in *And Then There Were Nine* (1985)—place her work alongside that of other popular mystery writers of the 1930s and 40s: Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, Ellery Queen, and S.S. Van Dine. Both Marks and Moran, after summing up her childhood, point out that orphans and tales of fractured families dominate the plots in many of her mysteries (Marks 47). The blogger Michael E. Grost asserts the influence of Damon Runyon's comic spirit on her urban and underworld characters.[3] Discussing her sense of humor in an *Armchair Detective* essay, Mary Ann Grochowski dubs her the "Merry Mistress of Mystery and Murder," and Marks, in his subtitle, crowns her "The Queen of Screwball Mystery."

She may well have taken a cue or two from the screwball comedies of the 1930s. Malone's sidekicks, the heiress Helene Brand and Jake Justus, often seem as wacky as characters in a Frank Capra film.

When Jake decides to marry Helene, he worries about money and class differences. In the style of thirties crazy comedy, these factors turn out to be exaggerated enough to let us laugh "at the idea of difference" (Cavell 123). And Helene's and Jake's nonstop drinking, like Malone's, seems no more than an endearing and laughable eccentricity. Their hangovers never last long, and drinking, they never tire of saying, helps them to "think clearly" (*The Wrong Murder* 172). A version of that line, and the joke it punches up, finds a place in most Malone novels, often at a moment just before the mystery is solved.

In short, while Craig Rice was writing murder mysteries in the Malone stories, she was also parodying the genre and its character types, plot devices, and assorted conventions, including those that defined the hard-drinking, hard-boiled detective and the screwball heiress. Imagining and projecting Chicago through the formulas of the hard-boiled detective story, she can make the city appear, as Chandler and Hammett did: dark, dangerous, and grotesque. Writers of "the American hard-boiled story," according to John G. Cawelti, made a point of stripping away the Arabian Nights glitter and romance of the urban milieu, exposing the city's "empty modernity, corruption, and death" (141-42). Following this convention, Rice can still elide and contradict it. Even as she discloses the city's empty modernity, she serves up Chicago as a setting for enchanting midnight drives along the Lake Shore, for giddy bar hopping from Rush Street to the far South Side, for long nights carousing elegantly at the Chez Paree or in a fictional Blue Casino. Such contradictions provide a key to both her humor and the city she imagined.

HARD-BOILED LAWYER

Rice never ties the Malone stories closely to specific dates or years, and, with rare exceptions, ignores historical and current events, including World War II. All the same, she includes enough references to Chicago politics, crime, and political corruption to let us know that Malone was practicing law in the time of the Kelly-Nash machine. Edward J. Kelly was the city's mayor from 1933-47, and Pat Nash, until 1943, was the Cook County Democratic Party chairman. Under their rule, illegal gambling, prostitution, and organized crime flourished in the city. The veteran journalist Len O'Connor summed up the prevailing political ethos in *Clout: Mayor Daley and His City*: "Taxes were high, the city was broke; police captains had orange crates of cash in the basements of their palatial homes . . . . By 1946,

Chicago was in one hell of a shape and out of control. The streets were dirty; payrollers and police were shirking their work . . ." (55). Malone, who spends much of his free time at the City Hall Bar, understands Chicago's political ways, knows when to put down a bribe, and recognizes those who have clout. He is bound to a double perspective: accepting the city's corrupt political practices, he seems also, ironically and comically, detached from them.

His detective work and his legal practice depend upon his knowing the way Chicago works. He fixes traffic tickets for clients, cultivates judges and political connections, and wines and dines his friends among the police. In *The Lucky Stiff* (1945), he casually tells his secretary to "'call Judge Seidel and fix Harry Wirtz's ticket, and send Harry a bill for twenty-five bucks. No, wait a minute, make it fifty'" (45). When, in *The Corpse Steps Out* (1940), Helene and Jake get into one of their usual scrapes with the law, he tells Jake: "'The police captain at the Chicago Avenue station is a friend of mine. He knows you two, as you might have remembered. I'll tell him how it happened, and get the whole thing dropped'" (129). When the two are arrested and jailed in Jackson, Wisconsin, Malone wonders "'how much of a bribe'" the small-town sheriff "'was holding out for'" (*Trial by Fury* 34). Fixing tickets, exchanging political favors, and laying down a friendly bribe or two were fairly routine matters in Chicago politics of the 1940s.

None of this, of course, makes Malone look like the classic hard-boiled detective. Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, Lew Archer, and their kin in 1930s and '40s fiction held to a code of integrity and independence, an autonomy that Sean McCann in *Gumshoe America* terms "a kind of compulsion" (90). If these fictional private investigators ever expressed a political sentiment, it was put in the words and angry tones of populist rhetoric. In his influential study, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance,* John Cawelti compares the lone and lonely P.I. to the western hero, the "man of honor in a false society." Tough guy detective and cowboy hero alike hammered out a code that transcended the existing social order, and were independent of any political system. (Cawelti 151). Wheeling and dealing—trading favors with cops, sending out payoffs, as Malone does—would entangle them in the existing political system and upend their code of autonomy.

Unlike the 1940s hard-boiled detective, Malone did not work alone. He does not, like the hard-boiled detective Cawelti describes, bother "to create his own personal code of ethics" and certainly does not savor an "unsullied isolation" (161, 151). Malone's a regular at Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar, and, at parties or in the courtroom, his storytelling and jokes "always drew a crowd" (*The Wrong Murder* 15). In the typical Malone novel, Jake or Helene will stumble onto a murder scene, arouse the suspicions and anger of the police, and then turn to Malone to help them struggle through court proceedings and some puzzling mystery. The three, working together and in tandem, solve crimes that have baffled all the official authorities.

Almost invariably, Helene, Jake, and Malone's detective work merges with heavy drinking. Rice, already descending into chronic alcoholism in the early 1930s, wrote from her own experience about long nights partying on Rush Street, drinking until dawn in Chicago nightclubs, casinos, and low-life taverns. When investigating a case, Malone can always find a bottle of hooch in his file cabinet drawers, or, when working in his messy downtown hotel apartment, he can search through his sock drawer for a half-finished bottle of Scotch. As Jake says, in words any of the three might have spoken, "it was wonderful how gin made him remember things" (*The Corpse* 104), and in *8 Faces at 3*, Helene complains that driving while sober makes her "terribly nervous" (182). Over "beer for breakfast," the three talk over a murder and kidnapping (*8 Faces* 175); they draw inspiration from cocktails at the fashionable bar of the Drake Hotel (*The Wrong Murder* 147-50), and, in *Trial by Fury*, Malone sops up "Dollar Gin" to help him track down a murderer (215-16). Convivial drinking, not the hard-boiled detective's long and lonely nights, helps the trio to do their detective work.

What Malone does share with Sam Spade and other hard-boiled detectives is a certain sense of superiority to the police force and to all government authority. Against incompetent cops, corrupt government officials, and a crumbling culture, the hard-boiled detective exercises a commanding expertise and unfailing shrewdness. The police and district attorneys, in contrast, are typically bumbling and usually self-important, limited in intelligence, and tied down by politics and bureaucratic procedures. Like the honest and plodding John Guild in Hammett's *The Thin Man*, they may be doing the best that they can, but their best leaves them far behind the genius of the hard-boiled detective (85).

Rice takes delight in burlesquing this convention through her characterizations of the slow-thinking Captain Daniel Von Flanagan,

head of the homicide squad at the Chicago Avenue station. Von Flanagan is an Irish cop who inserted "Von" before Flanagan so that he would not look like a typical Irish cop. Rice introduced the joke about Von Flanagan's name change in the second Malone novel, and, with slight variations, replayed it in nearly every sequel.

The exchanges between Malone and Von Flanagan, set in this farcical key, violate one important convention of the hard-boiled detective story. After running up against crooked cops or powerful interests, the private investigator in Chandler or Hammett will deliver a world-weary condemnation of the political system or the city's culture of corruption. Von Flanagan and Malone, on the other hand, nonchalantly accept Chicago's system of patronage and payoffs. In *The Corpse Steps Out*, Von Flanagan complains about the police department, the DA's office, and the newspapers, all trying to make his job hard and the investigation complicated (90). He goes on, as he so often does, to a sullen complaint about becoming a cop: "'If I had it to do over again, I'd of been an undertaker like I intended to be in the first place. Believe me, if our alderman's wife's brother hadn't owed my old man money, I'd of never been a cop . . . ' He sighed heavily" (91).

Von Flanagan's recital—his acknowledgment that his captain's post was bought—makes plain enough the routine and regular corruption in Chicago's patronage system. Rice sets up his story for laughs, fitting it into a broadly comic frame. Von Flanagan took his patronage job out of filial loyalty, and, in telling his story, he expects that others will see this and admire his sense of family obligation. Such twice-told tales of political payoffs don't provoke Malone to laughter or moral indignation. Living in Chicago all his life, he's heard stories like it too many times to do more than nod agreeably.

Von Flanagan's casual attitude about political fixes and payoffs makes him an amiable and comic guide to Chicago politics in the 1930s and '40s. He accepts, and assumes everyone else accepts, the way the Kelly-Nash machine doled out patronage jobs and tolerated crime and corruption. Talking about the murder of the racketeer, Big Joe Childers, he defines and defends the political system:

> I don't like these murders. They're mixed up with politics. Big Joe was an important guy. Tom McKeown is a big shot nowadays. He and Big Joe got Garrity his appointment, and his brother Bill is running some kind of racket. And Big Joe got killed in a joint Bill runs.

> Jake and Helene glanced at each other briefly. Malone relit his cigar.
>
> "Brodie," Von Flanagan went on, "was mixed up with the whole bunch of 'em, and for a while Brodie damn near run this town. Still runs his ward. And Jesse Conway owed Brodie a hell of a lot of dough. I don't like it. When politics and murder get mixed up together, there's likely to be trouble." (*The Lucky Stiff* 124)

An old hand at radio drama, Rice stuffs Von Flanagan's speech with enough complexity and detail to make this usually buffoonish character sound like a knowledgeable insider. He knows how the machine works, knows the history of political favors bought, sold, and still owed. His sense of justice and his idea of civic virtues, on the other hand, are limited by his comically drawn fear of "trouble." His account of Big Joe's murder, we will learn later, is faulty and misleading, a fat red herring spread across the page. A "farm girl from Wisconsin" and "photographic model," the beautiful Anna Marie St. Clair turns out to be "the real brains behind the protection racket" (6, 243) and, Malone concludes, responsible for killing Big Joe. But, if Von Flanagan is defective in his detective work, his tale of murder and politics still points a lesson. Read in context, his story of family connections and political patronage, the overlapping identities of ward bosses and crime bosses, amounts to a primer on Chicago politics under Kelly and Nash.

Having successfully defended many of Chicago's criminals and crime bosses in court, Malone, perhaps better than Von Flanagan, can say that he knows "practically all the small- and large-scale racketeers in the city . . ." (*The Lucky Stiff* 203). Calling the protection racket a "stinking one," Malone instructs the already victimized Jake on its finer points, when he explains what the final consequences of making just one payoff will be. With a bit of friendly irony, he tells Jake that, through his clients, he may now "be getting money" from the protection racket (*The Lucky Stiff* 63, 66-7). In *The Right Murder* (1941), Rice uses Malone's practiced understanding of the rackets to expose the tie between Chicago police and the syndicate. Through the mob boss, Max Hook, Malone learns where to find Mulcahey, a cop on the take. Mulcahey lives in an "ornate apartment hotel in Lincoln Park" (55). As Malone gazes "admiringly" at the apartment's richly furnished lobby, he says to Jake that it's "wonderful to be able to manage all this on a policeman s salary" (55). The reader

does not need a nudge, and Jake doesn't either, to understand that Max Hook and the syndicate helped to pay Mulcahey's rent.

Rice draws most of her mob bosses, racketeers, and gunmen in caricature; they might have comfortably fit into a *Dick Tracy* comic strip alongside "Claw," "Flyface" and "Alphonse 'Big Boy' Caprice." Take her "gambling czar," Max Hook: "He was a mountain of a man . . . . such a mass of fat, quivering flesh, that he seemed, at first glance, to be completely boneless. His head, entirely bald, was egg-shaped; it was impossible to tell where it ended and his shoulders began; the whole ran together in one jellylike glob of pink flesh" (*The Wrong Murder* 157). Hook speaks in strained inversions and brutally inflected understatements, punctuating his sentences with the movie gangsters' tagline, "See." His apartment, in contrast to his grotesque appearance and vicious manner, is a parody of one that might be featured in *Architectural Digest*: "the most ornately decorated in the city of Chicago," a confection of "innumerable little decorative lamps, pink-shaded, and . . . feminine printed draperies . . . held back by enormous satin ribbon bows" (157). He stands as a parody of Al Capone, Nero Wolfe, and, more than likely, Hammett's Gutman in *The Maltese Falcon.*

"THE HEIRESS" AND "A BROKEN-DOWN PRESS AGENT"

Until 1938, when she began writing *8 Faces at 3*, Rice made her living working for Chicago and Wisconsin papers and, alternately, writing scripts for radio programs in Chicago, Madison, Wisconsin; and elsewhere. She may have drawn some inspiration for tales of criminals and crime from her reporting on the police beat, but little in *8 Faces at 3* and her later fiction suggests she ever intended to write a documentary novel. Her Chicago, cut from the traditions of literary noir and comedy, is a fantasized city, a backdrop against which Rice both employs and sends up not only the conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction, but also those of romantic comedy.

The latter conventions are writ large in the subplots of the first three or four Malone novels, where we follow the love story of Jake Justus and Helene Brand. Casting Helene as "a beautiful blonde heiress," and seeing himself as "a broken-down press agent," Jake believes that their love will be forever thwarted (*8 Faces* 200). The two meet in "the cold and dreary library" of the Inglehart mansion, as the corpse of the murdered Alexandra Inglehart grows cold and stiff upstairs (*8 Faces* 25, 44). In this gruesomely forbidding setting, they proceed to fall instantly and madly in love. Over the next two

to three years, their love will burn, sputter, and glow again. Against the dark background of murder scenes, the Cook County Morgue, and Chicago jails, they exchange wisecracks, flirtations, and pledges of undying love. For laughs and a teasing *frisson* in the second Malone novel, Rice has Helene propose marriage to Jake, while he tries to talk about clues found in their visit to the morgue (*The Corpse Steps Out* 50-1).

The main outlines of their story follow the familiar patterns of Depression-era romantic comedy, the genre usually termed "screwball comedy." Anyone with a fresh or fading memory of *Bringing up Baby* (1938), *It Happened One Night* (1934), or period film comedies like them will recognize in Helene's and Jake's mutual attraction—and the quirky course their love takes—a reworking of certain master plots and character types. Robert Sklar sums these up in his comments on screwball comedy in American film: "Improbability and incongruity were never allowed to disturb the social order, but, rather, to show how well it worked. More often than not, the characters in screwball comedies were wealthy, and their wacky behavior showed audiences how funny and lovable and harmless the rich could be" (188). When Rice's *Having Wonderful Crime* (1943) was made into a film in 1945, Helene and Jake displayed as much "wacky behavior" as any screwball couple on screen before them. The screenwriters built up their scenes with vaudeville shtick; plotted murders and mysterious disappearances with a grand and comic indifference to plausibility. But references to Helene's wealth and social status here are muted, evident only in her stylish and expensive clothing.

Sklar's observations about the "funny and lovable . . . rich" better fit the character of Helene that Rice created in her novels. Helene makes her first entrance in *8 Faces at 3*, storming on to the murder scene like a "small cyclone." She is eccentrically dressed, wearing "galoshes, fur coat, and blue satin house pajamas," signs telling us of her lovable zaniness and wealth (*8 Faces* 44). She will later mock the idea that she should be thought of as a "North-shore debutante" (259). With Jake she happily joins in drinking parties in the city, and, with Malone and Jake, follows the trail of mystery and murder into Chicago's decaying slums and low-rent apartments. She needs no prompting to flee the decorous constraints of Maple Park. On their first night together, Helene picks up Jake and his friend, offering them a ride in her "long, sleek car": "'Hey, youse guys. Get on board. I ll drive

you down to the Loop.' Jake felt her bright eyes run over him from head to foot. It bothered him a little. He felt as if she were undressing him there, in the snow. A hell of a thing to be thinking about . . . " (46-7). This is, of course, a comic reversal of traditional sexual roles, a clever inversion of the male gaze. In this moment, Jake, not too surprisingly, feels an erotic disturbance and general discomfort.

Just before meeting Helene, he had measured off his social distance from this "classy suburb" (*8 Faces* 14). In the first three Malone novels, in the two years before their marriage, Rice stresses Jake's fitful worries over Helene's wealth and standing. On the night they meet, he's broke, has few paying clients, and fewer prospects. As he falls deeply in love with her, he pities himself, believing that a "Miss Brand of Maple Park was a bit out of his ken" (*8 Faces* 123). In *The Corpse Steps Out*, the second novel in the series, he realizes he wants to marry her, and then decides it was "an insane and impossible idea." She is a "famous beauty, socialite and heiress ; he is Jake Justus of downtown Chicago . . . who would never amount to a damn" (29). "Insane and impossible" in social terms, the pairing may be. But, in the world of screwball comedy, their madcap adventures and drunken pranks make them into an inseparable pair and, after Jake wins a casino on a bet, all his thoughts of difference can dissolve. In the third Malone novel, *The Wrong Murder* (1940), they marry and plan to honeymoon in Bermuda. Von Flanagan, in what seems to Malone a "heavy-handed" practical joke, has Helene arrested and put in jail on their wedding night (25).

ON THE COVER OF *TIME*

Rice reached the height of her popularity in 1946. *Time* magazine reported that paperback sales of *Trial by Fury* (1945) had gone over 500,000 and that a second paperback reprint, *Having Wonderful Crime* (1943), had climbed in an even shorter time to 300,000. In the mid-1940s, sales of her books rivaled Agatha Christie's and topped Dashiell Hammett's. *Time* placed her on its cover on 28 January 1946, titling the accompanying article, "Mulled Murder, with Spice."

Rice had moved to Los Angeles in 1942 to join her husband, the writer Lawrence Lipton, her children, and Nan Rice, her adoptive mother. All of them were living in Los Angeles or just outside the city. There Rice was to write six more Malone novels, starting with *Having a Wonderful Crime* (1943). Living in Los Angeles and writing scripts for Hollywood did not much change the Chicago that she

imagined and projected in her writing, though Jeffrey Marks justly complains that in *Knocked for a Loop* (1957) she reduced the city and downtown to a "bland backdrop" (Marks 161).

Between 1948 and 1951, a new, tougher Malone came to radio in "Murder and Mr. Malone" and then as "The Amazing Mr. Malone." The characters and storylines were loosely based on Rice's novels. In the recorded episodes that survive on "Old Time Radio," Jake and Helene have disappeared completely.[4] Though Malone is still called a criminal defense lawyer, he acts and sounds more like a typical city sleuth, a lesser Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe. Pieces of this recast, harder characterization made its way into the short stories she began writing for *Manhunt: Detective Story Monthly*. "Tears of Evil," the first of the eleven stories she placed in this pulp, ran alongside work by Mickey Spillane and Evan Hunter (Ed McBain). In the 1950s, to support herself, she also wrote Malone stories for *The Saint, Ellery Queen s Mystery Magazine,* and *Popular Detective* (*Murder, Mystery, and Malone,* 7 and 196).

Algren, Bellow, Farrell, Motley, and Richard Wright were her close contemporaries, writing about some of the same city scenes and times, but reviewers in the 1940s and after, searching for counterparts and comparisons, almost inevitably explain her Chicago stories through references to Ellery Queen, to Hammett and Chandler, to Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, or to other popular detective writers. *Time*'s article on Rice, following the lead of reviewers, did not in any way identify her fiction with that of other Chicago writers. This disassociation is understandable. Carla Cappetti has said that, during the 1930s and '40s the Chicago School of sociology, with its ethnographic and anthropological theories, formed the "sociological imagination" and "orientation" for Chicago's "representative" writers (14-5). Writing about Chicago, Rice ignored the "urban sociological tradition" that Cappetti sees writ so large in the fiction of Farrell, Algren, and Wright (149). Such a sociological orientation figured almost nowhere in Rice's representations of the urban milieu. She seems not to have possessed, much less cared to exercise, such a "sociological imagination." No school of sociology or anthropology influenced her Malone novels; no ethnographic study gave structure to her interpretations of urban reality.

How much Rice knew of this "urban sociological tradition" is hard to say. Her husband, the novelist and critic Lawrence Lipton, cited and quoted at length by Cappetti, certainly understood and val-

ued Algren's work in terms of that tradition (Cappetti 150). If Rice comically distorted hard facts that in Algren or Farrell were informed by sociological theories, it does not follow that she erased from her pages all signs of social conflict, urban violence, and political corruption. In the Malone novels and stories, she often turned to the familiar forms of popular literature, taking plot lines from crazy comedy and country house mysteries, characters and character types, from pulp crime fiction and literary noir. Doing so, she caught the city's antic spirit, and reveled in it. Laughing at Chicago's crooked cops, mob bosses, and ward politicians, she never quite let her readers forget that behind their comically grotesque masks, they were still crooked and corrupt.

Craig Rice died on August 28, 1957, at the age of forty-nine, succumbing to alcoholism, long illnesses, depression, and the effects of two suicide attempts. *Knocked for a Loop* was published two weeks after her death; another Malone novel, *But the Doctor Died*, appeared in 1967. Though she will never again be as popular as she was in the 1940s—or seem as funny—her J. J. Malone stories still retain a comic vitality that stems in part from the complexity of her use of fictional formulas, and they should hold a larger place in Chicago s literary history.

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NOTES

[1]Marks concludes, after describing her relation to Gypsy Rose Lee in detail, that Rice "did not write" either *The G-String Murders* or *Mother Finds a Body.* He acknowledges that Rice often "claimed credit for writing" them, and notes that others, relying on her claims, have attributed the books to her. See the last three or four pages of Marks's fourth chapter for his reconstruction of the argument for and against Rice's authorship (50-54). The "Description" of the "Craig Rice Papers, collection no. 0153, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California," makes the claim for her authorship: "Rice found time ...to ghost a couple of books, two for the stripper, Gypsy Rose Lee...." Peggy Moran, in her essay on Rice for *And Then There Were Nine,* says much the same (122).

[2]Marks states that by 1931 or 1932 Rice had dropped "Georgiana" and begun to "use the by-line of Craig Rice." He adds that, for her newspaper work in those years, she seldom acknowledges "her gender in the text of an aritcle." Rice delighted in fooling people into thinking she was a man..." (Marks 20).

[3]See Michael K. Grost's entry on Craig Rice in the blog, "A Guide to Classic Mystery and Detection": mikegrost.com/rice. He says, without qualification or much illustration, that"Rice's humorous underworld characters were influenced by those of Damon Runyon."

[4]Just how much she wrote of "Murder and Mr. Malone" is not clear. Marks says she "wrote the plot for the series," adding that the FBI read copies of her scripts before ABC was allowed to air the show (98-99). Though she divorced Lawrence Lipton in 1946, his membership in the Communist Party made Rice a continuing target of the FBI's suspicions. "The Amazing Mr. Malone," the successor to the earlier program, played on NBC in 1951. Recordings, available on "Old Radio World," give her no credit for writing scripts. On its website, "Old Radio World" says only that the series "was based on the John Malone" stories: http://www.oldradioworld.com/shows/Amazing_Mr_Malone.php

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"LIVING FIFTY-FIFTY": GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE PLAYS OF RACHEL CROTHERS

DAVID RADAVICH

Along with Susan Glaspell, Zona Gale, and Zoë Akins, Rachel Crothers was one of the female dramatists from the Midwest who dominated American theatre in the first three decades of the twentieth century in a fashion that has not been witnessed since. Audiences during these years witnessed the first feminist voices on Broadway, as Midwestern playwrights flourished in a social climate that responded favorably to the enactment of gender and civil rights issues. Crothers, "the most significant woman playwright the United States produced in the early twentieth century," announced her arrival with the Broadway production of *The Three of Us* in 1906 (Murphy 82). She continued writing feminist and social comedies until the late 1930s, winning a number of awards. Her crisp, forward-looking plays dominated Broadway for three decades, and yet, with notable exceptions, her works have since languished. Her incisive explorations of male-female relations, enacted across a variety of styles and situations, set her work apart even from the pioneering female dramatists of her time and remain surprisingly relevant.

From its historic beginnings, the Midwest distinguished itself as an egalitarian area of the country, with a high percentage of middle-class wage earners. Blacks escaping from the South and immigrants from many cultures, despite lingering racism, could own farms and businesses and work alongside whites in factories. Many unions were racially integrated fairly early. Midwestern women, too, were coming into their own: one of the best representatives of Midwestern feminist dynamism was Jane Addams (1865-1935), a social worker from downstate Illinois who founded Hull-House in Chicago in 1889, one of the first social settlements in the country for the poor. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Midwest produced a bumper crop of important female playwrights; many of their plays

were clustered around the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution that guaranteed suffrage for women.

Rachel Crothers (1878-1958) was born and spent her early years in Bloomington, Illinois, where she graduated from high school at the startlingly young age of thirteen. Soon after, she moved east and graduated from the New England School of Dramatic Instruction after one term (Gottlieb 13). Though she remained in the Northeast for the majority of her creative life, Crothers had clearly absorbed many of the predispositions characteristic of the Midwest: a preference for simplicity, common sense, and truth-telling; an egalitarian perspective toward gender and class; and a distaste for sham, arrogance, and hierarchy. The budding playwright was attracted early to the artistic opportunities available on Broadway. But the path was not easy; she was turned down by the American Dramatists Club because she was a woman, and she was forced to arrange and oversee many productions of her own works (Shafer 38).

Nonetheless, in her first successful play, *The Three of Us* (1906), Crothers announced what were to remain central concerns during a Broadway career that spanned four decades: equitable relations between men and women, and the fundamental right to explore and develop one's identity without undue pressure from social conventions. Despite the odds, *The Three of Us* became a smash hit on Broadway in 1906, toured extensively, and was produced in London the following year with Ethel Barrymore in the lead role and Crothers overseeing the production (Lindroth 15). Although set in a Nevada mining camp, the play nonetheless exhibits some Midwestern features, including the central domestic setting, a primary concern about honesty and lying, and "its natural realism and moral tone" (Lindroth 15). Crothers's feminism appears in the guise of Rhy MacChesney, who takes pains to defend her honor and independence without relying on a man.

Beginning with *Myself-Bettina* in 1908, Crothers made the first of several major shifts in her theatrical career, writing social problem plays on gender-related themes. At the heart of *Myself-Bettina* is a struggle not only over marriage but also over a performance of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* at a church social, clearly linking sexuality and the desire for freedom from gender roles. Not surprisingly, much critical response was negative. *A Man's World* (1910) pursues many of the same themes, as a female writer has taken the name of Frank to further her career: "I am a natural woman—because I've been a free

one (34). But the man who wants to marry her believes that "women are only meant to be loved": "Why—this is a man's world. Women'll never change anything" (43, 40). The same man turns out to have fathered and abandoned the child Frank later adopted as her own, making marriage impossible for them. *A Man's World* ends in a refusal to play by double standards, again arousing fierce (male) critical response; Augustus Thomas, the following year, wrote his play, *As a Man Thinks* (1911), in response to Crothers's play, defending the gendered double standard of morality that Crothers attacked (Shafer 37).

He and She, continuing in the problem-play vein of *A Man's World*, was first produced as *The Herfords* in Albany in 1911 and later achieved success and controversy on Broadway in 1920 (Lindroth 43). The play anatomizes male-female dynamics in surprisingly modern ways, so it's easy to understand that it was successfully revived in the 1970s and '80s. The writing is crisp, and the gender tensions over work and family remain insistently with us. Keith wants his fiancée, Ruth, to give up her career as a successful magazine editor once they get married: "I want a home. I want children . . . . The world has got to have homes to live in and who's going to make 'em if the women don't do it?" (11, 16). Ruth, by contrast, wants to keep working and encourages Keith to stay home: "But it must be fifty-fifty, dearest . . . . Housekeeping is [not] making a home" (29). Ruth offers this more far-reaching prophecy: "I sometimes think . . . that the great battle of the future will be between the sexes for supremacy" (40). Crothers touched a societal nerve with *He and She* in the very year the suffrage amendment was passed.

The other central couple in the play, Tom and Ann Herford, are both artists. Tom has enjoyed far more success and recognition, but Ann feels his latest work has become too "conventional" (13). The tension in their relationship comes to a head when both apply to win a prestigious and lucrative art commission. After Ann edges him out to win the prize, Tom reacts with anger and dismay: "She doesn't need me anymore" (107). Yet he recognizes that "If another *man* had got it I'd take my licking without whining" (108). The ending is ambiguous and might be troublesome for contemporary audiences: Ann falls against her husband's breast and asks him to complete the commissioned frieze for her. But this could be played a number of ways, and Crothers could have wanted to throw Ann's sudden compliance in the audience's face as a kind of surface capitulation that

rings out its own hollowness. *He and She* maintains a tone of Midwestern seriousness, but the relationships are complex and no easy answers are provided.

Following early productions of *He and She* in 1911-12, Rachel Crothers wrote one more problem play, *Ourselves* (1913), focusing on prostitution. Gottlieb calls the play an "excellent example of American naturalism, authentic not only in external details but in underlying emotions" (65). In preparation for writing in the "brothel play genre," Crothers visited police courts and the Bedford State Reformatory (Johnson 102; Gottlieb 65). After *Ourselves,* the manuscript of which has apparently been lost, Crothers turned away from writing problem plays in favor of sentimental romances during the war years. *Old Lady 31* (1916) was one of the most successful, followed by *A Little Journey* (1918), which "ran for 252 performances, gave Estelle Winwood one of her first starring roles, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize" (Gottlieb 84). The comedy *39 East* "opened to enthusiastic reviews on 31 March 1919" and was filmed in 1920 (Lindroth 40-41). But the arrival on Broadway of *He and She* in 1920 once again showcased Crothers's serious investigation of gender politics.

With the shift in social mood in the 1920s, Rachel Crothers was quick to respond in yet another major change of direction. Following her romances of the war years, she turned to writing comedies which were smart, crisp, and attuned to the rebellious ethos of the times. *Nice People* (1921) begins with social manners and dancing, but the opposite view is presented by Aunt Margaret, who decries superficiality and objects to her niece Teddy's "promiscuous love-making" (101, 108). Teddy runs off to a rendezvous with her current boyfriend, Scott, at her family's Westchester cottage. When an unprepossessing stranger named Billy arrives, his sparkling conversation with Teddy spins off beyond realism into a remarkable, transformative interchange. While everyone else worries about money and reputation, Billy labels the social scheming "hell," and Teddy gives up smoking and "nerves," having discovered the benefits of wholesome country living. In *Nice People*, Crothers cleverly inserts her Midwestern preference for directness and simplicity into a flapper culture of money, sophistication, and artifice.

Mary the Third (1923) also focuses on female choices and assertion. Like Glaspell's *Inheritors,* the play covers three generations of women, beginning in 1870 in the Prologue and continuing into the

present. The Mary of the title is thin and dynamic in 1922 and plans to go camping with male companions but without chaperones. She talks casually about "sleeping together": "I've just about decided that free love is the only solution . . . . I don't know that I *could* live all my life with one man—however much I loved him" (29, 31-2). Of course the parental generation recoils. Act II begins with a striking scene in a roadster going over sixty miles per hour; Mary loves the speed and freedom. Later, Mary and her brother Bobby overhear their parents fighting over their shallow marriage. In a startling and theatrically effective scene, Mary and Bobby confront the parents, encouraging them to live honestly and divorce. Mary tells her mother, "Women will have to change marriage—men never will" (91). In the end, while her mother plans to move out, Mary agrees to marry Lynn in order to "make marriage better instead of chucking it" (104).

This adventuresome play pulls even further than *Nice People* at the limits of Broadway, ending on a serious note after very comic opening acts and maintaining a commitment to unflinching honesty. The same pattern continues in *Expressing Willie* (1924), a striking work that centers on finding oneself and avoiding the corrupting temptations of money. Action takes place in "the ridiculously magnificent house of Willie Smith on Long Island" (3). Willie has twenty servants and has worked his way up to wealth; yet he is a fairly good looking typical American—radiating health and energy . . ." (10). Despite his riches, "there is still a very wholesome commonplaceness about him . . ." (10). When Willie's mother brings in Minnie for a surprise visit, we learn that all three come from the "Middle West" (15). Whereas most of Crothers's plays only covertly mention Midwestern culture, *Expressing Willie* showcases a debate about wholesomeness, honesty, and social pretense in a setting where Willie pretends to *arriviste* sophistication.

Having invited his clever, urbane friends to tour his new glamour palace, "the most pronounced type of the overdone Italian in America," Willie reacts with horror when Minnie, a country piano teacher, offers to play (3). She literally falls on her face and runs out humiliated. But in a characteristically daring theatrical stroke, Crothers has the abashed Minnie return with new-found courage and astonishing grace. This time she plays with abandon, thrilling all the blasé guests who had earlier mocked her. Later, Minnie confronts Willie in his bedroom about his personal dishonesty and, when Willie's fiancée enters, refuses to hide. In a series of unfolding con-

versations, Minnie leads several characters from social hypocrisy to the ability to express themselves and to admit openly to suppressed desires. As in *Mary the Third,* the ending is ambiguous—Minnie does not leap to accept Willie's offer of marriage—but the witty, effervescent dialogue serves to punch home Midwestern values of straightforward living and speaking over Eastern show, money, and glamour.

The latter 1920s proved to be a period of transition for female playwrights to even greater recognition in the 1930s. Rachel Crothers's experimental play *Venus* (1927) was not a commercial success, and apparently no manuscript remains extant (Gottlieb 117). This fascinating nonrealistic work features aviators returning from a "highly egalitarian society of Venus" with a chemical purported to reduce gender attributes of men and women (Gottlieb 117). In the decade that followed, however, female playwrights won a number of prestigious national awards. Zoë Akins's adaptation of Edith Wharton's *The Old Maid* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1935 and seems modeled at least in part on Crothers's *He and She*. Susan Glaspell won the Pulitzer Prize for *Alison's House* in 1931, while Crothers garnered several major drama prizes and the National Achievement Award in 1938, presented by Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House.

As Glaspell was winding up her theatrical career with *Alison's House*, Crothers was once again shifting gears for what became her most successful decade overall, with a string of triumphs on Broadway in the 1930s. The revised *He and She* of 1920, *Nice People, Expressing Willie*, and other plays of the Roaring Twenties dealt in large part with making or acquiring money in the context of gender relations. Crothers's plays of the 1930s, by contrast, concentrate more on the consequences of betrayal and struggling to find a pattern for marriage that can actually work. Divorce is now common, yet underneath a glittering, sophisticated exterior is a desire for more honest and reliable connection.

Let Us Be Gay (1929) begins with a prologue in California in which Kitty demands a divorce from Bob following an extramarital affair: "Nothing in this world is what I thought it was" (10). The remainder of the action takes place in Westchester, where Kitty has returned from living three years in Paris and does not want to remarry. One friend suggests, "Why not evolve something called marriage which the human animal could have some reasonable hope of making a success of?" (53). The comedy develops when Bob arrives unexpectedly for the weekend and the two former spouses agree to

"let us be gay" and pretend not to know each other. The problem is, underneath all the gaiety, Bob is still entranced by the more-sparkling-than-ever Kitty and wants her back. After a gripping, truthful encounter, Kitty finally agrees. *Let Us Be Gay* offers a lighthearted yet probing look at the struggle to sustain meaningful relationships in a social milieu of casual affairs and conversation without commitment.

As Husbands Go (1931) is outwardly the most Midwestern of all Crothers's plays, and one of her most genial. In a prologue set in Paris, two middle-aged women from Dubuque are shown with their lovers. While Emmie is entranced by Hippie, a European of many backgrounds, Lucile doesn't trust the love of Ronald, an English writer. Lucile voices a quintessentially Midwestern skepticism: "My life's been so quiet . . . . No one has ever known—what I *might* be—and how *starving* I am—to *be*—what I might be" (13). She feels afraid to return to Iowa: Everything that used to be all right because I thought it *had* to be that way—is going to seem horribly commonplace and ugly now" (14). Ronald compares Lucile to "a flower—unfolding in the sun," and Emmie believes Lucile should have an "out and out affair with Ronnie . . . and you'd go back to Charlie a great deal more contented" (14, 7). Lucile is not so sure: "Life doesn't let us off so easily" (20).

The three acts of *As Husbands Go* all take place in Dubuque five weeks later. The housemaid, Christine, is "plain—austere—radiating reliability and soap" (29). Lucile's daughter Peggy is "pretty in a fresh healthy way" and assumes her mother is bringing some "dame" home to "lecture or raise money for the cause . . ." (33). Lucile's husband Charles seems the ideal Midwestern husband, "medium sized and unremarkable—but he becomes good looking as his slow charm grows apparent in his self-effacement and his wise tolerance . . . . There is dignity and strength in his simplicity—and one feels that he has built the house—but that he has not built it for himself" (29). Yet Charles is alert to the changes evident in the two returning women: "something new and mysterious in you both" (58). Although various attempts are made to hide Lucile's Parisian attachment, when Ronald arrives suddenly, Charles quickly sizes up the situation and quietly launches his Midwestern-style counterattack.

Having discovered Ronald's enjoyment of fishing, Charles arranges an all-day outing together, praising Ronald's angling expertise and later getting him drunk. Ronald has seen life in Dubuque as

"a little more *real*—more *honest* . . . . Things seem to me somehow to be *just exactly as they are*" (125). Charles indicates his willingness to give his wife up—but only to a better man who will remain loyal to and provide for her. When Ronald admits that he wants a woman to take care of *him*, the game is essentially up and Ronald sneaks off the next morning. In the final scene, Charles prevents Lucile from confessing her infatuation by focusing instead on their nephew Wilbur, whom they are adopting, and on going in to Christmas dinner. This delightful comedy showcases a competition for husbands: Midwestern honesty is used as a formidable weapon, sincerity emerges as a power in its own right, and the action ends in litotes and dramatic irony, as Emmie decides to marry her agreeable European paramour while Lucile returns to her fundamentally decent and tolerant husband.

When Ladies Meet (1932) throws the ball in the opposite court, as the wife and mistress square off. Mary has pursued a clandestine affair with the married Rogers, feeling dissatisfied by the attentions of her friend Jimmie:

> MARY: I wonder if you're capable of great passion.
> JIMMIE: God I hope not. (61)

Jimmie seems Midwestern and prefers liking to loving; Mary has everything she wants except the "right man." Things become complicated when Mary is thrown together at her friend's Connecticut place with Claire, whom she doesn't realize is Rogers's wife. Claire offers useful and insightful criticism of Mary's latest novel, which turns out to mirror the very situation we are witnessing. In a memorable line Walter exclaims, "Broadway is a rest compared to the quiet countryside!" (137). Confronted by both wife and lover, Rogers gives Mary up, but Claire has endured enough and both women reject him. *When Ladies Meet* again offers sparkling dialogue and situations that reveal the perils of gender relations and coming to terms with betrayal.

Crothers's final success, *Susan and God* (1937), takes yet another turn, as the title character returns from a trip to England having "found God . . . in a *new way*" (25). She argues that "civilization's a failure" and "[God's] the only thing in the world that will stop war (27). The clever social set gathered at Irene's country house can't decide what to make of her transformation. But when they stage a fake confession as a kind of revenge, the social chitchat begins to implode. Irene and her fiancé fight, another couple splits up, but then Susan's husband

Barrie and their daughter Blossom arrive with their emotional demands. Barrie thinks Susan's God is all "show" (146). In the end, as Blossom confronts her mother and insists that they spend time together as a family, Susan and Barrie are reunited. *Susan and God* is Crothers's most parental comedy, with the shadow of impending world war lurking just offstage. Divorce is rampant, and while God is invoked and sometimes sought, the characters can't quite make sense of things. Only the daughter seems ultimately to anchor the social dynamics in the insistence of generational continuity.

With *Susan and God,* Crothers ended an astonishing Broadway career that began in 1906 and ended on the brink of the Second World War. In the 1930s, Crothers garnered many awards and remained highly regarded as a masterful director and caster of plays. To some extent, her reputation has suffered unjustly as a result of her proficiency: virtually all her plays are well-constructed, smartly written, and enjoyable while also probing important social questions, yet unlike with many other dramatists, it is difficult to single out one or two superior plays. Apart from the earliest efforts, her dialogue does not seem artificial or dated. A more experimental play like *Venus,* which proved unsuccessful in 1927 for its radical premise of gender reversal, might work now. Crothers's body of work is remarkable for its comic rigor and nuanced investigations into the tormented relations between women and men. Throughout her career, Crothers sought to delineate the possibilities for meaningful romance—beyond infidelity, conventions of marriage, social fashion, child-rearing, or infatuations with self and other.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, female playwrights from the Midwest achieved major breakthroughs. Among a talented group, Rachel Crothers and Susan Glaspell remain the dominant figures, together effecting a double coup in enacting female consciousness and desire on Broadway and in the Little Theatre movement. Unlike Glaspell, many of whose plays are probing and experimental, and, in long plays like *The Verge* and *Inheritors,* ambitious and craggy, Rachel Crothers the "Broadway feminist" triumphed in her chosen arena for over three decades (Abramson). Glaspell almost always focused on female protagonists, while Crothers featured male-female couples struggling with commitment, betrayal, and justice issues. From *The Three of Us* in 1906 to *Susan and God* in 1937, she assayed many different aspects of gender relations, achieving a Broadway success approaching that of Neil Simon.

Joseph Wood Krutch accused Crothers of "moralizing" (Lindroth 70, 116), but the author never supplies easy answers. Instead, she fuses the conventions of Broadway comedy, employing witty dialogue characteristic of Shaw, Wharton, and Coward, with the debate of social issues typical of Ibsen's middle period. While Glaspell focused on the female struggle for identity and freedom, Crothers concentrated more on navigating that same struggle through romance and marriage, and almost always with a balance of male and female characters. These two important dramatists not only enacted their concerns in different theatrical venues, they also revolutionized American drama by giving voice to contrasting feminist concerns and strivings that had not been seen on stage before.

Like the outspoken Zona Gale, Glaspell was always up front about her Midwestern heritage, claiming and celebrating it. Apart from *Trifles,* which has resonated with the stereotypes of frontier living in the national psyche, this quality of her work may have vitiated some of its broader appeal. Crothers's Midwestern habits of thought, by contrast, are more circumspect, often imbedded in Eastern settings like those of Zoë Akins. However, her plays embody the same staunch commitment to honesty, equal rights, and free speech as Glaspell's. As Sharon Friedman notes, "[t]hough the plays of Glaspell and Crothers differ in theme and techniques, issues of feminist concern often constitute the central conflict . . . . Almost without exception, the plays of both Glaspell and Crothers take a woman as protagonist" (Friedman 72). Despite the outward glitter of her social settings and dialogue, Crothers communicates a clear preference for the pleasures of the countryside and unpretentious living. As her career unfolded and became more established, she began inserting Midwestern characters and themes with increasing boldness and self-assertion.

The nature of Broadway shows has changed significantly since Crothers dominated the Great White Way with her astutely rendered comedies of the sexes. Yet from the beginning, Rachel Crothers pushed at the limits of stage convention, interrogating with a sharp pen the shifting dynamics of gender power and commitment in relationships. While clearly attracted by Broadway glamour and northeastern cultural sophistication, she nonetheless held on to values of honesty, simplicity, and plain-dealing inherited from her upbringing in the Midwest. The creative dissonance between regions and world views that animates her plays suggests that, in a time of ongoing sec-

tional and gender tensions, many of them could attract and entertain contemporary audiences. Crothers's pioneering works eschew easy formulations and trite conventions, enacting emotionally honest explorations of how to live true to oneself and constructively with others amid the moral confusion of modern life.

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QUESTIONING IDEALS OF MIDWESTERN ESCAPISM: PHILIP ROTH'S *INDIGNATION*

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While the physical boundaries between the Midwest and other regions of the United States are merely set by state lines, the mentalities and stereotypes that separate the regions run deep. Although the Midwest and its residents are part of a larger American community, those in the Midwest are assumed to have a particular lifestyle and a specific political and global outlook—distinctly different from that of surrounding regions. While these stereotypes ignore the autonomy of the individuals living within these regions, for better or worse, these regional expectations have, in many cases, stood the test of time. Issues of regional identity are brought to the forefront in Philip Roth's novel *Indignation* (2008), in which the Eastern United States is opposed to the Midwest. Roth's protagonist and first-person narrator is Marcus Messner, a native of Newark, New Jersey, who attends college in north central Ohio, is later drafted into the Korean War, and narrates the story from beyond the grave.

Fearing the Korean War draft and stifled by his anxiety-ridden father, Marcus departs for the Midwest in search of an escape. Like many Americans during the middle of the twentieth century, Marcus believes the Midwest to be somehow removed from the global realities that he is confronted with on the East Coast. Marcus flees to the Midwest under the assumption that there he can forget the war, forget his overbearing father, and somehow halt the future that he feels propelled into. However, while Marcus views the Midwest in this sentimental manner, the socially constructed nature of these regional boundaries becomes apparent as the violence that he fears while living on the East Coast follows him to Ohio, leading to his untimely death.

THE COGNITIVE DIVISION OF THE EASTERN AND MIDWESTERN UNITED STATES

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Midwest region was, in many ways, excluded by the rest of American society. Middle America was viewed as a remote and isolated land, comprised of farmland, small towns, and simple-minded people. While the large cities and residents on the East Coast had the self-perception that they were industrially advanced and culturally sophisticated, the Midwest was commonly viewed as regressive and inferior. In *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture,* James R. Shortridge addresses this common historical belief that the Midwest was somehow backsliding, arguing that many felt the region to be "behind the times" (72). This negative stereotype of the Midwest is further illustrated by James H. Madison, who suggests that the Midwest is victim to generalizations concerning the region's "lag, retardation, or decline" (4). Furthermore, Madison discusses the prevalent dichotomous view of the Midwest and the East, namely that the Midwest has been viewed as simple and unworldly, in direct contrast to the culture of large urban cities. Whether or not these accusations of inferiority are grounded in truth seems almost immaterial, as most Easterners have viewed the Midwest in this destructive and damaging way, giving the region a poor image for much of the twentieth century.

While many Americans viewed the Midwest in this negative light, some felt these same characteristics to be positive, particularly in times of war. Having just concluded a half century of nearly constant warfare, the simplicity that was assumed to exist in the Midwest became desirable around 1950 —the time in which Roth chose to set his novel. While the Midwest was still perceived to be inferior to what many believe to be a more culturally and industrially advanced East, there was a growing belief that it was also "the most stable, normal, and happy part of the United States" (Shortridge 66). Shortridge describes this as the "nostalgic" view of the Midwest, a perspective which "romanticized" the region and labeled it "quaint" rather than "backward" in a critical sense (67-71). This belief that the Midwest is somehow a safe haven from modern warfare is supported by Fill Calhoun in his 1941 *Life Magazine* article. Calhoun writes, "A typical small-town Midwesterner knows for certain that his town is the best little old town in the U.S. and his country is the finest in the world. All he knows for certain about the rest of the world is that it is in a hell of a mess" (17). Here Calhoun is setting up the Midwest in a dichotomy with the rest of the world, but in times of war, this opposition takes on a more positive tone. There is the Midwest and then there is the rest—a chaotic and frenzied world. While the world is characterized by war and disorder, the Midwest, in all of its seclusion, is perceived as maintaining an almost envious and blissful stability.

This construction of the Midwest as a pastoral, isolated, innocent haven, removed from the violence and reality of war permeates *Indignation.* More specifically, Roth's novel pits the Eastern United States and the Midwest region against one another in a battle within the psyche of Marcus Messner. In Newark, New Jersey, in the mid-twentieth century, Marcus's family is faced with many of the harsh realities of a contemporary global society. Marcus's family's business, a kosher meat store, is slowly being overpowered by the expanding grocery stores in the area. Additionally, his father has become paralyzed with the fear that the future holds nothing but disaster for Marcus. Having been the recipient of a friend's premonition that the "world is waiting, it's licking its chops, to take your boy away" (Roth 14), Marcus's father fears that mid-century life is a dark place and that society is merely waiting to inflict harm, an understandable fear in the 1950s with the Korean War on the horizon and the last four decades saturated with two world wars. In his text, *In the Shadow of War,* Michael S. Sherry discusses the anxiety that was common in America toward the middle of the twentieth century, noting the use of the slogan "the age of anxiety" to refer to the late 1940s (157). More specifically, the fear felt at the onset of the Korean War was a reaction to the severe threat that the Korean War posed: that of a possible third world war (Sherry 186). Faced with this fear and owning a long family history of wartime death, both Marcus and his father are greatly impacted by the war-oriented anxiety of mid-century life. However, it is clear that Marcus associates this terror and tension with living in the East, a feeling and lifestyle that he believes he can evade by relocating to the Midwestern United States.

The majority of Roth's novel takes place at Winesburg College, located in the farmland of northern Ohio. While Winesburg College is a fictional institution, many critics have noted the connection between Roth's school and the tranquil small town presented by Sherwood Anderson in his work *Winesburg, Ohio.* As argued by Glen A. Love, Anderson's Winesburg was a town where citizens are "cut

off" from the "urban world" (xv), a place "impervious to time" (xiii), an idyllic location where "love and communication" were still possible (xii). In this sense, Anderson's Winesburg is a world in and of itself, and everything outside this small town is separate and external. The idyllic and isolated nature of Anderson's Winesburg is mirrored in Roth's Winesburg College, as seen in Marcus's first impressions of the institution. Marcus describes Winesburg as a campus with "tall, shapely trees," with "ivy-covered brick quadrangles set picturesquely on a hill, a campus that could have been the back drop for one of those Technicolor college movie musicals where all the students go around singing and dancing instead of studying" (Roth 18). This belief that the Midwest is a haven untainted by any negative outside forces and filled with cheerful citizens is similarly conveyed in a Winesburg catalog photo—the motivation for Marcus's applying to Winesburg in the first place. As Marcus describes the photo, "There was big leafy trees on either side of the two happy students, and they were walking down a grassy hill with ivy-clad, brick buildings in the distance behind them, and the girl was smiling so appreciatively at the boy, and the boy looked so confident and carefree beside her, that I filled out the application" (Roth 115). By describing the students as "carefree," Marcus is almost portraying the Midwestern resident as an individual living in a sort of ignorant, happy-go-lucky state. Enrolling in Winesburg College at the age of eighteen, Marcus wholeheartedly feels everything that an Easterner typically does, that northern Ohio is pastoral, old-fashioned, and safe —essentially, non-Eastern.

THE BLENDING OF THE EAST AND MIDWEST AS BLURRING LOVE AND VIOLENCE

This dichotomy between the East and the Midwest takes metaphoric shape in Roth's novel through Marcus's interactions with love and violence. Constantly threatened by violence and war, Marcus feels that his late adolescence is being taken from him and, as a result, moves to the Midwest in search of love, sex, and the youthful innocence that he feels the East cannot offer. James R. Shortridge suggests that at midcentury the nostalgia movement caused the Midwest to be viewed by outside regions as the epitome of youth and innocence (72). This belief is precisely the mindset of Marcus, who expects Winesburg College to be a place where time stands still. Consequently, the dichotomy that Roth creates between the East and the Midwest is, quite simply, one between violence and innocence—as throughout the novel, innocence manifests itself in Marcus's experiences with love, romance, and sex. However, the East and its association with war and death follow Marcus to Ohio, tainting all of his romantic interactions and making his reclamation of innocence unlikely. Marcus is convinced that he can geographically leave the Eastern world of war, death, and violence and enter the Midwestern one of love and carefree innocence, but these are mere mental presumptions and stereotypes of the adjacent regions. As a result, Marcus's hope for escapism is a futile one.

The most salient way in which Marcus blends the stereotypes of Midwestern innocence and Eastern violence is in his thoughts of sex, which are routinely saturated with wartime images. In his illustration of Buckeye Street on campus, Marcus describes, "the tree-lined avenue bisected by a small green with a Civil War cannon that, according to the risqué witticism repeated to newcomers, went off whenever a virgin walked by" (Roth 20). Although this metaphor is not of Marcus's own design, the association of deflowering with the firing of a cannon (and therefore war) mirrors the correlation prevalent within Marcus's psyche. Similarly, Marcus finds himself attracted to a female student named Olivia and proceeds to describe their first date in militaristic terms. The ease and willingness with which Olivia performs sexual acts causes Marcus to state, "that darting, swabbing, gliding, teeth-licking tongue . . . prompted me to attempt to delicately move her hand onto the crotch of my pants. And again I met with no resistance. *There was no battle*" (Roth 54). Here the language that Marcus uses resonates of war. Marcus uses the word "battle" to describe what he had expected of his first sexual encounter and similarly, his use of the word "resistance" implies that there is some conflict or struggle.

Furthermore, Marcus's account of his first sexual encounter is followed by the disclosure that he dies at age nineteen in the Korean War. This sequence suggests that Marcus as a narrator is unable to ponder his sexuality without simultaneously considering his violent death. Marcus also interjects his musings surrounding this sexual encounter with Olivia with facts about Korea: "It was 1951 and, for the third time in just over half a century, America was at war again. I certainly could never believe that what happened might have anything to do with her finding me attractive, let alone desirable" (Roth

58). When Marcus shifts from sex to war and back to sex, his narration takes a stream-of-consciousness form without transition. This narrative style is illustrative of Marcus's perception that sex and war, and affection and violence, are similarly bled together. By fusing concepts of war and sex, Marcus has essentially brought the mindset of the East with him into the Midwest, illustrating the breakdown of these stereotypical divisions.

In addition to the strictly wartime images that Marcus uses to describe his sexual encounters, he more broadly applies this Eastern mentality to his relationship with Olivia, as their romance becomes defined through sadomasochism. Marcus and Olivia gain pleasure from the experience of pain, shown primarily in distressing images that serve as sexual stimulants for both characters. Just as Marcus had a violent history working in the butcher shop with his father, Olivia's past is similarly full of suffering, shown in her admission of her alcoholism, a previous suicide attempt, and psychiatric institutionalization. Once Marcus finishes reading a letter from Olivia that discloses her past, he proclaims his affection for her by suggestively kissing her signature: "I put my mouth to the page and kissed the 'O.' Kissed it and kissed it. Then, impulsively, with the tip of my tongue I began to lick the ink of the signature . . . I had drunk her writing. I had eaten her name. I had all I could do not to eat the whole thing" (Roth 71). Although Olivia's confession seems something that would generally yield unsettling feelings of repulsion, or possibly pity, in a potential lover, learning of Olivia's past creates strictly erotic emotions in Marcus.

Moreover, Marcus begins to view Olivia's scar on her wrist as the embodiment of her self-inflicted violence and therefore the source of his affections. What makes this blending of pleasure and pain more intriguing is the fact that Marcus seems fully cognizant that he is associating the two. Marcus confesses, "All I knew was that the scar did it. I was transfixed. I'd never been so worked up over anyone before. The history of drinking, the scar, the sanitarium, the frailty, the fortitude—I was in bondage to it all" (Roth 77). The fact that Marcus views Olivia's scar as a symbol of violence and cruelty suggests that it is not Olivia herself who is the source of Marcus's sexual attraction, but rather the brutality that she represents. This sadism is similarly characteristic of Olivia, illustrated by her desire to hear Marcus tell of his experiences in the butcher shop. Just as Marcus shifts between the contemplation of sex and death, Olivia muses over

Marcus's violent past just after having sexual contact with him. Marcus narrates, "Olivia was fascinated by my being a butcher's son . . . after I had my orgasm, she almost immediately began asking me about the store" (Roth 133). Olivia describes Marcus's experiences with animal slaughter as "terrific" (137) and they serve as a source of excitement and intrigue rather than evoking the more common reaction of disgust.

Lastly, the fact that the romance between Marcus and Olivia is predicated on this blending of sexual affection and suffering is shown in the locations in which they choose to perform their sexual acts. Anticipating their first sexual encounter, Marcus borrows his roommate Elwyn's LaSalle in order to take Olivia out. Since the LaSalle serves as the site of Marcus's first sexual experience, the vehicle becomes a symbol of this monumental event. Marcus goes even so far as to tell Elwyn, "I want to thank you for the car. It wouldn't have happened without the car" (Roth 61). Given Roth's tendency to pair the concepts of sex with violence, and love with death, it is fitting that the LaSalle quite literally become the vehicle of Elwyn's death. During the blizzard of 1951 that put the Winesburg campus under a mass of snow, Elwyn, attempting to race with an oncoming freight train, collides with it. Marcus realizes this confusion of symbolism the LaSalle now represents, stating, "The car in which I had taken Olivia to dinner . . . a historic vehicle, even a monument of sorts, in the history of fellatio's advent . . . went careening off to the side and turned end-over-end down Lower Main until it exploded in flames, and Elwyn Ayers Jr. was killed" (Roth 209). Therefore, the LaSalle, which had served as an emblem of Marcus's sexual conquest, also becomes representative of death and destruction.

Aside from Marcus and Olivia's first sexual act taking place in Elwyn's car, the only other time that they are seen having sexual interactions is in the hospital when Marcus is admitted due to appendicitis. While the typical image of a hospital is that of a place of illness, injury, and, ultimately, death, Marcus and Olivia use Marcus's hospital room as the setting for their sexual explorations with one another, causing the hospital to embody this paradoxical imagery. Similarly, after Olivia performs manual sex on Marcus in his hospital bed, he ejaculates into the air, inspiring Olivia to sing, "I shot an arrow into the air / It fell to earth I knew not where" (Roth 130). This association between Marcus's semen and a weapon implies that Olivia is viewing sexual pleasure as a simultaneous expression of

pain and harm. At the metaphoric level, Marcus's constant fusion of pleasure and pain, sex and violence, love and war, undermines any ability to escape the wartime fears and tensions that he believes solely reside in the East.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF WAR: BREAKING DOWN REGIONAL BARRIERS

Despite the pervasive merging of violence and love throughout his work, Roth does not deal directly with the Korean War until the close of his narrative. In response to the "panty raid"—an act of vandalism in which many male Winesburg students invaded female dorms in search of lingerie—Winesbur's president, Albin Lentz (a World War II veteran), gives a special address to the male student body. During his lecture, Lentz discusses the prevailing assumption that there is a "dual reality" characteristic of wartime: where "here" and "there," "domestic citizen" and "soldier" are viewed as detached from one another. Lentz attempts to dispel this belief that personal reality and the global/political reality of the exterior world are separate and suggests rather that they co-exist and influence one another. He begins by appealing to the personal lives of the students, recalling the victorious football games Winesburg participated in that year. Lentz reminisces about Winesburg defeating Bowling Green and successfully upsetting the University of West Virginia, stating, "What a game for Winesburg! But do you know what happened in Korea that same week?" (Roth 218). He goes on to inform the students of a small advance made in the Old Baldy area by the US soldiers and their allies. Lentz states, "A small advance at a cost of four thousand casualties. Four thousand young men like yourselves, dead, maimed, and wounded, between the time we beat Bowling Green and the time we upset UWV" (218). By drawing this stark and emotional connection between the arguably insignificant nature of the personal lives of the Winesburg students and the larger-scale events of the Korean War, Lentz is attempting to express the unacknowledged proximity of the war. In stating that the fallen soldiers are "young men like yourselves," Lentz is stressing the reality of the draft to those students who avoided it due to their enrollment in the university. Similarly, Lentz argues, "Beyond your dormitories, a world is on fire and you are kindled by underwear. Beyond your fraternities, history unfolds daily—warfare, bombings, wholesale slaughter, and you are oblivious to it

all. Well, you won't be oblivious for long!" (222). It is easy to interpret Lentz's use of the word "beyond" to suggest that the Korean War is a world distant and isolated from the private lives of the students on Winesburg's campus. Yet, it is perhaps more accurate and suggestive to read Lentz's use of "beyond" as indicating that war is a more valued and "greater" world, and also that the larger world of war encompasses the smaller, personal world of Winesburg.

Within Roth's narrative, Winesburg functions synecdochally for the Midwest as a region. Thus, Lentz's lecture describes the Midwest and the region's relationship to the rest of the United States and to the world at large. If Winesburg and its students are in fact representative of the Midwestern United States, then Lentz is making an argument for the realization that the Midwest, the East, and the outside world are not separate and exterior locations, but rather are all bound in the same present-day reality. By drawing a parallel between Winesburg students and Korean War soldiers, as well as between Winesburg football games and Korean War battles, Lentz is showing that the Midwest exists within, not outside of, the wartime reality of midcentury. In this regard, the meaning of Lentz's message is the same as Roth's blending of love and violence in the psyche of Marcus. Although Marcus attempts to view the Midwest and the East as binary opposites—quite literally moving geographically and mentally from one to the other—he is also continually blending the two. Similarly, Lentz is adamantly arguing that the Midwestern resident is not a being isolated and exterior to a larger war-torn society.

These issues of regional identity—clearly themes present within the novel—yield several possible interpretations. The obvious conclusion is that the narrative suggests that regional identity is merely a construction. While regional stereotypes may be grounded in fact, to view these expectations as "truth" would be a mistake. Even though the physical boundaries between the American regions are, to a certain extent, finite, the assumptions about what makes an Easterner or Midwesterner, in a cognitive sense, are blurred and unclear. A second reading suggests that these regional stereotypes, in fact, do hold a large amount of truth. There is clearly a reason that Lentz felt he needed to threaten the Winesburg students with the reality of the Korean War—the Winesburg students indeed did feel separated from the exterior world. Lentz's blunt claim that the students are "oblivious to the real world" (Roth 222) seems to be a claim that is semi-accurate, therefore supporting regional stereotypes. The

war is clearly not looming over the Midwestern students as threateningly as it was over Marcus when he lived in New Jersey.

Lastly, Roth also seems to be making the argument that there are universal elements in history and daily life that surpass the boundaries we set between us as human beings. Richard C. Longworth addresses these universal elements in his text, *Caught in the Middle,* suggesting that globalization is a force that the Midwest region cannot ignore. Longworth argues that "no part of America is immune to globalization "and that it is a force that "no part of the Midwest . . . escapes" (5-6). While Longworth's focus is more on economic and industrial globalization, his argument can be applied to global militarization as well. The progression of wars which saturated the twentieth century had a great impact on softening the borders between nations and between states. Marcus feels this force on the East Coast; however, he wrongly believes that he can hide in the Midwest. While Marcus's assumptions were, at least at one time, shared by the majority of the American population, he is ignoring the ubiquitous and all-inclusive nature of the very threat from which he is trying to run.

When considering issues of regional identity in times of war, Roth's *Indignation* offers a text that explores the nature of regional boundaries and simultaneously questions their validity. There is no doubt that Roth sets up the East and the Midwest in opposition to one another, and he portrays Winesburg College as the quintessential small Midwestern town. To further his theme of regionalism, Roth creates a protagonist who wholeheartedly believes in a dichotomy between the East and the Midwest. Marcus thinks of the East as a fearful modern locale, full of terror, war, and inevitable death and the Midwest as a place where he can be an innocent adolescent, live out his youth, and feel safe from the threats of the outside world. Yet, while Marcus believes that he can escape the world of violence by leaving the East, this project is a futile endeavor, as the mid-century anxiety he feels is not something that can be denied. Marcus is never able to experience fully his youth, and terror, begotten in the East, permeates the majority of his human interactions, found most explicitly in his failed attempts to experience love and human affection. Therefore, Roth seems to be suggesting that while regional boundaries have their legitimacy, there are times when these borders mean little and cannot be relied on as forms of rigid separation. More specifically, Roth shows that war and death are forces that defy

regional isolation and calls for a universality of common humanity that undermines any labels we place on our differences.

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DANTE'S *DIVINE COMEDY* AND BRADBURY'S *FARENHEIT 451*: DYNAMIC STORIES OF AWAKENING, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND REDEMPTION

KEITH TOOKEY AND LOREN LOGSDON

"Where do we find ourselves?" Ralph Waldo Emerson asks in the opening paragraph of his essay, "Experience." It is a question that many people have asked themselves during troubled and confused moments. Emerson then describes a sense of being lost, asleep, drugged by opium, lethargic. Writers across the ages and across cultures have posed this same question and expressed these same feelings during times of personal or cultural crises. Two texts, widely divergent on the surface, that address Emerson's question are Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. While the *Divine Comedy* is a world classic and *Fahrenheit 451* has attained a modest international reputation, our purpose is not to judge the two in terms of literary quality; nor can we establish that Dante provided the model for Bradbury. Rather, we believe that examining these works through the lens of Emerson's question results in an unusually fruitful way to discuss *Fahrenheit 451* and the *Divine Comedy*. Dante's epic poem and Bradbury's novel, written centuries apart, tell of two protagonists who are spiritually dead, living like sleepwalkers, oblivious of life as mystery and miracle. Both "find themselves," as Emerson would express it, at the midpoint of their lives and desperately in need of an awakening. Both are lost—Dante's Pilgrim to the powers of sin and Montag to a soul-deadening technology that seduces him with comfort, shallow happiness, and a false sense of security. Both face the real possibility of reaching the end of their lives to discover that they have not lived. Hell awaits Dante's Pilgrim, and death and destruction from a nuclear war lie ahead for Montag. Further, the problems of the two protagonists reflect those of their culture writ large. What is fascinating and enriching is that both protagonists experience an awakening and an

enlightenment about life that are strikingly similar. This study will examine the similarities of these two texts to show how they illustrate a dynamic pattern of awakening, enlightenment, and redemption.

The most fundamental similarity between the two works is that of structure. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a classic from fourteenth-century Italy. *Fahrenheit 451* is a modern science fiction tale from a twentieth-century Midwestern author. Ironically, given that Ray Bradbury denies any inspiration from Dante for his book ("An Evening with Ray Bradbury," November 19, 2008), Dante is mentioned explicitly as one of the authors to be burned in the City.[1] Yet in spite of Bradbury's denial, parallels exist at all levels. First, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is divided into Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Hell is where sinners are trapped because of their sins. Purgatory is where one must suffer to become ready to go on. Heaven is where one experiences the glories of redemption. *Fahrenheit 451* is explicitly divided into three parts as well: "The Hearth and the Salamander," "The Sieve and the Sand," and "Burning Bright." Montag starts in the hellish City (the Inferno). He is not only trapped in the city, he is trapped in a way of life, because citizens are not allowed to know any other way. He goes through the purgatory of decision, suffering as he separates from the City, and then crosses the river into life (the redemption). Thus the structure of Bradbury's novel parallels that of Dante's poem.

A further similarity is that both protagonists need assistance to awaken them to their plight, and for each that assistance comes in the person of a young woman. At the beginning of the *Inferno,* Dante's Pilgrim finds himself in a dark wood. He has strayed from the right path and, while he sees the sunlight above, he cannot find a way to reach it because his way is blocked by three beasts. Help comes in the figure of Virgil, the famous poet, who has been sent by Beatrice, Dante's symbol of God's divine grace, to serve as his guide. As the embodiment of spiritual purity, Beatrice is aware that Dante's Pilgrim needs help to find his way, but spiritual purity cannot exist in Hell and would never be found there, so she must send Virgil as a guide. Virgil is a good choice because he is Dante's countryman and favorite poet, and Virgil has previously made a trip through Hell. In the *Vita Nuova*, Dante tells more of Beatrice. His reaction to their brief encounters can only be described as "a boy with a crush" (Chiarenza, 20-21). After she dies, he is in a crisis; he is unsure if it would betray

his love for her to marry another, yet to outward eyes, they never had a relationship. Yet he sees her as his ideal love, a feminine representation of the glory of God. Dante goes on to marry, but he never forgets Beatrice. She is his spiritual guide to Heaven, even after her death. The Dante-Beatrice relationship can be understood in terms of the courtly love tradition of Dante's time. In that tradition, the woman is an ideal not to be experienced in an actual physical relationship.

In *Fahrenheit 451* Montag's situation is similar to that of Dante's Pilgrim's. Montag is lost in mindless conformity to the life-denying values of the City, but when the novel opens, he does not know he is lost. On the contrary, he is proud of his work as a fireman. The book begins with the line, "It was a pleasure to burn." Furthermore, what is wrong in the City is not so obvious because on the surface the City represents positive human goals of happiness, comfort, and security. Fortunately for Montag, there is a young girl named Clarisse McClellan who, through her importuning, awakens him to the realization that something is wrong in his life. During their first brief walk as neighbors, this young girl leaves Montag somewhat perplexed. Even though (or perhaps because) he is married, Montag has all the signs of being infatuated with this girl. She unsettles him. Worse, for someone in Bradbury's City, she makes him think with her questions. Montag's crisis comes when at one point he asks, "How did I get so empty?" 44). The fact that Clarisse dies is ironically parallel to the *Inferno.* Beatrice, a symbol of spiritual purity and divine grace, could not exist in Hell, and Clarisse, a healthy symbol of the natural world, cannot survive in the artificial environment of the City. In fact Beatty, the fire chief, referred to Clarisse as a "time bomb." Her death in the novel confirms that something is seriously wrong with the City. But Clarisse's death poses a further problem for Montag; he is without a guide. Unlike Dante's Pilgrim, Montag must find his own way, and he locates Faber, who becomes his teacher. At the end of the novel, when Montag walks on the railroad tracks which lead to the colony of book people, he senses that Clarisse had been there before him. Thus he realizes that though Clarisse is dead, she was his guide all along, leading him to Granger, who completes his education. In an interesting note, in the film version of *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag discovers Clarisse among the book people. In commenting on how he might revise the novel, Bradbury mentioned that he would find some way for Clarisse to survive the City and make her way to the book people. When asked if Dante's Beatrice had

served as the inspiration for Clarisse, Bradbury denied any connection. He explained that Clarisse was a version of his younger self, when he was excited by life and the world of nature[2] ("An Evening with Ray Bradbury").

A third parallel is that both protagonists go through a process of enlightenment and education. In one way, the education of Dante's Pilgrim is clearer because Virgil knows that he must make his pupil fully aware of the life-denying results of sin as a general concept; thus, the specific seven deadly sins are presented in a dramatic fashion. They are, indeed, so relentless and repulsive in their distortions of the human form that the Pilgrim at times averts his eyes, but Virgil forces him to look so that his education into the ugliness of sin is complete. Virgil leads the Pilgrim on a tour from the lesser sins to the worst sins, culminating in Satan, frozen in ice at the bottom of the Inferno. Sin in Dante is clearly symbolized by separation from God, and it is fitting that Satan, the worst sinner, is the farthest from God. On the other hand, Montag's process of enlightenment is not so clear or dramatic; in fact, at first Montag has only hints of something wrong—Clarisse's questions cause him to think. Then he discovers Mildred's suicidal tendencies—her overdosing and her fast driving, the deafening sound of the parlor walls, the insane distortion of reality in the commercials, and the trivial conversations of the family on the TV walls. But it is Millie's physical description that reveals how sick she is: "Mildred stood over his bed, curiously. He felt her there, he saw her without opening his eyes, her hair burnt by chemicals to a brittle straw, her eyes with a kind of cataract unseen but suspect far behind the pupils, the reddened pouting lips, the body as thin as a praying mantis from dieting, and her flesh like white bacon. He could remember her no other way" (48).

Through Mildred's devotion to the parlor walls, Montag slowly becomes aware of something badly wrong in his society. Then, even further, there is Clarisse's fear of children her own age and the growing antagonism of the Mechanical Hound. In addition, Montag is confronted with Beatty's explanation and defense of the City, and Beatty is persuasive and eloquent in his arguments. Montag is overwhelmed until he encounters the opposite view of the City and its culture when he visits Faber. Although Faber succeeds in persuading Montag that the City is actually life-denying in its attempt to make life easier, Montag is at a loss as to what course of action to take. Like

Dante's Pilgrim, Montag sees the truth, but doesn't yet know what to do about it.

Dante's Pilgrim discovers the nastiness of sin; Montag discovers the nastiness of the City. In Dante's Hell, suffering, including fire, is used to punish sin. In Bradbury's City, technology, including fire, is used to suppress thought. Although Dante is clearly opposed to sin, and Bradbury clearly promotes thought, both Hell and the City share the goal of controlling people by fear.

Like one whose eyes have been opened to the truth, Montag has the strong impulse to awaken others. He first thinks of a subversive plan to plant books in the homes of firemen, but then, despite Faber's appeal to be cautious, Montag attempts to awaken his wife and her friends with the truth. When he reads Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" to Mildred and her friends, Montag exposes himself as a danger to the City, and Mildred turns him in to the authorities. Her action merely confirms Beatty's suspicions, which are also echoed in the Mechanical Hound's increasing antagonism toward Montag. The City as modern Hell comes alive for Montag when he kills Beatty and becomes a fugitive chased by the Mechanical Hound, the City's perfect representative of its life-denying nature brought about by the misuse of technology.

Another similarity is that both Dante and Bradbury employ a rich pattern of symbolism in their respective works. The parallels here are somewhat uncanny and further illustrate that both writers are addressing issues of crucial importance. Dante creates a cosmic view of life in his *Divine Comedy,* and Bradbury's focus is a bit narrower in its emphasis on technology. Ultimately both writers have a spiritual concern—Dante is concerned with man's relationship to God and Bradbury with man's relationship to God's Creation.

The first symbol in common is the City. A city is an actual place, but even more important, it represents a center for specific values. Augustine's City of God and the Earthly City are the most famous examples; also, Rome has come to be known as the Holy City and Babylon as the symbol for excessive luxury. The *Inferno*'s city, named Dis, is the collection of sinners, the place of eternal punishment for those who have strayed from righteousness. The famous inscription above the gate to Dis reads: "Abandon all hope ye who enter here!" (6). Bradbury's City is not so clearly seen as evil because that City represents the human misuse of technological progress, which has resulted in the abuse of the machine to achieve goals that

were ostensibly positive; human goals of comfort, happiness, and security. However, in dedicating itself to the mass production by the machine and giving in to minority pressure, the City is guilty of what to Bradbury would be an unforgivable sin. In the worship of technology, human beings have given themselves over to the "how" instead of the "why." Consequently, the City has practically shut its inhabitants off from any meaningful contact with and an awareness of nature. The comfort and happiness that the City has to offer come with a high price. As Beatty explains to Montag, because of mass production, life is simplified. Critical thinking, such as that which Clarisse engages in, is discouraged. Books are so dangerous to the City because, as Beatty says, they confuse people by offering conflicting views on issues. As Beatty says, "If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none" (61). It is very significant that planes flying overhead indicate a war is approaching, but the people don't know anything about it. Suddenly, war is declared. Thus the security provided by the City is in reality not actual security but a dangerous illusion.

In addition, the happiness which the City offers is the shallow, mindless parlor walls and the Clara Dove five-minute romance. Beatty's explanation of fun sounds ominously like our own world:

> More sports for everyone, group spirit, fun, and you don't have to think, eh? Organize and organize and superorganize super-super sports. More cartoons in books. More pictures. The mind drinks less and less. Impatience. Highways full of crowds going somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, nowhere. The gasoline refugee. Towns turn into motels, people in nomadic surges from place to place, following the moon tides, living tonight in the room where you slept this noon and I the night before (57).

Beatty's words in the passage above clearly point forward to our own times when professional athletes are paid unbelievable amounts of money and coaches at megauniversities are given greater salaries than the presidents, indicating that priorities have gone very wrong. His remarks bring to mind the hype and hoopla given to the Super Bowl, which has all of the trappings of a religious holiday, a sacred event that draws thousands of spectators and millions via our own "parlor" walls.

A second symbolic parallel is found in the dog, in both works an unnatural dog: Cerebus is a monstrous beast and the Mechanical Hound is even more unnatural. It is ironic that Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to the underworld in Greek mythology, is best described by Virgil, the guide for Dante's Pilgrim. It is worth asking why so many figures from Greek mythology keep ending up in Dante's work, when Christian thought precludes Virgil's Cerberus from being "real." Bradbury also uses mythological references, alluding to the stories of Antaeus, Icarus, and the Phoenix, important cautionary tales about man and nature whose lessons are lost if people are denied access to books. Cerberus is the guardian of Hell, in the third circle, the circle of gluttony. He is there for a purpose: to punish the sinners, and prevent them from leaving. Virgil was able to get past by filling all three of the hungry mouths.

The Mechanical Hound, the "enforcer" of the city, is a guard and a hound, although it does not have three heads. Technology allows the hound to know who the "inners" are. Genetic identification of criminals was still science fiction in the 1950s, but bloodhounds go way back. In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* technology is used as a tool of suppression, and a way to further the separation from the natural world. Montag was able to get away from the technological bloodhound by laying a false trail.

The Mechanical Hound is essential to Bradbury's message for two main reasons. First, it represents the terror of the City. In Dante's *Inferno,* the terror is rather consistent and widespread, as one descends to the lower depths of Hell, where it is focused in the view of Satan as the monster with three heads. In Bradbury's City, the terror is collected in one unnatural creature—the Mechanical Hound. And for Bradbury and Montag the terror is real. Bradbury explained in an interview that his idea for the Mechanical Hound came from an incident in his childhood, when he persuaded his parents to let him stay home alone to listen to a radio broadcast of Arthur Conan Doyle 's "The Hound of the Baskervilles." The howling of the hound terrified him, and he ran screaming out of the house to join his parents who were attending a band concert nearby (Lecture at Eureka College, April 15, 1997). Terror is everywhere in Dante's *Inferno,* but in *Farenheit 451* it is focused carefully in Bradbury's Mechanical Hound and its function in pursuing and dispatching dangerous nonconformists.

In addition to causing fear, the Mechanical Hound represents the City's complete devotion to a technology which has taken a living animal and made it into a machine. The Hound is the result of technology's narrow goals of technique and efficiency. The life of a natural dog is much more complex than hunting and killing, but those other attributes get in the way of efficiency. Thus it is better to have a mechanical dog—a machine—than a natural dog. The Mechanical Hound is a sin against nature. It is truly terrifying because as Montag says to Faber, "[The] Mechanical Hound never fails" (133).

Another symbol common to both works is the river. Ironically, Dante's protagonist crosses the river into Hell while Montag crosses the river into life. Montag's understanding is completed as he floats down the river away from the City. He achieves a self-knowledge that will change him. He realizes the consequences of his life as a fireman—the destruction of burning books. And he sees that he and the sun are both burning, and one has to stop. He is the obvious one to stop because the sun won't. What Montag wants, then, is the world of nature to accept him, and that desire is manifested in a wonderful dream of a girl's face in a window, a night of restful sleep in a barn, and awakening to find a glass of milk, a pear, and some apples as a sign of acceptance. One might say that Montag's floating down the river is a kind of Purgatory for him in which he is cleansed of the City's influence so that when he emerges from the river he is a new man; he is reborn, as it were, into a natural world. When he makes his way to the book people, he senses that Clarisse has been here before. To confirm his redemption, Montag is accepted by the book people and will take his place in the use of books in "the healing of the nations" (165).

Crossing the river into Hell, for its residents, is to abandon life for an eternity of torture, with no possibility of redemption. By crossing the river into Hell, Dante's Pilgrim sees and awakens to the consequences of sin in preparation for his enlightenment and presumed eventual redemption in contrast to the sinners who are being punished there. He achieves a knowledge that changes him about the consequences of sin. Crossing the river for Montag is to abandon the hellish life of the City and move on to redemption.

An obvious yet powerful symbol for both writers is fire, an element that has terrified and fascinated humanity since the dawn of time. In Greek mythology, Prometheus stole fire (back) from Zeus and returned it to humans. For this he was punished. Hesiod suggests Zeus

stole the "means of life" as well (*Works and Days*, lines 42-105). Aeschylus portrays Prometheus, in bringing fire, as having taught men the arts of civilization, such as writing, mathematics, agriculture, medicine, and science. Prometheus is seen in some ways as the father of technology as well as the bringer (restorer) of fire. Fire has been central to our concept of what is human, as distinct from animality.

Fire was critical to survival for early humans, and important to metal working and most other forms of technology. It was first captured by our ancestors to give us heat and light, but it has always been a source of danger, and to this day, fears. Fire is used to attract and repel, create and destroy, label and erase, punish and reward, in many different ways. Dragons breathe fire, steel is forged in fire, forests and houses are destroyed by fire, food is cooked by fire, ideas are said to have caught fire, Hanukkah is a celebration of a long-burning oil lamp, and employees are "fired."

The first part of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is called the *Inferno,* after the flames of Hell. Most people call the whole work Dante's *Inferno,* even though that is only the first part of the book. Canto 25 begins with reference to the burning of a city, and a fire-breathing dragon. In Canto 26, "every flame has snatched a sinner's soul" (45). The flame is a torture as repayment for their sins. In *Fahrenheit 451,* fire is a much more complicated symbol than it is for Dante because of technology. William Touponce cogently expresses how technology has changed the world since Dante s time:

> *Fahrenheit 451* makes vivid for the reader the whole problematic course of Western enlightenment that culminated in technology and the positivistic processes of thought its world-wide dominance have brought about. In order to know nature objectively, we in a sense misrecognize or forget oursleves as a part of nature. The price of progress is brought by a kind of oblivion, like that of a surgical operation on our bodies during which we were unconscious or anesthetized. Consciousness once more restored, we find it dificult to bridge the gap between our present and our past ... (82).

Thus, Touponce explains the cyclical pattern of history on which Bradbury's novel is based. Fire led to knowledge, which led to books, which led to technology, which led to the burning of books and finally to the destruction of the City by war. Most important is Touponce's point that the more highly technological a civilization, the farther removed it is from any meaningful contact with nature.

The first clue to the importance of fire is the title of Bradbury's opening section of the novel: "The Salamander and the Hearth." The Salamander is a mythical creature that can live in the fire and thus is associated with the destructive use of fire as punishment where the forbidden books are found. Ironically, firemen in the City do not put out fires in houses as they once did. The firemen burn the books as a way of enforcing the conformity demanded by the City. This meaning of fire connects with the story of the Phoenix at the end of the novel. On the other hand, the hearth represents the positive meaning of fire. Fire can be used for warmth, which is a life-affirming value. This use of fire is brought home to Montag when he approaches the campfire at the end of the novel. The Salamander and the Phoenix represent one kind of burning and the hearth another. Fire, like technology, is both destructive and beneficial.

In Dante's Hell, fire is used by a just God to punish sinners for their wrongdoings. In Dante's Purgatory, sinners must suffer long enough to recompense for their sins. Fire is punishment, but punishment seen as justice and/or purification even by those who feel the burn. In *Fahrenheit 451,* however, fire is punishment, focused on social control, and not seen even by the fire chief as justice.

Since redemption is the goal of both works, light becomes of utmost importance. Light for Dante and Bradbury symbolizes enlightenment and truth. Dante's *Divine Comedy* moves from a world of darkness, shadows and ugliness to a world of glorious light and beauty. In the conclusion of Paradise, Dante's Pilgrim is overcome with light, which he refers to as "Light Supreme," "Eternal Light," "Living Light," and "Exalted Light." His vision is completed as he sees three rings of light with a human face at the center. The Pilgrim wants to know how the three rings are connected, and his understanding is completed when he discovers that it is "Love, which moves the sun and other stars" (*Paradiso,* Canto 33, 187).

Light in Bradbury's novel is complicated by technology, which has become a false friend to man through human abuse and misuse. Ironically, the City is well-lighted, but with the artificial light produced by electrical power. Actual firelight, a feature of the natural world, offers the desirable alternative. Montag recollects an experience in his childhood when the power went off. He and his mother enjoyed storytelling by candlelight—a shared moment of human warmth. When he comes upon Granger and the book people gathered

around a campfire, Montag discovers that fire can be a source of warmth and light as well as a way to burn books.

At the center of the circles of light in Paradise, Dante's Pilgrim sees a human face. The same is true for Montag's light. He refers to Clarisse as the face of a luminous clock that one sees in the darkness. And later, Clarisse becomes the face of a girl in the window of the farmhouse as Montag is dreaming of being welcomed to the natural world.

The most perceptive view of the importance of light has been noted at the conclusion of *Fahrenheit 451* by Donald Watt. He asserts that the key to Bradbury's message is the Biblical passages that Montag refers to. The first is found in Montag's answer when Granger asks him what he has to offer in joining the book people. Montag replies: "Nothing. I thought I had part of the Book of Ecclesiastes and maybe a little of Revelation, but I haven't even that now" (150). Granger assures Montag that they have perfected a method to recall everything. But by the end of the novel Montag recalls that "[t]o everything there is a season. Yes. A time to break down, and a time to build up. A time to keep silent and a time to speak. Yes, all that. But what else. What else?" (165). Then he recalls the famous passage from Revelations: "And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month ; And the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations" (165).

Watt finds great significance in Montag's move from Ecclesiastes to Revelations and the tree of life for the healing of the nations. According to Watt, "Bradbury draws on the Biblical notion of a heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city where man will dwell with God after the apocalypse. Its appeal is the final stroke of Bradbury's symbolism. In the Bible, the heavenly city needs no sun or moon to shine on it, for God's glory is what keeps it lit. The nations of the world will walk together by this light, and there will be no night there." (36)

Watt explains that this God-light is what Montag chooses over Beatty's nuclear destructive light (36). Thus Bradbury and Dante end their stories with the similar vision that light is essential for human well-being: Light and enlightenment are the central symbols for both writers. The light of Clarisse's face is symbolic of enlightenment in *Fahrenheit 451*; the brilliant light of heaven is symbolic of salvation in the *Divine Comedy*. And Beatrice and Clarisse, in their respective ways, are bearers of light, human figures whose light shines the way to ultimate truth.

Both Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* end in redemption. In fact, the key to the structural pattern of both works is the concept of redemption, which is primarily spiritual. What blocks the healthy spiritual life is sin, and Dante and Bradbury are both concerned with sin, but not exactly in the same way. Dante addresses sin in terms of the seven deadly sins of Medieval Catholic Christianity. Bradbury addresses the sins against life that come from the abuses of technology. Those sins are collected and manifested in Montag's City: the Mechanical Hound is the most obvious manifestation. For Bradbury, it is a sin for technology to remove humans from a meaningful connection with nature. It is a sin for a person of talent not to use that talent. It is a sin for a person to go through life like an automaton or robot. It is a sin for a person not to touch the world in some life-affirming way.

Both stories are about punishment of wrongdoers, ugliness, suffering and death. In the City, technology is used to punish those who think the wrong way. The wrong way, ironically, is to think independently and decide for oneself. As Clarisse explains, the children in school are not encouraged to ask questions. The right way in the City is simply to enjoy the superficial pleasures of happiness; the dreams made in factories and thus mass produced as Granger puts it; the comfort, and simplicity of not offending minorities. In other words, the City promotes conformity and shallow, selfish pleasures. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, pain and suffering are used to punish those who think the wrong way. The wrong way is to do whatever you want, to focus on selfish pleasures. The right way is simply to enjoy the happiness, comfort, and security of nearness to God. In other words, the right way is to love God. The City and Hell are both the appropriate places for narrow, selfish pleasures.

What is redemption? In both stories, paradise is freely choosing the Good. To Bradbury, redemption is re-entering the natural world, which the city denies. Montag is redeemed, from the world where technology is used to control thought, to re-enter the natural world. To Dante, redemption is reunion with God, the creator of the natural world and all that is therein. Going to heaven is entering the spiritual world, which is our true home.

To conclude, we must return to the beginning. In "Experience," Emerson is keenly aware of the problems that interfere with one's potential for living a rich spiritual life. He describes how easy it is to lose sight of what is most important in life. To live dynam-

ically, one must overcome the lethargy that can block the way to a higher life, a lethargy that can leave one confused and lost, whether in a dark wood or in a technologically dependent City. Thus, Dante and Bradbury are both writing cautionary tales. At the beginning of *The Inferno*, Dante's Pilgrim has become sluggish to the destructiveness of sin and has strayed from the right path. Consequently, he needs to be awakened to the consequences of the wrong choices people make by giving into sin. He receives an education about sin and is redeemed at the end of *The Divine Comedy*. Similarly, Bradbury's Montag has been lulled to sleep in a world where technology has been misused to the point that nature is excluded and life has been reduced to a sterile comfort and a false security. In their respective journeys to seek enlightenment, both protagonists experience redemption and, as a result, speak for the life-affirming values that are essential to our spiritual and emotional well-being. Both works focus on an individual protagonist, but the truth that these protagonists learn on their journeys applies in a universal sense as well. Dante and Bradbury are both addressing, respectively, the major problems of their times. Both protagonists have freed themselves from the lethargy that Emerson describes to enable them to live a higher and spiritually dynamic life. To answer Emerson's profound question, both Dante and Bradbury tell us where we should find ourselves. As healthy living beings we should find ourselves in the midst of a mystery and a miracle. We are part of God's Creation which unfolds before us each day. Life is a precious and valuable gift. As healthy individuals we can participate fully in the Creation through living our lives to full measure, through imagination and especially through love. Beatrice and Clarisse enable Dante's Pilgrim and Bradbury's Montag to realize that love is the greatest truth of God's Creation.

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NOTES

[1]Bradbury does not name specifically the setting for *Fahrenheit 451*. Consequently, Montag could be living in any modern technological city, thus giving his cautionary tale a universal significance. Keith Tookey believes that Montag is living in Chicago, but it could be London or Paris. Throughout our essay we have chosen to capitalize the word City to give it the importance that Bradbury intended.

[2]If Bradbury were thinking of Clarisse as his younger self at a time when he was alive to nature, why is the character female? First, Clarisse is a dynamic contrast to Montag's wife. Clarisse is fully alive while Mildred, a pathological narcissist, is dead-alive, actually looking physically sick and, even more important, suicidal. Mildred is one of several characters in Bradbury's fiction who are not truly alive, who are self-absorbed, and who go through the motions of life without really living. Second, to see Clarisse as the equivalent of Beatrice gives *Fahrenheit 451* a richness of content that emphasizes its importance to modern readers.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2009

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A	Anthology	juv	Juvenile fiction
bibl	Bibliography	lang	Language; linguistics
biog	Biography	M	Memoir

corr	Correspondence	N	Novel
crit	Criticism	P	Poetry
D	Drama	pub	Publishing; printing
I	Interview(s)	rev	Review essay
jrnl	Journalism	S	Short fiction

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