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In Honor of

MARC VAN WORMER

PREFACE

With the publication of *MidAmerica IX* the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature marks another year of progress, highlighted by the most successful twelfth annual conference, the Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the Midwest and concurrent Midwest Poetry Festival held at Michigan State University on May 6-8. Awards presented at the conference were the MidAmerica Award to Clarence Andrews and the Mark Twain Award to Wright Morris. The symposium and festival to be held in May 1983 are expected to be equally successful.

The wide variety of essays, many of which had their inception at past symposia, and the impressive bibliography that make up *MidAmerica IX* are further evidence of the continued growth of Midwestern literature and Midwestern literary study. Especially commendable are the efforts of Donald Pady and Robert Beasecker, the Society's bibliographers, in making available the record of Midwestern literature and literary study in this yearbook and in their computerized records. Commendable, too, are the continued efforts of Marc Van Wormer, Conference Coordinator at Michigan State University, in making the symposia and poetry festivals successful. We dedicate this volume to him as an expression of the Society's appreciation.

October, 1982 — David D. Anderson

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JOHN RUSSELL AND THE PIASA LEGEND

JOHN E. HALLWAS

John Russell (1793-1863), who spent much of his life at Bluffdale, Illinois, near Carrollton, was the most well-known fiction writer in that state after James Hall left in 1833. Unfortunately, he was not as talented as Hall, and so today there is little reason to read any of his moralistic and sentimental short stories and novelettes. However, Russell's works were admired in his own day, not only by Hall, who printed "The Emigrant" and "The Spectre Hunter" in his *Western Monthly Magazine*, but by John Mason Peck and John Reynolds, who were also widely known contemporaneous men of letters.

Three decades ago Russell's career was the subject of an article by John Flanagan, but he failed to discuss, or even mention, the most successful story in the author's canon, "The Piasa: An Indian Tradition of Illinois."[1] However, seven years later Russell's authorship of that narrative was discussed by Wayne C. Temple in "The Piasa Bird: Fact or Fiction?" As his title indicates, he was concerned only with determining whether there was any historical basis for the tale — and his research led him to conclude that there was none:

> Russell's story is full of the supernatural and its composition shows the flair of a novelist. He certainly never intended for this fanciful tale to be accepted as a historical article, but the reading public did just that. When questioned by William McAdams about the Piasa legend, Russell admitted that his story was *"somewhat illustrated."* And years later, his son, Spencer G. Russell, related to John F. Snyder that his father at one time confessed to him that the legend of the Piasa Bird was the product of his imagination coupled with Marquette's account.[2]

Temple's conclusion is not very surprising, for a story about a huge man-eating bird was not likely to be factual. However, it is evident from what he uncovered that the Piasa legend should clearly be regarded as Russell's literary creation and not an Indian tale that the latter ran across and simply transcribed for publication.

Although Temple mentions other authors who retold Russell's story, he does not discuss the literary quality of the various versions. Yet this is an interesting consideration because there are significant differences between Russell's tale and later versions that were based on it. These differences allow us to determine how various tellers of the legend tried to interpret it, and they also provide insights into the transmission history of this famous tale.

Russell's account first appeared in an eastern magazine during 1836, and it is brief enough to present here in its entirety:

> No part of the United States, not even the highlands of the Hudson, can vie, in wild and romantik scenery, with the bluffs of the Illinois. On one side of the river, often at the water's edge, a perpendicular wall of rock rises to the height of some hundred feet. Generally on the opposite shore is a level bottom or prairie, of several miles in width, extending to a similar bluff that runs parallel with the river.
>
> One of these ranges commences at Alton, and extends with few intervals for many miles along the left bank of the Illinois. In descending the river to Alton, the traveller will observe between that town and the mouth of the Illinois, a narrow ravine through which a small stream discharges its waters into the Mississippi. The stream is the Piasa. Its name is Indian, and signifies in the language of the Illini, "THE BIRD THAT DEVOURS MEN." Near the mouth of that stream, on the smooth and perpendicular face of the bluff, at an elevation which no human art can reach, is cut the figure of an enormous bird, with its wings extended. The bird which this figure represents was called by the Indians, the Piasa, and from this is derived the name of the stream.
>
> The tradition of the Piasa is still current among all the tribes of the Upper Mississippi, and those who have inhabited the valley of the Illinois, and is briefly this: "Many thousand moons before the arrival of the pale faces, when the great magalonyx and mastodon, whose bones are now dug up, were still living in this land of the green prairies, there existed a bird of such dimensions that he could easily carry off, in his talons, a full grown deer. Having obtained a taste of human flesh, from that time he would prey upon nothing else. He was artful as he was powerful; would dart suddenly and unexpectedly upon an Indian, bear him off into one of the caves in the bluff, and devour him. Hundreds of Warriours attempted for years to destroy him, but without success. Whole villages were nearly depopulated, and consternation spread through all the tribes of the Illini. At length, Ouatoga, a chief, whose fame as a warriour extended beyond the great lakes, separating himself from the rest of his tribe, fasted in solitude for the space of a whole moon, and prayed to the Great Spirit, the Master of life, that he would protect his children from the Piasa. On the last night of the fast, the Great Spirit appeared to Ouatoga in a dream, and directed him to select twenty of his warriours, each armed with a bow and a poisoned arrow, and conceal them in a designated spot. Near the place of their concealment, another warriour was to stand in open view, as a victim for the Piasa, which they must shoot the instant that he pounced upon his prey. When the chief awoke in the morning, he thanked the Great Spirit, and returning to his tribe, told them his dream. The warriours were quickly selected and placed in ambush as directed. Ouatoga offered himself as the victim. He was willing to die for his tribe. Placing himself in open view of the bluff, he soon saw the Piasa perched on the cliff eyeing his prey. Ouatoga drew up his manly form to its utmost height, and planting his feet firmly upon the earth, began to chant the death-song of a warriour. A moment after, the Piasa rose into the air, and swift as the thunderbolt, darted down upon the chief. Scarcely had he reached his victim when every bow was sprung, and every arrow sent, to the feather, into his body. The Piasa uttered a wild, fearful scream, that resounded far over the opposite side of the river, and expired. Ouatoga was safe. Not an arrow, not even the talons of the bird, had touched him. The Master of life, in admiration of the generous deed of Ouatoga, had held over him an invisible shield. In memory of this event, the image of the Piasa was engraved on the face of the bluff." Such is the Indian tradition. Of course I do not vouch for its truth. This much,

however, is certain; the figure of a large bird cut into the solid rock is still there, and at a height that is perfectly inaccessible. How and for what purpose it was made, I leave for others to determine; even at this day, an Indian never passes that spot in his canoe without firing his gun at the figure of the bird. The marks of balls on the rock are almost innumerable.

Near the close of March of the present year, I was induced to visit the bluffs below the mouth of the Illinois and above that of the Piasa. My curiosity was principally directed to the examination of a cave connected with the above traditions, as one of those to which the bird had carried its human victims. Preceded by an intelligent guide who carried a spade, I set out on my excursion. The cave was extremely difficult of access, and at one point of our progress I stood at an elevation of more than one hundred and fifty feet on the face of the bluff, with barely room to sustain one foot. The unbroken wall towered above me, while below was the river. After a long and perilous clambering we reached the cave, which was about fifty feet above the surface of the river. By the aid of a long pole, placed on the projecting rock and the upper end touching the mouth of the cave, we succeeded in entering it. Nothing could be more impressive than the view from the entrance of this cavern. The Mississippi was rolling in silent grandeur beneath us; high over our heads a single cedar hung its branches over the cliff, on the blasted top of which was seated a bald eagle. No other sound or sign of life was near us. A sabbath stillness rested upon the scene. Not a cloud was in the heavens; not a breath of air was stirring. The broad Mississippi lay before us, calm and smooth, as a lake. The landscape presented the same wild aspect as it did before it had yet met the eye of the white man.

The roof of the cavern was vaulted, the top of which was hardly less than twenty-five feet in height. The shape of the cave was irregular, but so far as I could judge, the bottom would average twenty by thirty feet. The floor of this cave throughout its whole extent was a mass of human bones. Sculls and other bones were mingled together in the utmost confusion. To what depth they extended I am unable to decide, but we dug to the depth of three or four feet in every quarter of the cavern and still we found only bones. The remains of thousands must have been deposited here. How, and by whom, and for what purpose, it is impossible even to conjecture. J. R.[3]

Temple's comment that Russell "certainly never intended for this fanciful tale to be accepted as a historical article" is not supported by the text. The very title labels the narrative as an "Indian tradition" rather than a fiction, and the purpose of the author's closing account about his visit to a cave filled with bones is clearly to suggest that the tradition may have been factual.

Moreover, Russell commonly asserted a historical basis, or an authentic source, for his stories. For example, in a longer work published the very next year, "Cahokia: A Legend of the Olden Time in Illinois," he makes this statement about his sources:

> To one who thoroughly understands their language, and is fond of "legendary lore,' a richer banquet can hardly be devised than sitting at the winter evening hearth of one of these venerable fathers of Cahokia, and listening to *"a tale of the times of old."* Partly from this source, and partly from an old manuscript still in my possession, belonging to one of the principal families of that village, I have obtained the following narrative.[4]

Likewise, he opens the article with historical information about the founding of Cahokia. And yet the narrative — about how the French settlement tried to save itself from destruction by offering a beautiful bride to an Indian leader, and how the two fell in love and subsequently died in each other's arms — is just as obviously fictitious as the Piasa story. (It was common for authors of this period to attempt to create an air of authenticity for their stories.)

There are several reasons why Russell was successful in passing off his tale as an authentic Indian tradition. His preface to the narrative — which offers a description of the Piasa River locale, gives an English meaning for the word *Piasa,* and refers to the painting of an enormous bird on a Mississippi River bluff — seems like accurate factual information. While it does not demonstrate that such a man-eating bird existed, it does appear to prove that the story which follows was an Indian tradition. Furthermore, the narrative itself is simple enough to have been an oral tale, and it carries a theme which is essential to Indian culture: self-sacrifice for the tribe. Also, the details about Ouatoga

fasting and praying to the Great Spirit and, later, singing his death song are consistent with what is known of Indian behavior. Finally, the explicit connection of the narrative to the supposed Piasa painting on the bluff (at the end of the tale) appears to verify the existence of the Indian tradition.

It is not surprising that the story also expresses God's (the Great Spirit's) response to Ouatoga's prayers and his protection of the brave warrior, for Russell was a Baptist minister who frequently made a religious point in his narratives. In "Cahokia," for example, the entire town prays to God for help, and the leader of the attacking Indians is converted to the Christian perspective.

The first author to retell the story was Edmund Flagg, who included the narrative about Ouatoga almost verbatim in *The Far West* (1838).[5] It is interesting to note that he does not give credit to Russell for the story, in spite of the fact that he mentions (and quotes from) dozens of other authors in his travel book. He accepted the notion that the Piasa legend was an Indian tradition, and consequently, he must have felt that the text was not Russell's literary property but the transcription of an oral tale. In short, Russell succeeded in convincing Flagg of the story's authenticity.

In the same year A. D. Jones published *Illinois and the West,* which also included a version of the story, and again no credit was given to Russell. However, the narrative is expanded considerably. Jones introduces the tale of Owatoga (as he spells the name) by first describing the extent and power of the Illinois Indians, and then he gives a lengthy description of the Piasa bird:

> they were terrified with a fearful visitation from the Great Spirit. There appeared upon the inaccessible bluffs, where it made its home, an immense and hideous animal, half bird, half beast, which, from the circumstance of its having wings, they called the Piasau Bird. This name, like all Indian names, is significant of the character of the monster which it designates — it means *"the man-destroying Bird."* This bird is described as being of gigantic size, capable of bearing off with ease in its talons, a horse or buffalo. Its head and back were like those of a vulture, with eyes of the most dazzling brilliancy; its wings black as the raven and clothed with thunder, making a most fearful noise in heavy flight; its legs, four in number, and talons like those of a mighty eagle; its body similar to that of a dragon, ending with a tail of huge dimensions, like a scorpion. Its body was gorgeously colored with every hue, and in its flight it made a most imposing spectacle, inspiring terror, awe and wonder.[6]

It is apparent from this description that Jones attempted to sensationalize the tale. And there are other significant variations from Russell's version: Owaoga does not fast alone but with his priests, and his role as sacrificial victim is kept secret until the last minute — although the secrecy serves no useful purpose. Moreover, he delivers a speech to the tribe just prior to the sacrifice, which includes an explanation for the bird's appearance: " 'The Great Spirit is angry with his children. He hath sent us this scourge to punish us for our sins. He hath demanded this sacrifice. Who is so fit as your chief?' "[7] As this indicates, Jones's version makes the Great Spirit the adversary rather than the protector of the tribe.

That Russell's story is the ultimate source for this longer narrative there is no question, but it is apparent that Jones knew only an oral version of the legend. That is to say, Russell's simple tale must have been orally transmitted among residents of the Alton area after it appeared in *The Alton Telegraph* of 1836, for Jones visited that area on June 10, 1838, and heard the story — as he indicates in his book. Specifically, he mentions that he visited the Piasa bluff, which "seemed to corroborate the tradition related to me in the neighborhood."[8] This then explains the extensive variations in Jones's version of the story and the complete lack of verbal correspondence between his narrative and Russell's.

Another version of the tale appeared three years later, in *The Valley of the Mississippi* (1841) by Lewis F. Thomas. He too visited the bluff on which the monster was painted, and he gives a very precise description of what he saw. Either he viewed the original figures (there were actually two of them) described by Marquette, or he viewed someone's restoration of them. In any case, he introduces his version of the tale by saying, "The legend, *as we have heard it,* is as follows. . . [my emphasis]."[9] Hence, his story is also based on an oral version of the Piasa legend,

which he undoubtedly heard while inspecting the bluff north of Alton. Since he mentions that the painting was "marked over with the names of ambitious visitors," it is likely that the fame of the legend had made the bluff a popular place to visit.

Thomas provides numerous details that differ from the versions of Russell and Jones. He asserts that the monster "was covered with scales of every possible color, and had a huge tail, with a blow of which it could shake the earth . . . and its four feet were armed with powerful claws, in each of which it could carry a buffaloe." (Hence, it could carry off four times as many buffaloes as the monster described by Jones.) The "Bird of the Piasau" (as he spells it) is declared to mean "bird of the evil spirit," and the young Indian is called Wassatogo. After the Great Spirit told him that he must "offer himself as a sacrifice" in order to "rid his people of their destroyer," he made elaborate preparations to confront the monster:

> He then assembled the tribe, and made a speech, recounting his deeds of valor, acquainting them of his dream, and exhorting them, like him, to be ever ready to die for their people. Wassatogo then dressed himself in his chieftan's garb, put on his war paint, as if going to battle, and taking his bow, arrows and tomahawk, he placed himself on a prominent point of the rock, to await the coming of the monster-bird.

And when the bird approached, it actually "seized the chieftan in its talons," and Wassatogo then "dealt it a blow on the head with his tomahawk." Hence, the climactic moment in Lewis's version is much more of a battle between man and bird than in the two earlier versions. Consequently, the role of the Great Spirit, who protected Ouatoga in Russell's version, is diminished. However, Thomas's tale is effective, for it reads like a brief item of heroic literature.

During the same decade, two other Piasa stories that differed entirely from Russell's narrative appeared in Illinois newspapers. Both were attempts to displace Russell's legend with other tales that were presented as the genuine tradition behind the painting on the bluff. The earliest is called "The Manitou of the Piasa: An Indian Tradition," and it was written by "L." for *The Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review* in 1844. This story, about

Pottawatomie twins named Peasayah and Onecaw who defeat a monster living along the Mississippi River, is not relevant to the discussion of the Russell legend. However, the author at least recognizes that Russell wrote the other Piasa bird narrative, even though he refers to it as a "gross fable" which simply displays the writer's "ingenuity."[10] It is possible that "L." may have known for sure that Russell's tale was fiction, but more than likely he was simply attacking the notion that it was an Indian tradition in order to replace the tale with his own legendary account.

Another anonymous author took a very different approach to the same goal: he published an article called "The Piasa Bird — An Illinois Legend" in Springfield's *Illinois Journal* in 1847 under the name of John Russell.[11] Temple assumes that this story — about an Indian named Alpeora who defeats a man-eating condor — was written by Russell, but it undoubtedly was not. In the first place, Russell was not living in Illinois at the time and, hence, was not publishing in the state's newspapers. Second, as Temple indicates, Russell reprinted the Ouatoga narrative in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* of Utica, New York in 1848.[12] Thus, he had no intention of replacing his tale with another Piasa legend. Third, the 1847 story is unlike any other literary work by Russell. It has no Christian or moral overtones at all, and it is clearly not written in Russell's style. (For instance, he would never have said, "the Illinois were at their wits end what to do," which is far too idiomatic for his formal mode of expression.) In any case, this story, like the 1844 tale, failed to replace Russell's narrative as the legend of the Piasa bluff. There is no evidence that it was ever reprinted or retold.

In 1873 Martin Beem published a Piasa story in Springfield's *Illinois State Register* that is obviously related to Russell's legend, but at the same time, it is considerably different from the earlier versions. The central figure is Lincahtello, an Indian chieftain who was leader of the Ottowwah and Illinois tribes. He is described as "saddened at the mysterious loss of his only daughter, and the death of her lover, who flung himself over the cliffs, in a moment of despair" — a circumstance which is not further explained in the tale.[13] The Piasa bird is depicted as "Possessing an eagle's head and wings, — the former crested with steel, — it had the tongue of an adder, and the tail of a dragon, tipped with the

sting of a scorpion. It had four legs, human to the knees, and eagle the rest, pointed by the longest and sharpest talons. . . ." And the author explicitly indicates that the meaning of the word *Piasa* is a mystery: "how it received its name, or what that name meant, is unknown."

Moreover, in this tale, the Indian medicine men attempt to get rid of the monster before Lincahtello steps in. They first invoke Meesakkamnego, the grandmother of mankind, then Klapocheesek, the north wind, and finally Ahminmeeogeechee, the spirit of Thunder. When all of their incantations fail, they appeal to Lincahtello, who is described as a heroic figure: "Lincahtello was a great chief, wise in council, strong in arm, brave in battle. He had often dallied with death, and laughed it to scorn. He had gone fifty days without food; had cut the tongue from a bear, torn the fangs from an adder; and had made the greatest chief of his foes swallow an arrow. . . ." He proposes (without the help of the Great Spirit) that someone be sacrificed in order to allow the bird to be ambushed. The identity of the victim is kept a secret until the last minute, as in the version by Jones. After Lincahtello offers himself and the monster is killed, the Indians rejoice.

The article concludes with a variety of additional information. Lincahtello's later death and burial is briefly described. Then the coming of white men — "another scourge, deadlier and more fearful" — given as the reason why the Ottawwah and Illinois Indians died and the memory of Lincahtello was forgotten (Beem thus forgets to indicate how he could have acquired the story.) He also mentions the "lover's leap" where Lincahtello's daughter's lover supposedly hurled himself into the river. Finally, he asserts that time has now destroyed the painting of the bird on the bluff.

Beem's story is not as different from Russell's as it first appears. Evidently he combined an oral version of the Russell legend with a vague tale about a lover's leap and added information of his own about the activities of Indian medicine men. (The name Lincahtello was apparently associated with the lover's leap story, for he is first introduced as the father of the missing daughter whose lover subsequently leaped to his death.) In any case, the narrative is now so involved and so sentimentalized that it

could no longer be easily mistaken for an authentic Indian tradition.

Fourteen years after Beem's story appeared two scholars published their investigations of the Piasa legend. William McAdams included his findings in *Records of Ancient Races in the Mississippi Valley* (1887), and Perry Armstrong privately printed a slim volume called *The Piasa, or the Devil Among the Indians* (1887). They recognize that Russell wrote the first published version of the legend, and they both reprint his text. As mentioned earlier, McAdams offers evidence that Russell's tale was exaggerated, if not entirely fictitious: "A few years after the publication of the tradition of the Piasa, we wrote a letter to Russell at Bluffdale. He answered that there was a somewhat similar tradition among the Indians, but he admitted, to use his own words, that the story was '*somewhat illustrated*'."[14] On the other hand, Armstrong, who was a much less capable scholar, simply accepts Russell's article as fact. Moreover, he offers, as a complement to it, "The Miami Tradition of the Piasa," which he claims was "related to us nearly sixty years ago by a chief."[15] It is unrelated to the Russell story and features two warring Indian tribes, two Piasa monsters, and a version of the Starved Rock legend. Unlike Russell's tale, Armstrong's could never be misunderstood as anything but his own concoction.

Nine years later one more version of Russell's Piasa legend was published. Mary Hartwell Catherwood, author of many romantic novels and short stories about the Midwest, wrote a series of articles about the Lower Illinois River Valley for the Chicago *Daily Tribune* in January of 1896, and the third of these is entitled "Legend of the Piasa."

The article is part historical investigation and part narrative. She begins by mentioning that Marquette first saw the picture on the bluff, and she discusses William McAdams's description of the Piasa in his recent book. More importantly, she asserts that she has visited "Squire Russell of Bluffdale, who has been nearer the Piasa than any person now living," to get his recollections of the painting on the bluff.[16] She must have been referring to John Russell's son, Spencer, for the author had died in 1863, but in any case, she quotes three paragraphs about the paintings that are presented as "Squire Russell's" recollections.

Then she offers a version of the Piasa story which is very close to Russell's 1836 legend. However, there are no verbal correspondences, and so she was probably retelling the story approximately as Spencer Russell related it to her. Unfortunately, her style has several colloquial expressions that detract from the effectiveness of the tale: "down the hopper," "by hook or crook," "no more free lunches," and so on. Her most distinctive addition to the narrative is an attempt to heighten the emotional impact of the story with a sensational description of the monster in action: "He hangs an instant over the wretched village, his bat wings quivering, his fiery eyes selecting; he drops and is away! One more . . . warrior is gone. His doomed legs may be seen kicking and struggling as that ugly beast trails away in its low and oozing flight with him."[17]

She concludes the article by presenting the hypothesis — based on Chapter IV of McAdam's' book — that the Piasa bird may have been the last of the prehistoric flying reptiles. Her final line asks, "do we positively know there never was a Piasa, a Destroyer, a Thunder-bird — a true lumbering saurian, hanging with claw-fingers to the cliffs of the Illinois?"[18]

As the foregoing discussion has shown, the main reason why Russell's tale inspired so many later versions of the Piasa legend is that it became an orally transmitted story in the Alton area. This is surely why Russell is not referred to by writers like Jones, Lewis, and Beem — all of whom had at least visited the Piasa bluff region — and it is also the reason why later printed versions had so many differences from the narrative published in 1836.

It is also worth emphasizing that Russell's tale is the most well-written version of the Piasa legend. The spare narrative very effectively conveys his two themes: Ouatoga's devotion to the welfare of his tribe and the Great Spirit's interest in helping the warrior and his people. In contrast, both Jones and Beem indicate that the monster was sent by the Great Spirit, and thus, they confuse or eliminate the second theme. Likewise, they both add the melodramatic but essentially pointless matter of Ouatoga's (Lincahtello's) secrecy about who will be sacrificed in the ambush attempt. Furthermore, their descriptions of the monster add sensationalism but diminish the sense of mystery about the Piasa bird that is found in Russell's story. To some extent, this is

also true of the version by Thomas, although it is the most well-constructed narrative aside from Russell's. The emotionalism of Catherwood's story, as well as the frequent colloquialisms in her style, make it perhaps the least satisfactory of the Piasa versions. Finally, it should be stressed that no one succeeded in creating a frame for the narrative that was as effective as Russell's. In short, "The Piasa: An Indian Tradition of Illinois" is not only the source of a famous Illinois legend, it is the one literary work by John Russell that deserves a continuing readership.

Western Illinois University

NOTES

1. See "John Russell of Bluffdale," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 42 (1949), 272-91.
2. "The Piasa Bird: Fact or Fiction?" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 49 (1956), 316. The mention of "Marquette's account" refers not to a story about a man-eating bird but to the famous explorer's journal description of "2 monsters" painted on a Mississippi River bluff. See *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., 1900), LIX, 139-41.
3. [John Russell], "The Piasa: An Indian Tradition of Illinois," *The Family Magazine*, August 1836, 101-02. The article was soon reprinted in *The Alton Telegraph*, 28 Sept. 1836, *The Sangamo Journal*, 10 Oct. 1836, and probably other Illinois newspapers as well. The newspapers identified Russell as the author.
4. "Cahokia: A Legend of the Olden Time in Illinois," *The Alton Telegraph*, 18 Oct. 1837, p. 1.
5. *The Far West*, in *Early Western Travels 1748-1846*, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), XXVI, 123-25.
6. *Illinois and the West* (Boston: Jordan and Co., 1838), pp. 54-55.
7. Ibid., p. 57.
8. Ibid., p. 59.
9. "Piasau Rock," *The Valley of the Mississippi* (St. Louis: J. C. Wild, 1841), p. 71. Since the brief story is contained on pages 71 and 72, subsequent quotations from it will not be footnoted.
10. "The Manitou of the Piasa: An Indian Tradition," *The Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review*, 20 April, 1844, p. 1. The story itself is concluded in the April 27 issue.
11. "The Piasa Bird—An Illinois Legend," *Illinois Journal* (Springfield), 28 Oct. 1847, p. 1.
12. "The Piasa Bird: Fact or Fiction?", p. 321.
13. "The Piasa-Bird: A Legend of the Illinois," *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), 14 June 1873, p. 2. Since the entire article appears on page two of the newspaper, subsequent quotations from it will not be footnoted.

14. *Records of Ancient Races in the Mississippi Valley* (St. Louis: C. R. Barns, 1887), p. 5.
15. *The Piasa, or the Devil Among the Indians* (Morris, Illinois: E. B. Fletcher, 1887), p. 34.
16. "Legend of the Piasa," in *Lower Illinois Valley Local Sketches of Long Ago*, ed. Eileen Smith Cunningham (Kane, Illinois: Umphress Printing Co., 1975), p. 22.
17. Ibid., p. 23.
18. Ibid., p. 25.

HAMLIN GARLAND: REALIST OF OLD AGE

LELAND KRAUTH

When he is remembered at all, Hamlin Garland is recalled in literary history as a writer who took the right trail in the beginning, as the realist of *Main-Travelled Roads*, only to wander astray into the thin atmosphere of rocky mountain romance in the end. Garland has been praised for opening the Midwest to fiction more authentically than his regional predecessors, writers like Edward Eggleston, E. W. Howe, and Joseph Kirkland; for fulfilling Howells' dictum that the commonplace is the proper subject for the realist; and for instilling into the main-stream of American writing a capacious yet gritty humanitarian sympathy. But he has, I believe, also done one other notable thing: he has given serious, extended, and successful treatment to a subject that is more often than not skirted in American literature — old age.

Garland's consideration of old people is especially notable because it runs counter to the prevailing myths embodied in the classic literature of our culture. Whitman gave voice to the image that has stirred the American literary imagination most deeply:

> As Adam early in the morning,
> Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep
> Behold me where I pass . . .[1]

Our literature has been predisposed to see America in Edenic terms, as the New World garden, and to see the archetypal Americans as the New Adam and the New Eve, wandering hand-in-hand their solitary way, perpetually beginning anew.[2] With their emphasis upon youthful innocence and change, our Edenic myths exclude *a priori* the elderly whose characters tend to be fixed and whose knowledge has come from a gradual accumulation of experience. In this context, Garland's depiction of the aged is both a needed counterbalance and a daring experiment.

While old age is a motif running throughout Garland's many prose works (he wrote over fifty separate volumes), it appears most definitely, I believe, in two categories of his writing: first in the fiction centered on the Middle Border, of which *Main-Travelled Roads* is clearly the most significant; and second, in Garland's journal, which is a neglected masterwork of American letters. By looking briefly at these, I hope to show not only Garland's realistic view of old age but also the significance he assigns the aged.

Garland himself outlived his generation of realists, "The Class of the '70s" as Warner Berthoff has called them,[3] that included Stephen Crane and Frank Norris. But long before he was old himself, Garland was haunted by visions of the elderly, by images of people who had, as he put it in one of the prosey, sentimental verses he sometimes mistook for poetry, grown old together:

> F'r forty years next Easter day,
> Him and me in wind and weather
> Have been a-gittin' bent 'n' gray,
> Moggin' along together.[4]

The "bent 'n' gray" loom large in Garland's fiction from the first, partly because they were pivotal in his life. As Garland repeatedly made clear, the immediate impetus behind *Main-Travelled Roads* was his return from the East, first in 1887 and then again in 1888, to the prairie home of his aged parents in Ordway, South Dakota, where he discovered both regional poverty and familial distress. With a lacerating mixture of pity and guilt, he witnessed "the ugliness, the endless drudgery, and the loneliness of the farmer's lot," and he found his parents, especially his mother, hopelessly "imprisoned" in that dreary life.[5] Most critics have emphasized the general awareness of hard times instilled in Garland by his returns, but it seems clear that what stirred his creativity, as it cut closest to the bone of his compassion, was the plight of his aging parents. Garland got the idea for the first of the *Main-Travelled Roads* stories, "Mrs. Ripley's Trip," from his mother, and he wrote most of it in between grinding work with his fifty-nine year old father as a stacker in the wheat harvest. In a real sense, Garland's aged and struggling parents — to whom he dedicated his book — provided the models as well as the inspiration for *Main-Travelled Roads.*

Old people are central to the book. They appear in one role or another in all six of the original stories, and they are prominent in four of them. Garland creates his old people in the spirit of the realist — or more exactly, in the spirit of what he would come to call "veritism," which was for him a combination of truth to things as they are and to individual perception. In *Crumbling Idols* he summarized the essence of his version of realism in this injunction: "Write of those things of which you know most, and for which you care most. By so doing you will be true to yourself, true to your locality, and true to your time."[6] Garland's old people are perfect examples of this theory. While they are patterned after his family members, about whom Garland cared deeply, they represent quite convincingly the Middle Border region in its time of agrarian struggle. They appear as the debilitated survivors of the hardships of Midwestern life.

On the face of it, the most commonplace feature of Garland's elderly characters is their attachment to the land. Of course the heroes of our literature are often found absorbed in the natural world, whether that world is a receding frontier ,a whale-haunted ocean, a Mississippi flowing insistently South, or a rocky mountain peak rising starkly from the plains. Garland's aged characters, however, inhabit a more down-to-earth landscape; they are simply living on farms. Garland frames the opening and closing of the book with realistic scenes of old people at work on the land. In the first story, "A Branch-Road," old man Kinney, who is, Garland says, a "Hard-featured, wiry old man," "entering his second childhood," is pictured beginning "to limp painfully" as he goes through the daily chore of "driving the cows" out to pasture, and in the last story of the original six, "Mrs. Ripley's Trip," old Ethan Ripley is seen "husking all alone in the field, his spare form rigged out in two or three ragged coats, his hands inserted in a pair of gloves minus nearly all the fingers, his thumbs done up in 'Stalls', and his feet thrust into huge coarse boots."[7] Both men are bent and stiff, weary from work, poverty, and age. Like Kinney and Ripley, all the elderly of *Main-Travelled Roads* are locked into a farm life that yields only a marginal existence at best. They are enslaved on the land, and while its natural beauty provides intermitent satisfaction, there is no retirement from their grinding work short of death.

Garland's old people of the Middle Border do not live in consonance with the deeper rhythms of the natural world. Max Westbrook has pointed out that the seminal Western hero has an intimate relationship with nature in its most profound dimension; he is, Westbrook says, one who has experienced at some moment the sacred "original creation" and thereafter knows the essential "unity" of all things.[8] For all of their direct contact with the land, Garland's old people have no such knowledge. They do not take from the land ultimate truth, but only labor to eke out a living. They are not extraordinary Western heroes but ordinary Midwestern people, a part of the land in its non-mythic actuality.

The young people of *Main-Travelled Roads* often try to sever themselves from the land. Will Hannan, Agnes Kinney, Howard McLane, Rob Rodemaker, and Julia Peterson all leave their Middle Border farms for such places East and West as New York, South Dakota, and Arizona. In their desire to escape, to flee from home, as well as in their mobility, they are typical of the figures who populate most American fiction, characters who are, more often than not, on the run, lighting out for the territories—or if they start there, for the cities—to get away from or to catch up with the rest. Further, in their urgent exodus Garland's younger people trace a pattern that will become distinctive in Midwestern literature — a path of departure followed by such later figures as Anderson's George Willard, Lewis's Carol Kennicott, and Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, to mention only a few.[9] Garland's old people, on the other hand, are sedentary. And this makes them unique. They are confined to their regional homes by economic necessity, by the exhaustion of old age, and, most importantly, by choice. Of all the elderly people in *Main-Travelled Roads* only one, Mrs. Ripley, leaves the region, and she does so simply to visit her family in the state of New York. Significantly, having begun *Main-Travelled Roads* with the flight of young Will Hannan, Garland ends the volume with the return of old Mrs. Ripley, who comes back to her husband, her grandson, and her work — to stay.

At the emotional and normative center of *Main-Travelled Roads* is the home. With the single exception of old widow Gray in "The Return of a Private," all of Garland's old people are

married couples — home-folk "Moggin' along together," as he put it in his poem. In all six of the stories Garland depicts families which include more than one generation. While he is attentive to the hardships of farming and the snares of capitalism, issues which make *Main-Travelled Roads* protest fiction, Garland envisions the ultimate threat arising from these conditions as the loss of the family home. Fully two-thirds of the stories turn upon either the fact or the possibility of dispossession. Such loss looms as the ultimate horror, for home is the core of life in Garland's Middle Border. Lapsing at one point into Victorian sentimentality, Garland observes,

> There is no despair as deep as the despair of a homeless man or woman. To roam the roads of the country or the streets of the city, to feel there is no rood of ground on which the feet can rest, to halt weary and hungry outside lighted windows and hear laughter and song within—these are the hungers and rebellions that drive men to crime and women to shame. (p. 166)

The homes Garland cherishes are uniformly dilapidated, realistic emblems of Midwestern poverty and deprivation. Yet they are enlivened by the spirit of their aged inhabitants, especially the old women.

For all of his interest in realism, Garland was, as Jay Martin has observed, "a maker and follower of myth and romance."[10] His imagination, even at its most factual, strained to lift its creations into larger configurations of meaning. In *Main-Travelled Roads* this inclination results in a glorification of the Aged Mother. While the Mother figure obviously derives from Garland's own mother, to find in the type, as some critics have, only an embarrassingly unconscious Oedipal love is to miss Garland's indication of universality. Old Widow Gray, old Mother Council, old Mrs. Ripley are virtually mythologized as avators of love; they are Garland's equivalents of the archetypal Great Earth Mother who is the source and sustainer of life.[11] Garland describes Old Widow Gray, the quintessence of the type, in quasisacramental language as the "visible incarnation of hospitality" (p. 141), and he compares the aged Mother Council to the sun and endows her with the power to instill vitality into those lifeless in body and spirit (p. 163). Garland is too realistic to bestow full mythic stature

upon the Mothers of the Middle Border, but he sees them all as elemental forces, universal nourishers, timeless figures of unconditional, enduring charity.

These almost mythic women live in a world that is not only real but even shabby. The widow Gray's parlor, a best-room carpeted with "a faded and patched rag" rug, is decorated, Garland says, by a "horrible white-and-green-striped wall-paper" and "a few ghastly effigies of dead members of the family hung in variously-sized oval walnut frames" (p. 142). Whatever the failures of taste here (the room is Garland's counterpart to the Grangerford parlor in *Huckleberry Finn*), the family portraits attest to a sense of the past. Unlike the typical heroes of our literature who are so bereft of history as to exist primarily in space, not time, Garland's old people are linked to the past. They have family as well as personal histories. Both resentments, like the Hannans' dislike of the Kinneys in "A Branch-Road," and loyalties, like the McTurgs' ties to the MacLanes in "Up the Coulé," linger through generations. The young are identified as the son or daughter of their parents, and the old are defined by the time they — or their parents — first settled in the region. Garland's old people naturally conceive of themselves in time as well as place, as Jane Ripley does when she explains her desire for a trip, "I ain't been away't stay overnight for thirteen years in this house, 'n' it was just so in Davis Country for ten more" (p. 173). Having lived out their histories, the aged retell them to newcomers with dignified restraint — in "Western fashion," Garland says, slowly, equitably, trading one long lifestory for another (p. 157).

Embodying the past, Garland's old people represent not only continuity but also an ethic of communal cooperation, the code of "help" that obtained of necessity when the land was first settled. The sense of mutuality that informed such pioneer tasks as house-roofing, barn-raising, and harvesting lives on in the elderly people of *Main-Travelled Roads*. It leads the old Councils first to take-in the Haskins family and then to back their effort to farm with advice, seed, stock, and labor. And it prompts old widow Gray to help feed Private Smith's family while he is at war. In the later additions to *Main-Travelled Roads* this ethic of cooperation degenerates into what one critic has called Garland's "ersatz glorification of small-town togetherness,"[12] but in

the original stories the code convincingly animates the old people. For while Garland is, as Donald Pizer has pointed out, a romantic individualist,[13] he deviates from romantics like Emerson and Thoreau in his outright celebration of communal living, both in the extended families headed by the elderly and in the larger rural society knit together by a common past.

Perhaps most importantly Garland's old people — like Faulkner's after him — endure. Despite their deprivations and sufferings, despite their drudgery and poverty, they survive, and their survival is in itself a kind of triumph. For Garland their spirit is unconquerable. Intertwining the ideas of a harsh land, of home and family, of mutual concern, and of a binding past, Garland conveys the spirit of his old people in the image of old Mrs. Ripley returning from her once-in-a-lifetime trip:

> And off up the road the indomitable little figure trudged, head held down to the cutting blast. Little snow-fly, a speck on a measureless expanse, crawling along with painful breathing, and slipping, sliding steps—"Gittin' home to Ripley an' the boy." (p. 184)

In *Main-Travelled Roads* Garland envisions the Midwest as a coherent culture: built upon a series of family farms, centered in the values of the home, animated by an ethic of communal cooperation, and bound together by the past living on into the present in the old people. Garland creates a dramatic and symbolic representation of the cohesion of the Middle Border ethos in "Up the Coulé," when William McTurg plays, for the young and the old, for the permanent community members and the temporarily estranged native sons, the old fiddle tunes of frontier settlement.[14] As McTurg plays the old songs of Westward dreaming, the people of the Middle Border sense their common past and so draw together in their present. Personal resentments, intellectual differences, economic disparities, and separate generations are all bridged as the region's music sounds the past. The moment of transfiguring music is, however, heavy with melancholy, for McTurg's music reminds the community of unrealized hopes as well as heroic achievements.

Ignored in criticism, the aged William McTurg is one of the most significant figures in *Main-Travelled Roads*. Garland depicts him as an embodiment of the past: he is a patriachal figure —

a grizzled old man with white "hair and beard" and "great lion-like head," a "soft-voiced giant" who, despite his years, holds himself as "erect as an Indian" (pp. 52-53). McTurg's enormous strength, instinctive kindness, and aesthetic appreciation of the land's austere beauty represent the noble qualities of the early pioneers. Most importantly, old McTurg is the native artist who expresses in his music the heritage of the region. Unlike the elderly mothers who suffer the ills of advancing age but who in their maternal aspect seem to rise beyond time, out of history to the realm of myth, Garland's regional artist is timebound, linked to a specific moment of heroic settlement. His traditional materials express again and again the emotions, aspirations, and endeavors of a bygone era. In *Main-Travelled Roads* both the character of this artist and his art are honored.

But in *Prairie Folks,* one of the sequels to *Main-Travelled Roads,* the native artist becomes a displaced person, as change overtakes Garland's Middle Border. In "Daddy Deering," for instance, Garland conveys with considerable power both the coming of old age and the passing of an heroic era. Deering, described as a "gaunt old man of sixty years" or "older," as a "giant" with a body as "bony and tough as hickery," is a varient of the aged William McTurg, and like McTurg, Deering is both prodigious worker of the land and its native artist (PF, pp. 157-58). As a former logger, farmer, horse trader, cattle herder, hog butcher, and grain harvester, he is the epitome of the passing Middle Border life, and "above all else," Garland tells us, he loves to "play the fiddle for dances" (PF, p. 165). With more grim honesty than pathos, Garland shows Deering's gradual but steady loss of physical prowess, a decline that finally leaves him crippled in his hands and lame in his legs. His diminished state terrifies him; it makes him, Garland observes, begin "to think and to tremble," for it brings "age and decay close to him" (PF, pp. 171-72). Deering's demise strips him of his heroic stature as an invincible pioneer. At the same time, the changing culture of the region denies him his place as its artist, and for Deering — and no doubt for Garland — this is more tragic than physical decay.

In his early old age Deering is able to fiddle for the local dances, sitting in a chair on the kitchen table "as if it were a

throne," bearing himself with a "rude sort of grace and a certain dignity," playing the songs filled with "old-time memories" (PF, pp. 166, 168). Although the young people delight more in his "antics" than his "tunes," they are nevertheless "immensely pleased" with him (PF, p. 166). But as an even newer generation comes of age, as the old neighbors die, as the young migrate West or to the cities, as, Garland says, "the wholesome simplicity of pioneer days is lost, Daddy Deering becomes not only unwanted as a musician but even unwelcome as a "visitor" (PF, p. 170). He says flatly of himself, "I'm left out" (PF, p. 170), and ironically his plain, laconic statement marks him indelibly as a Middle Border man, even as it expresses his exclusion from the region's present life. The utterance is Garland's epitaph for all his timebound heroes, who become obsolete when the prairie lands are broken, when their own Herculean bodies decay, and when their traditional music falls upon indifferent young ears.

After *Main-Travelled Roads,* to which *Prairie Folks* is a kind of coda, Garland soon shifted his fiction from the Middle Border to the Rocky Mountain West. From 1898 to 1916 he created a series of romances notable for their flimsiness. With the occasional exception of an ancient Indian meant to suggest the passing of the oldest West, Garland's dozen or so romances do not attend to the aged in any significant way. Perhaps his most interesting use of old people in the romances is in fact a single brief scene in *Cavanagh: Forest Ranger* (1910) in which he describes an old government scout, an old miner, and an old remittance man—all figures of an earlier era—living out their later years in a dreary poverty, relieved only by half-illusory memories of the "good old days." All three of these early Western men are displaced by change, much as Daddy Deering is. Largely ignoring the aged, Garland's romances center upon the young, for compared to his Middle Border fictions, Garland's tales of the far West are a crescendo of youth and decrescendo of reality. Aging himself, Garland recaptured his youth vicariously in his romances, evading the reality of his condition as well as the actuality of Western life.

Garland's most important work after *Main-Travelled Roads* is his autobiographical tetralogy of Midwestern life: *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917), *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), *Trail-Makers of the Middle Border* (1926), and *Back-Trailers from*

the Midle Border (1928). Paradoxically Garland, who escaped his own farm life to become a writer in the East, did so only to discover, as Donald Pizer has said, that the "world of his mother and father, of the farm and of westering," was the "one great emotional reality of his life and . . . in a sense his only literary material."[15] The four Middle Border volumes confirm Henry James's judgment that in Garland "saturation" amounts almost to "genius," and on the basis of these works Warner Berthoff rightly insists that Garland has made a "genuine contribution to the documentary record of American life."[16] But what the tetralogy also documents is Garland's early realistic fiction, his *Main-Travelled Roads*. His fictional old people in particular are revealed as authentically modeled upon his family—his father and mother, to be sure, but also his grandparents and his uncles. William McTurg and Daddy Deering are based on Garland's maternal uncles, the McClintocks, as well as the local farm-worker, Daddy Fairburn, while the Widow Gray and Mother Council reflect his grandmother McClintock as well as his own mother. The Middle Border chronicles thus define in their different way the same old people, with the same strengths and vulnerabilities, that appear in the fiction.

Garland did, however, hit upon one new thing in his tetralogy —his "final literary voice."[17] That voice is of course the personal one, a harmonious blending of realistic statement with nostalgic reminiscence. Nowhere is this voice more honest or more moving than in his diaries. Beginning in 1898, Garland kept a journal of his daily life until his death in March of 1940. These diaries, excerpts of which have been published, are a rich record of the man and of the several eras he lived through. Of particular interest are the entries from Garland's later years, for in them he faced his own aging. His life, in a sense, caught up at last with his imagination, and he became more than ever the realist of old age.

Coming somewhat late to literature, not publishing his first book until he was thirty-one, Garland was extremely conscious of his age. At forty he mused in his diary that he had reached "the youth of old age," and from then on no year passed without attention to his advancing age.[18] The frequency and the candor with which Garland recorded his days are the more notable because he often felt there was little meaning and satisfaction in

existence. "Life," he observed, "will not bear close investigation. It yields depressing results at its best" (p. 50). Garland's account of his older age centers about three interrelated conditions, all, as he said, "depressing," yet all fully and realistically recorded: his physical and mental decline, his increasing isolation, and his sense of obsolescence.

Perhaps the most startling motif in the diaries is the detailed account of physical and mental decay. Garland felt that his vitality had begun to ebb at fifty, and each succeeding year seemed only to quicken the loss. By the time he was in his early sixties this man who would live to be seventy-nine noted, "I am not only lame but my brain is not of much use" (p. 56). At sixty-five he recorded:

> This winter is to be a fight for me, a contest against fat, inertia, and the megrims. To exercise is a task. To set out for a walk is a bore and I find all kinds of excuses for not doing it. Lossening teeth, thinning hair and stiffening joints warn me that I *must* keep moving. (p. 57)

The will to resist the depletions of old age persisted in Garland, no doubt contributing to his longevity, and his effort to endure recalls the spirit of the aged men and women of his Middle Border fiction. In his late seventies, however, Garland not only acknowledged the physical enfeeblement he had by then been tracing for decades but also sounded a plaintif note:

> Signs of decay multiply. One eye is now useless. My teeth are growing thinner and hearing is impaired, and my feet are so tender that walking is a painful "process of falling," as Dr. Homes called it. But can a man of seventy-eight expect but growing disability? The worst of it is I have no one to help me, no one to share the daily burden of maintaining this house and garden. (p. 71)

Garland also records his loss of mental alertness. "The feeling, the *realization* of age," he noted in his seventy-eighth year, "was in my mind as well as my body today. My joints cracked and my brain was 'fuzzy' " (p. 70). The lucid diary entries themselves belie Garland's sense of deteriorating intelligence. But while he maintained his clarity of mind, he was unable to effect any satisfactory corresponding soundness of body. So in his last year the

diaries reveal a startling—and poignant—dissociation of Garland's consciousness from his corporeal self:

> As I was dressing this morning, I had a disheartening concept of what my aging body requires. It is not only a poor, fumbling, tremulous machine; it is a decaying mass of flesh and bone. It needs constant care to prevent its being a nuisance to others. It stinks. It sheds its hair. It itches, aches and burns. It constantly sloughs its skin. It sweats, wrinkles and cracks. It was a poor contrivance at the beginning—it is now a burden. I must continue to wash it, dress it, endure its out-thrusting hair and fingernails and keep its internal cogworks from clogging. The best I can do for it is to cover it up with cloth of pleasing texture and color, for it is certain to become more unsightly as the months march on. (pp. 72-73)

As his years increased Garland found himself, as he put it, "more and more solitary" (p. 60). With the honesty that is so characteristic of his journal-keeping, however, he questioned the desirability of being close to friends in mutual old age, for in their "gray and sluggish" condition he felt "the chill of the twilight zone" into which he too had "entered" (p. 62). "I am not sure," he said, "that I want to live where I can see them decay" (pp. 62-63). He experienced much the same distress as he watched his wife grow old, though like the aged couples of his fiction, Garland and Zulime remained affectionate and tenderly helpful to each other. He understood their position as the inevitable trial of love in old age: "Every faithful married couple must go through what we are now going through—seeing our partners growing old and gray and inert from day to day while we look helplessly on" (p. 66). While Garland had the cherished companionship of his wife, he suffered from his growing social isolation. "I am," he recorded, "like a man on some lovely alien island with no one of his old companions and colaborers about him, but at times, I am fully aware that this is about all that remains for me" (p. 65).

Garland's later years were by no means a time of unrelieved gloom. It would misrepresent his account of old age not to take note of the consolations he found. His wife, his family, his home in California, his beautiful garden, his modest financial security, and his various literary honors were all sources of comfort, even

causes of joy. Surprisingly, the most powerful and traditional consolation of all, a belief in immortality, eluded Garland. Although he was fascinated by spiritual phenomena throughout his life, he concluded his book, *Forty Years of Psychic Research* (published just four years before his death), with this avowal: "I confess to a state of doubt."[19]

Garland's journal account of aging is as remarkable for its scant selfpity as it is for its honesty. As he lived on and on into deeper old age, Garland could even twit himself about his longevity. "Is anything gained by long life?" he asked himself. "Is it anything to boast about? Is it not a progressively bad habit?" (p. 69). Perhaps the most difficult thing for Garland to contend with as he pursued his "bad habit" of living long was his sense of irrelevance as a writer. Like the elderly pioneer artists of his Middle Border fiction, like Daddy Deering, Garland came to feel that he was "left out." The sense of displacement came over him early, a symptom of his insecurity, so that at fifty-two with the triumph of the Middle Border chronicles still before him, Garland could record that he felt "helpless and unproductive" and that this was "the beginning" of his "supersedence by the younger men" (pp. 52-53). Even when he was honored he felt obsolete. Invited in 1926 to speak at Dartmouth, Garland felt antiquated and unappreciated:

> As the day wore on I wondered how I happened to be called to speak here. No one knew of me or cared to hear me. Why do I continue to go where I am in a false position? I have nothing in common with these young people. I am an old man celebrating the past—talking of men for whom they care nothing. Why should they? They have their own heroes and prophets! I am merely chanting songs in praise of the slain. (p. 58)

Even more disheatening to Garland than the indifference of the young was the defection of his own generation. "Even my friends," he noted, "are no longer interested in my books or in me" (p. 63).

While Garland noted down the depressing facts of his physical decay, his social isolation, and his artistic superannuation, he continued, as he put it at seventy-four, to "feel the necessity of pushing ahead" (p. 66). And in a real sense Garland managed, I believe, to turn the defeat of old age into a victory—one that was

both personal and literary. His final triumph as a man and writer is simply his journal record of aging. It is a major, though neglected, document which certifies the power of the realism that Garland at his best practiced. There are more than a few suggestions in the diaries that Garland conceived of his record of aging as a *literary* work. With something of the rebellious spirit of his own iconoclastic youth, Garland, at seventy-eight, pointed out what he took to be the originality for American letters of his bleak account of his own senescence:

> We seldom find in journals of famous authors any mention of their deterioration. In Thoreau, in Emerson, in Hawthorne, so far as their printed records go, no mention of disability or death appears. Mark Twain looked ahead, saw certain decay coming and said so, but for the most part men and women even after seventy shut their eyes to the dark future. . . (pp. 71-72)

Garland refused to shut his eyes to the realities of old age. In his youth he looked about him, saw the elderly folk of the Middle Border, and recorded them in his fiction; in his own old age he looked at himself, saw the changes wrought by time, and recorded them in his diaries. He did not shirk the grimness in either accounting. In the last year of his life he declared:

> I am fully aware that these later volumes of my dairy bear witness to my growing loneliness and decay, but these admissions by their repetition are a part of my mental and bodily history. Whoever reads these books will not find in them any striving to be younger and gayer than a man of my years naturally is. . . . As I have repeatedly recorded in this chronicle, "It is my business to be old." (p. 73)

Garland's final "business," his honest record of aging, is one of the great legacies of our realistic literature.

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NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, "As Adam Early in the Morning," *Leaves of Grass* (1891-92; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 111.
2. For extended discussions of the Edenic myths, see R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Judith Fryer, *The Faces of Eve* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); and David W. Noble, *The Eternal Adam and the New World Garden* (New York: Braziller, 1968).
3. Warner Berthoff, *The Ferment of Realism: American Literature, 1884-1919* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 219.
4. Hamlin Garland, "Growing Old," *Prairie Folks* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1899), p. 254. Hereafter this edition will be cited parenthetically as PF.
5. Hamlin Garland, "Preface," *Main-Travelled Roads* (1922 edition; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1926), p. ix.
6. Hamlin Garland, *Crumbling Idols: Twelve Essays on Art and Literature* (1894; rpt. Gainsville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1952), p. 35.
7. Hamlin Garland, *Main-Travelled Roads: Six Mississippi Valley Stories* (1891; rpt. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), pp. 29, 176-77. All parenthetical references in my text are to this reprinting of the first edition.
8. Max Westbrook, "Mountain Home: The Hero in the American West," in *The Westering Experience in American Literature*, ed. Merrill Lewis and L. L. Lee (Bellingham: Western Washington University Press, 1977), pp. 12-14.
9. For provocative remarks on the evasions of the typical American hero, see Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion, 1960), passim; for comments on the "nomadism" of Midwestern writers, see John T. Flanagan, "The Reality of Midwestern Literature," *The Midwest: Myth or Reality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), pp. 89-90.
10. Jay Martin, *Harvests of Change: American Literature 1865-1914* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 129.
11. The classic study of this mythic figure is Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, Bollingen Series XLVII (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955).
12. Anthony Channell Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village 1915-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 43.
13. Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), pp. 88-94.
14. For illuminating discussions of the importance of songs for Garland's writings, see Ray B. Browne, " 'Popular' and Folk Songs: Unifying Forces in Garland's Autobiographical Works," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 25 (Sept. 1961), 153-66; and James Marshall, "A Homestead Countermyth and Prairie Realists," forthcoming in *MidAmerica X*.
15. Donald Pizer, "Hamlin Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*: Autobiography as Art," in *Essays in American and English Literature "Presented to" Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr.*, ed. Max F. Schulz (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1967), p. 97.
16. Henry James, letter to *Literature*, 9 April 1898, pp. 422-23, as quoted in B. R. McElderry, Jr., "Hamlin Garland and Henry James," *American Literature*, 23 (Jan. 1952), p. 435; Berthoff, *The Ferment of Realism*, p. 135.
17. Pizer, "Autobiography as Art," p. 84.
18. *Hamlin Garland's Diaries;* ed. Donald Pizer (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1968), p. 50. All parenthetical references to the diaries in my text are to this edition.
19. Hamlin Garlin, *Forty Years of Psychic Research* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 385. For additional expressions of his interest and skepticism, see *Diaries*, pp. 93-96.

TWENTY ACRES OF INDEPENDENCE
THE LETTERS OF OMAR MORSE, 1890-1900

JAMES MARSHALL

"The whole country has improved in everything but morals," Omar Morse wrote to his son, Manly, a skilled blacksmith for the railroad in Burlington, Iowa.[1] He also voiced his distrust of the age in four others of the thirty-two letters he wrote to his son in the last decade of his life (1824-1901). In the quoted letter, he writes of a visit to Pine Island, Minnesota, near his twenty-acre homestead farm in Roscoe Township, where a creamery and "water works" recently had been constructed. While he admired such technological progress, he was uncertain of the values they represented. A homestead farmer, he had been several times dispossessed from his farms in Wisconsin and Minnesota (from 1847 through 1878) due to the "everlasting mortgage" (his term), thus distrustful of a society which he felt was manipulated by "money sharks and speculators" (or usurers) in the past and industry, the source of progress, in the present. A letter warns Manly that he is in the employ of an "aristocratic corporation" which held less regard for its employees than he held for his barnyard animals. A small "spot of God's green earth," such as he owned, would provide an insurance against the hazards of the railroad "smokehouse" (the repair shop where Manly worked) as well as the economic circumstances of retirement (*LOM*, 1892-3?). Two worlds, an agrarian past and an industrial future, stand in opposition in this father-to-son correspondence. They serve to illuminate a gray area of the nineteenth-century midwestern and national cultural landscape, a legacy of an agrarian language created by changes of the national economy. (The Populists' campaigns brought the troubled farmer to national attention in the 1890's.[3]) To illustrate this unexplored aspect of nine-

teenth-century culture, the essay will analyze Mr. Morse's uses of language in the repossession of his identity as an American — on twenty acres of independence, so to speak, — through his adjustment of a homestead myth which had retained its Jeffersonian idealism.

Numerous studies have made pioneer homestead farmers as familiar as neighbors, if more paradoxical: they are violent, wasteful, isolated in their rugged individualism, racist, shiftless and Indian killers, yet religious, industrious, cooperative in mutual aid, curious, disciplined, democratic, suffering and independent. The list is not exhaustive. The purpose of the essay is not to resolve scholarly contradictions but to illuminate a human dimension evident in the language of Morse's letters, among the several abstractions. Mr. Morse was not an educated person, but he reveals a depth of character which by any definition suggests his human qualities. To this end, then, the essay first describes his background and source of cultural attitudes, his repossession of independence through renewal of identity and, in conclusion, an analysis of the tragic wisdom Morse acquired in the recovery of his identity and its relation to Hamlin Garland's perceptive *A Spoil of Office* (1892).[4]

Born in the backwoods of Hastings Township in Oswego County, New York, the son of a pioneer homesteader in that county and grandson of a chaplain in the American Revolution, he first migrated to Fond Du Lac County, Wisconsin, and later to Dodge and Goodhue Counties in Minnesota. Yet, economically, his life was comparable to that of the field hand he had been in New York. Dispossession by mortgage seemed to follow his plough, a not uncommon predicament on the frontier. In 1882, his wife, Delia, died and he faced the care of five children as well as his farming. For a time he also worked as a builder, a field hand, a wood cutter, any work that came to his hand. With the help of his oldest son, Manly, he was able to repossess twenty of a former seventy acres in Roscoe Township, Goodhue County, but much of it was woodland yet to be cleared. From the vantage point of this pocket-sized homestead farm, he saw himself living beyond cultural earshot of the "toots of the Master's whistle" (his phrase) which he felt controlled Manly's life. If the century had stranded him at sixty-eight in poverty on mar-

ginal land, his displaced values were renewed by the creation of a symbolic place, "The Old House at Home." This was his name for his repossessed farm, a name that implies an old self that found itself, if you will, because he at last owned a farm free and clear of mortgage debt, and a bachelor son, Omar, Jr., helped him to work the land. For them it seemed independence (it was not life as dispossessed farmers) although necessity required that Omar write to Anna, Manly's wife, to send them old clothes.[5]

Curiously, his letters contrast significantly with his unpublished autobiography. In his letters the persona, a bristling father-advisor, vigorously attacks the outrages of the railroad company for whom Manly was working in the manner of the Populist party, historically the origin of American liberalism. In the latter he tells of his loss of homesteads to mortgage and other debts as if unaware of the "cold, universal Laissez-faire" (Thomas Carlyle's phrase) that had caused his dispossession. Since he wrote the later part of his autobiography while writing letters of advice to his son, and thus illustrates an understanding of "gilded age" political morality, he apparently chose not to intrude social comment in a personal narrative. However, both in the letters and autobiography the character of the persona at first seems familiar; he is the American of the frontier scholars' fable, an idealist seeking independence on the homestead and a realist pragmatically aware of his situation, a humorist capable of satirizing land speculators (with amused irony in the autobiography) and a stoic grappling with the fates who had led him into the mythic garden of the west only to desert him when the mortgage was due. Moreover, as scholars have suggested, Morse is typical in his deep attachment to his family, indeed, a self-confessed sentimentalist in this respect. If the American heritage of a family-centered society is anti-social, as some scholars think,[6] leading to dynasty and financial empire, clearly Morse and other homesteaders sought family companionship as their buffer against log-cabin isolation. But a less familiar settler also appears in Morse's letters. He is the once dispossessed homesteader whose loss of farms had frustrated and isolated him. He seldom reveals the pain and frustration of loss directly; however, one letter states that the purpose of the autobiography was to prove his identity as a citizen, that is, he intended to show that he had always been a good

American, a person who had no vices and held a philanthropic concern for the common good. While he makes no reference to his virtues or vices and writes few incidents to realize this purpose, his need to assure his family, for whom his autobiography was written, of his personal character implies the unnecessary guilt of failure and, it seems, an uncertain identity in a society in which poverty became shameful. Thus the rhetoric of Populist campaign language must have furnished him with a model of the liberal with whom he could identify. His letters give dramatic examples of his pleasure in the use of Populist metaphors of protest and became a verbal means, the following pages suggest, of repossessing an identity as an independent homestead farmer, however reduced his acreage.

But Morse was not a Populist. He mentions his relief when a Populist speaker failed to appear at a rally and picnic supper. Perhaps he distrusted politicians in general. An excerpt from a letter to his son in Burlington, Iowa, illustrates his enjoyment of language useful to his intent, to attack the employer responsible for Manly's loss of homestead freedom.

> You are nearly 40—about One half of your life has been spent in the hardest kind of servitude for an Aristocratic corporation that cares less for your interest or well-being than we do for our Stock—while your Labor and sweat holds out to build them up and enrich them *you are all right*—if you vote right.
>
> But you understand this state of things can't last always —The Strongest Constitution fail[s] up in time and Old Age comes on—a little Spot of God's green earth to fall back on will help Materially to tide you over the pinch if it be. When the knees get weak and the eyes *grow dim* and many other Sumptoms of debility I might enumerate having experienced all this in my short life [he was sixty-eight] you need a few acres with a comfortable Shanty to shield the wife and little ones from the blasts of winter and scorching rays of the Summer Sun—
>
> I believe you advised us [himself and son Omar] in days gone by to get rid of this little Homestead—It is true that it is not as desirable a place as we would like but we have it free and clear—It makes us a home and by being saving and Equinomical [pun?] we live and are independent—in

> this sense—if we want a holiday—Or if we feel inclined we can sleep in the Morning regardless of the toots of the Masters whistle [factory whistles?] and the grass grows just the same—the corn beans Cabbage and other products thrive and the Chickens tend to their business just the Same—We are our Own masters as well as servants. This I call *Independence what would you call it.* [underlining Morse's] (*LOM*, 1892-3?).

Morse's attack of the "Aristocratic corporation" and defiance of "Corporations *trusts* or Combines" is demonstrable Populist rhetoric.

While nineteenth-century audiences and orators enjoyed a "spreadeagle" oratory, Populists with homestead backgrounds seem to have chosen a transposed biblical idiom familiar to the homestead community where such circuit riders as Peter Cartwright had once evangelized. Edwin H. Atwood, when president of the Minnesota Farmers' Alliance (1886-89), illustrates this style in the draft of a letter to Congress which had recently passed a bill to raise import duty on agricultural products. "The master thief of the continent is monopoly. Where we lose one dollar by the tariff [import duty], we lose ten by watered railroad stock, high rates of transportation, land grabbers, speculators and coal and oil trusts. The poor workman of the country may gain some benefit from protection [import duty] but only the rich profit from monopoly." Atwood's letter is comparable to such Populist speeches as Ignatius Donnelly's antimonopoly speech at the state meeting in Rochester.[7] In such speeches, a homestead satan, "land grabbers" who were the monopolistic railroad corporations, had presumably ruined an edenic garden of the west, leaving farmers and laborers to travel unaided through this world of woe. The innocent victim should therefore have been helped by the government through stronger legislation of farmers' transportation costs. Since railroads had caused near and actual starvation by manipulating prices in some areas, the Populists' anger was justified. They felt an indifferent government had failed to assure rural and urban labor its "natural" or Jeffersonian liberty, its right to a fair share of their farm profits. Like other midwest farmers, Morse obviously enjoyed this homespun dialectic, even if he distrusted politices.

He may have heard or read Donnelly's speeches or those of another state Populist leader. His farm was a day's ride by horse and wagon from Nininger, Donnelly's farm; moreover, Donnelly was campaigning for governer at the time of Morse's quoted letter. Whatever source he found congenial to his purposes, his aim in part is that of the Populists — to protest the gilded-age corporation. As a mordant satirist, he seems to find the Populists' melodrama of virtue and villainy useful because it loaned its tone of idealism and attack, freeing him to express the bitterness he had felt, when a dispossessed homesteader, against usurious "land grabbers." This liberal stance bristling with political assurance, suggests his personal renewal of independence. He returns to the myth of the west, not as the Jeffersonian yeoman he believed he had been on his first homestead in 1849, harvesting abstract freedom and virtue, but as an idealist in righteous battle with specific materialistic "land grabbers." The railroads for him were simply the land speculators who had dispossessed him grown richer and more powerful. As Atwood's defiant satire illustrates, Morse's verbal landscape reflects the Populists' vision of cultural decay: he had adjusted their fallen landscape of righteous innocents to his own limited freedom, perhaps aware that his was a rear guard action to cover an old man's strategic retreat from an industrial progress he distrusted but perceived as his son's future. Such a democratic vista was on the high river bluffs of an alluvial deposit which time and the river (i.e., technology) could destroy, as it were, but Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt borrowed freely from the political ideology stated in the Populists' Omaha Platform (July, 1892), making further adjustments to enhance and legislate social progress.

Note that Morse's letter also combines humor with angry invective. The humorist seems to focus on the theme of independence as the angry satirist seems to focus on the theme of independence as the angry satirist does; irony turns on an imaginary garden-homestead with real fowl and livestock. It is a frontier humorist's ironic adjustment of the popular romance of the homestead.[8] He will sleep late while factory slaves labor: the grass will grow to feed his cow, the chickens lay, the garden ripen without his effort. A naive contrast shapes the simple form of his letter; his intent is to warn his son against the new factory

system by persuasion. The independence of the lazy farmer is frontier burlesque to illustrate an implied identity as a citizen who determines his own schedule. Seasonal time, not railroad time, is the clock he watches. His humorist's garden of pastoral bliss is psychological, suggesting inward independence. However, the Atwood letter reflects the Populists' belief that individual liberty required just economic reward.[9] Jefferson's agrarian philosophy visualized a western yeoman farmer who was self-sufficient, harvesting land with which he had mixed his sweat and purchased with that sweat, in short, land granted without cost by the government. Thus Populists, aware of this promise, felt railroads had deprived them of liberty by virtual theft of their income through transportation costs, that is, liberty defined as the fruits of labor.[10] Morse could not have escaped at least some understanding of this principle, but his income denied its political application. His frontier exaggeration of independence implies an ironist's consciousness that his liberty was confined to his farm because he lived on a survival income. It is a poor man's adjustment of expectations to reality with laughter; he had identity as a person rich in leisure provided by nature's bounty. The technique restores an identity which parodies "land grabbers" and conceals the shame of poverty in the comfort and ease of the "lazy" farmer. His is a defensive posture, of course, using materials supplied by political idealism and the method of the early humorist, comic irony.

Yet Morse's stance remains difficult to define. He is neither Emerson's or Jefferson's abstract self-reliant citizen; his independence is that of an angry individualist. Nor is he the strawchewing yokel whom we conventionally associate with the politically stoic midwestern and plains farmer. Perhaps his counterpart in modern life is the independent backwoods farmer in the Ozarks or the dusty flatlands of Kansas. Nor is he the eponymous farmer armed with virtue, a plough and a rifle who subdued the untamed wilderness and implemented national progress by killing Indians, a nineteenth-century popular notion. Nor is he the ideal of Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt who, like Cooper, were at once nostalgic, evoking the myth of the west, and progressives who believe new leadership would come from the tough democratic frontier.[11] Nor is Morse the innocent tenderfoot of Mark Twain's *Roughing It,* nor de Tocqueville's hopeful critic or Dickens' disillusioned idealist. He poses as the farmer in the homestead garden where, humourously of course, nature's bounty feeds the poor in pocket and free in spirit. This also seems his adjustment of the Populists' myth of the farmer who would now feed the nation and himself if his transportation costs were regulated by the government, long indifferent to his plight. Such common definitions of the neglected homestead farmer do not seem applicable, however.

Morse's need to restore his identity, after his dispossessions, is indicated by a brief mention of the autobiography and statement of its purpose in a letter of 1892. He writes: "My object was merely to show to my family when on Earth I had a personality — did really exist and that I tried to live a sober and industrious life such as becomes a true American citizen and that in all the transactions of life I had for my object the betterment of mankind." Somewhat like Huckleberry Finn, it seems, he longs to be part of Tom Sawyer's respectable "gang." This appears, in part, the intent of his desire to portray himself as the "true American." But he may also reveal an early homestead folk culture in which such humanitarian values as the betterment of mankind were patriotic ideals. However, we can be certain only that his need to restore such a grand identity for his family reflected his needless sense of disgrace as a poor farmer who had several times been dispossessed. His independence is, in effect, a disguise, an attempt to relieve the isolation of the dispossessed person he had been.

The tropes of Populists' defiance in his letter illustrate that he had recovered his identity. As earlier pages have indicated, his mixture of humor and invective imply a new identity in his freedom as defiant owner, free and clear of mortgage debt. Brief analysis, however, uncovers a more complex and human identity. First, let us examine a culture change. Morse's metophors of renewed identity as an American independent, it appears, reflect Atwood's rural Populism, an indication of their common source: the homestead garden replanted, so to speak, which had been, as we know, a nineteenth-century heritage of Jefferson's agrarian vision of the west. Such metaphors of Morse's adjusted identity as the independent who owns but twenty acres of land free and

clear of mortgage debt, the humourous master who is his own servant and whose table is supplied by nature's "magic" bounty seem as native to a homestead and Populist cultural landscape as his language of protest against monopoly, the industrial landscape of the "aristocratic corporation" where devoted servants live by the "toots of the Master's whistle" and silently endure hazardous working conditions, factory politics and retirement poverty. Thus, as the Morse letter suggests and as Richard Hofstader believes, a rural Populism had adjusted the patriotism and humanism of the early Jeffersonian garden myth to renew and support their aspirations for western independence. The Morse letter, in addition, illustrates a rural society in which ordinary people were liberating themselves from the morality of the evangelists' jeremiad. They were free to attack political indifference in the government which they saw as the instrument of wealth. His letter, like that of Atwood's, suggests a new form of the jeremiad — western, political and indigenous — that enabled Populists and the "grass-roots" liberalism they reflected to perceive a self-definition (or identity) through protest more flexible and adaptable than the traditional jeremiad which, as Sacvan Bercowitz has pointed out, was an American form of self-definition through protest.

Thus Morse's renewal of identity as a humourously independent farmer mirrors a cultural change through protest and an identity as an angry, vocal liberal, impotent to change the direction of "gilded-age" society through local Alliance (or Populists') meetings although he was not a Populist. The farmers were able to relieve rural isolation and renew their hopes of a long promised aid from a government they believed dedicated to all of the people; however, their identity as an independent people saved little but their human dignity. They met the fate of all American third parties in the national election of 1892. It was an adjustment to the realities of economic and social change.

From this perspective, secure in an identity as an independent man (hence an American citizen), Morse delights in taking caustic aim at the political world. Irritated at first by the delay in progress of the Spanish-American War, for example, he writes, "McKinley is no warrior and his advisor are money sharks and speculators." (Both terms are Populists' verbal brickbats for usurers.) He continues with provincial, perhaps midwestern insularity, not without its perceptive edge: "Starving Cubans — O my — look at the starving miners here at home — helpless women and children without a crust of bread — whole families right in St. Paul Starving to death" (*LOM*, 1893-6?). Morse refers to a coal miners' strike. The humanism of the world in which he lived appears to have encouraged his change of opinion toward the Spanish-American as well as the recent invasion of the Philippine Islands. A later letter illustrates his change. Once a Republican (when Lincoln's party), Morse comments, "Our Republican Government had so much sympathy for the poor Cubans. They knock out the Spanish Fleet and have assumed the responsibility of Seducing the Philippines — Big job they have got on their hands — more Canned Mule Meat — More Ships, More Murder" (*LOM*, 1899?). Although he mentions that he subscribed to the *New York World*, and likely read local papers as well, his perspective reveals his compassion. With humor and invective, he shows that strength which we associate with a firm sense of identity. While "money sharks and speculators" peopled the national and regional landscape, he also found an heritage of common humanity. In this respect, his world was not anti-social. Populist rhetoric had relieved his isolation and strengthened his identity as an independent person. He and his son continued their survival existence; letters record floods, droughts, the back-wrenching chore of clearing land and — invariably — a short supply of crops and cash. He drew a plan of his large vegetable and fruit garden which he believed would prosper, advising Manly to follow his example. But the climate had other plans — a flood ruined it before it became profitable. To acquire the tough humanity of compassion for others with equanimity in personal misfortune, however, also suggests his tragic wisdom.[12] It is the wisdom which led to his adjusted identity, the human dimension which modern historians overlook.

Edward Eggleston, Joseph Kirkland and Hamlin Garland, "prairie realists" if you will, perceived the tragic limits of human character in their grasp of the engulfing space, topographically and socially, of the western frontier. It is the isolation of the self that centers their common theme of a dispossessed society, embryonic yet decadent in its violence, corrupt politics and unethi-

cal businesses. Eggleston and Kirkland, like Twain, found a strategic retreat into history a writer's necessity. Only Garland was openly contemporary and political; his realism was short lived. Kirkland did not share Garland's conversion to and deconversion from Populism, thus his sympathies were masked in a strategic withdrawal to historian of the prairie frontier in his novel, *Zury; The Meanest Man In Spring County*. My "A Homestead Protest and the Prairie Realists" has dealt with this literary perspective at length.[13] Although the major stage of Garland's political novel, *A Spoil of Office* (1892) is Washington and its corrupt manuevers, the most powerful writing occurs when his hero, Bradley Talcott, returns to his heroine, Ida Wilbur, in the Iowa-Nebraska midwest.[14] Analysis of these chapters illuminates Garland's source of insight into the pioneer folk culture that Morse reflects.

Bradley, an idealistic Senator, and Ida, his companion and a gifted orator, address a Kansas Alliance meeting in a district schoolhouse, to point out a central thematic chapter. Talcott, now thoroughly disillusioned by his tenure in Congress, has been unable to campaign enthusiastically and seriously for re-election. The driver who takes them to the meeting seems an historian of dispossession, so to speak, and thus Garland's spokesman. Once a hopeful farmer in the next county, the driver remarks that he had "sunk nine hundred and fifty dollars" in land, home and tools before losing it to mortgage debt; he explains that "they're all mortgaged out there." Talcott sees this as the common fate of homesteaders — their "pitiful tragic life — a life of incessant toil." His implied theme of dispossession, actual and political, in these chapters is suggested through such background characters as the driver. The setting too contributes; the district schoolhouse lies on an "illimitable prairie," a Garland metaphor of his "vitalist" nature, here as indifferent to human suffering as the frontier land speculation that originally caused it. The assembled farmers seem at first an unpromising audience for Ida to inspire to heights of political action; they are unkempt, drab, the men, with hands like "bludgeons," wearing wool "Kansas" hats. Talcott finds himself seated next to a young farmer whose hands seem in raw contrast to sensitive eyes and "low, soft voice." He is Garland's natural gentleman, uneducated but aware. Brother Williams, the older generation exemplified, is similar in appearance. When he

rises to speak, however, he demonstrates the eloquence of a natural gentleman. "His words were well chosen and his gestures almost majestic. He spoke in a conversational way, but with great power and sincerity" (*SO*, p. 370). For Garland, it is the innate courtesy of the natural gentleman taking form in the restrained eloquence that stamps his oration with the authority of an art. However, Morse's borrowed invectives suggest that Garland's Kansans would have used Populist "purple" invective with its sermon-style hellfire transposed to political ends. Accuracy is not invaribly art, however, neither for Garland nor other literary realists.

Both Omar and his family understood the fact of homestead suffering in remembered fields of wheat and corn sold to pay mortgages. That is, they recognized in their usurious mortgagers the limitations of man and his terrifying isolation; it seems an unstated tragic perception common to homestead life. Garland's eloquent farmers, to suggest example, imply his consciousness of their education by a tragic experience, the numbing experience of human avarice, that expresses itself in the sincerity of restraint. This seems the reality, the art, that supercedes the surfaces of accurate observation. Perhaps like Morse and other dispossessed homesteaders, Garland's source of consciousness was not the hard farm labor of his youth, but the frontier greed that isolated and undermined human character (and dissolved with its acid the hope of frontier ideals); perhaps such a western consciousness led to his finest art.

Garland's portrayal of Kansas homesteaders in their hunger, actual and spiritual, would seem to recognize this tragic fact of human nature. It is a perception, moreover, which he shares with Morse, several times dispossessed. Its source, we may assume, is the experience of being dispossessed of an identity by greed which became a midwestern and national homestead culture's history — and awarness. A comparable incident seems to illustrate this aspect of the early homestead culture, as yet insufficiently explored by scholars. A previous meeting of the Farmers' Alliance (or Populists) which Bradley and Ida witnessed ends in a hunger march, or so it may be described. With mute despair these hardened farmers protest their neglect by the government in a march through town; they are "old or middle-aged men and women with

stooping shoulders, and eyes dim with toil and suffering. There was nothing of lovely girlhood or elastic smiling boyhood; not a touch of color or grace in the whole line of march. It was somber, silent, ominous, and resolute" (*SO*, p. 340). (While Garland is a minor novelist, such moments in his fiction have the memorability of greatness.) A bystander comments that if the marchers had cannon and guns, then and only then would politicians respond. Morse may have known but did not wish to describe his impotence as a person who felt without voice in government. Garland gives it a tragic figure. It is from this somber moral vision that both were able to perceive the human helplessness of the frontier, an aspect of its reality. Through wit, and ownership, Morse was able to harvest the seeds of acceptance in later life, thus regaining "twenty acres of independence" and with it his human dignity. To use Garland's figure of the hunger marchers, he could define his limits and in irony accept himself as he was without feeling the shame of poverty.

Morse's unpublished autobiography illustrates the lives of Garland's homesteaders, in Garland's phrase, "their pitiful tragic life — a life of incessant toil." With ownership of the land, however, he could better confront "cold, universal Laissez-faire" (Carlye's phrase) in letters of advice to his son. It was his act of repossession, a gain of confidence in the reality of the self — a confidence lost when he had been tragic victim of avarice — hungering to march in the uniform of newfound independence. With this identity, he could protest the age, "improved in everything but morals," with courage and laughter.[15]

In sum, the essay has suggested that Morse illuminates the courage of adjustment demanded by the realities of homestead independence, in effect, a practical individual's adjustment of the myth of America's manifest destiny — the homestead garden, once the symbol of Jefferson's vision, inflated by frontier opportunism. Although scholars have indicated the significance of independence and equality in the early west (now the midwest), they do not recognize the human element of suffering, wit, the sense of loss, necessary for the consciousness that leads to adjustment, of aspiration to reality. Secondly, in Morse's repossession, the essay suggests the suffering that preceeds such an adjustment. Behind a masking humour and the passion of his outrage is his need for

a wall of independence against the encroachment of human greed. In Garland's farmers we also find an implied tragic consciousness of frontier isolation and limitation. Grant Woods' "American Gothic" implies the heritage of cultural failure in the desperate respectability of his middle-age couple; they can not march in protest or declare their independence. The support offered by Populist idealism, apparently understood by Morse and clearly by Garland, had submerged and with it the tragic perception that had originally inspired an American liberal spirit. These aspects of homestead folk culture have been neglected or insufficiently understood by scholars.

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NOTES

1. "The Letters of Omar Morse, 1890-900." Collection loaned for scholarly publication by Evelyn Morse Peterson; hereafter referred to in the text as LOM with approximate date. As Morse neglected dating letters used and post office cancelation marks were blurred dates given are educated guesswork.
2. "The Autobiography of Omar Morse." Loaned for scholarly publication by Mrs. Peterson. Biographical information taken from this manuscript has not been footnoted as it seems unnecessary. The entire of this seventy-six page manuscript has been edited and included as central to *Land Fever*, my unpublished book, due to its unique exposure of a homestead family's dispossession.
3. Such collections of Populist speeches and writings as *A Populist Reader*, ed. George B. Tindall (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), *The Issues of the Populist and Progressive Eras*, 1892-1912, ed. Richard Abrams (Harper and Row, 1969), *American Populism*, ed. George McKenna (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1974) and Richard Hofstader's history of the era, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1961), remain useful and germane to the article. For a recent history that centers American liberal politics of the gilded age see David D. Anderson's study of the complex weathervane of midwestern and national politics, *Ignatius Donnelly* (Boston: Twayne Publishing Company, 1980).
4. Research in published and unpublished homestead writings—narratives, diaries, letters, memorabilia—in the New York State Historical Society Library, Wisconsin and Minnesota State Historical Library, the Newberry Library and Beinecke Library has failed to locate another document that so clearly illustrates the effect of land speculation on homesteaders. See Paul Gates' *Landlords and Tenants On The Prairie Frontier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) for a well-documented study of midwestern land speculation.
5. Family memories of Omar living in Roscoe suggest that he and his second son needed financial help as well as old clothes. This may have been due to Omar, Sr.'s increasing age and thus inability to work the long hours necessary to clear land, plough, cultivate and harvest. He writes of a small garden and planting raspberry and other fruit bushes.

6. Here I have taken a stance on a moot issue, contending that the isolation of Midwest frontier homesteaders turned individuals toward their families in the absence of society. Women, burdened by large families, obviously were more isolated than men but the absence of churches, stores, often schools and social centers, and endless labor, led to insanity and desperation for both sexes. See Seth Humphrey, *Following the Prairie Frontier* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1931), especially pp. 169-170 where Humphrey notes the courage of women in the isolation of the prairie frontier and John Mack Farager, "History From The Inside Out: Writing The History of Women in Rural America," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981) 5, 536, 567, for the woman's role in the frontier family.
7. Undated letter draft in the Edwin Atwood Papers. My thanks to the Minnesota Historical Society for permission to quote and for the courtesy of Dallas Cheslock and her staff during research. The date given in the text is educated guesswork. See also Martin Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly: Portrait of a Politician* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 152-164. For discussion of Donnelly's role in the Anti-Monopoly Party in Minnesota; see also pp. 257-261 on Donnelly's role in state union politics.
8. See John Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1931) for a useful, if partisan, history of populism in the United States.
9. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950, 1970) remains the seminal study of the growth and decay of the garden of the west myth. It was a national symbol originally conveying Jefferson and other 18th century social theorists' humanistic plan for democracy in western territories.
10. James Baird Weaver, *A Call To Action: An Interpretation of the Great Uprising, Its Source and Causes* (Des Moines: Iowa Printing Co., 1892) excerpted in *A Populist Reader*, op. cit., pp. 60-73. This conservative statement of the Populists' presidential candidate in 1892-3 illustrates a highly enlightened principle of the relation of civil liberty to individual income.
11. Richard Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier," *American Quarterly*, 33 (1981) 4, 608-37. Slotkin compares Frederick Turner's logical perception of the west as the historian and idealist with Roosevelt's mythological view as the "initiate" and politician.
12. James Marshall, "An Unheard Voice; The Autobiography of a Dispossessed Homesteader and a Nineteenth-Century Cultural Theme of Dispossession," *The Old Northwest; A Journal of History and Culture*, 6 (1980-81) 4, 303-329.
13. See also, "A Homestead Protest and the Prairie Realists," *MidAmerica X*. Publication pending at this writing.
14. *A Spoil of Office* (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969): hereafter referred to as *SO* and included in the text.
15. Land Fever; *The Autobiography of a Dispossessed Homesteader and The 'Unweeded Garden' of the West*, my unpublished book, has a complete selection of excerpts from Morse's letters. Typescript available to scholars and publishers on request.

ANOTHER ANGLE OF WILLA CATHER'S ARTISTIC PRISM: IMPRESSIONISTIC CHARACTER PORTRAITURE IN *MY ANTONIA*

EDWARD J. PIACENTINO

My Antonia, although not a work within the elitist domain of *avant garde* fiction of the early twentieth century, is generally acknowledged to be Willa Cather's masterpiece. Regarded as a classic of modern American fiction, a novel with an irresistibly enduring appeal, *My Antonia* has been widely and sometimes ingeniously discussed, and, as one might expect, there are almost as many divergent views of the novel and its merits, artistic and otherwise, as there are critics who have explored it. H. L. Mencken, in a contemporary review that appeared in *Smart Set*, lauded it enthusiastically, saying that *My Antonia* "shows an earnest striving toward . . . free and dignified self-expression, high artistic conscience, . . . [and] civilized point of view"[1]; and his generous appraisal helped to establish a positive tone that much of the subsequent criticism of the novel would later echo.

My Antonia is respected highly because it demonstrates the impressive imaginative sensibility of Willa Cather functioning as a serious and conscientious craftsman of distinguished magnitude. Miss Cather herself, at different points in her career, made pronouncements clearly suggesting that she perceived the novel genre to be an art form. In one of her more famous pronouncements, found in her oft-quoted essay, "The Novel Démeublé," Cather remarked, "Out of the teeming, gleaming stream of the present it [the novel] must select the eternal material of art."[2] She then went on to say that she hoped some of the younger writers of her time would "attempt to break away from mere verisimilitude, and following the development of modern painting, to interpret imaginatively the material and social investiture of their characters;

to present their scene by suggestion rather than enumeration."[3] Thus since Cather was an advocate of the suggestive, or as it is sometimes called, the impressionistic method, an important dimension of her artistry, Dorothy Tuck McFarland has accurately recognized, "lies primarily in her power to create with words vivid pictorial images that are imbued with an ineffable quality of felt reality. . . ."[4]

If as she viewed it, the purpose of the novel was to be selective and hence suggestive for the intention of evoking feeling — the "quality of felt reality" — then this may in part explain the reaction of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who, when reading *My Ántonia* in 1930, twelve years after the initial publication, wrote that the book had "unfailing charm. . . , a beautiful tenderness. . . . It is a poem made from nature"[5] or that of Cather's official biographer, E. K. Brown, who noted that "everything in the book is there to convey a feeling, not to tell a story, not to establish a social philosophy, not even to animate a group of characters. The feeling attaches to persons, places, moments."[6]

Because to Willa Cather the transference of feeling was of the utmost importance in a novel, she seems to have consciously adopted a stylistic strategy in *My Ántonia* that closely approximates the general method of the lyric poet: the evocation of feeling through concrete images and image patterns; however, in carrying out her intention, she turned over the narrative responsibility to Jim Burden, who, in becoming the first-person retrospective narrator of *My Ántonia* — the controlling character through whom the events are filtered — also serves as Cather's author-surrogate. From the information revealed in the introduction of *My Ántonia,* we recognize that Jim is not a writer by profession; rather he is a lawyer employed by one of the great western railways and a writer by avocation only. As many of the novel's commentators have observed, Jim is a romantic, an idealist, a middleaged malcontent who, although dissatified with the state of his present life, is a character with an astute poetic sensibility.

As Cather's surrogate-author, an imaginative idealist, then, Jim often describes Ántonia and some of the other foreign immigrants who settle the Nebraska Divide impressionistically, frequently almost poetically, rather than resorting to the techniques of photographic, representational realism.[7] In his portrait of Ántonia, particularly, as well as his portraits of some of the other foreign-born settlers, but to a lesser degree, Jim presents a series of vivid details, chiefly apt impressionistic natural images to accentuate some of their dominant attributes and personality traits and to convey his personal impressions of and attitudes toward these characters — a practice which importantly influences the way the reader, too, ultimately perceives them.

Of all the characters Ántonia — Jim's beloved embodiment of the agrarian ideal — is mainly depicted in terms of natural, land-related images.[8] In Jim's description of her, Ántonia's eyes are delineated figuratively, within an idyllic frame of reference, as "big and warm and full of light, like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood."[9] "Her skin," Jim continues, "was brown, too, and in her cheeks she had a glow of rich, dark colour. Her brown hair was curly and wildlooking" (p. 23). The qualities of warmth and light importantly connote the very vitality, the vigor that is so frequently associated with Ántonia's character throughout the novel, and anticipate the ingredients essential to the earth-goddess image Ántonia projects in the last section of the book. The color brown that dominates this passage clearly has affinities with the land itself, bringing to mind the rich hue of the soil and thus serving to reinforce Ántonia's relationship to the land.

In addition, there are several recurring imagistic references to Ántonia's brown skin that seem to re-emphasize her close kinship to the land. In one such reference accenting Ántonia's vitality, Frances Harling, using a figure of speech drawn from a product of the land itself, tells Grandmother Burden, " 'She had such fine brown legs and arms, and splendid colour in her cheeks like those big dark red plums' " (p. 153) And in the first of several reunion scenes between Jim and Ántonia, when she is twenty-four years old and back on the family farm with a child born out of wedlock, Jim avidly recalls, "I took her hands and held them against my breast, feeling once more how strong and warm and good they were, those brown hands, and remembering how many kind things they had done for me" (p. 322). And finally when Jim returns to the Divide and confronts Ántonia after a twenty-year absence, Ántonia, though a middle-aged veteran of an arduous life and the matron of a large family and a fertile and productive farm, is viewed by him impressionistically: "Ántonia

came in and stood before me; a stalwart, brown woman, flat-chested, her curly brown hair a little grizzled" (p. 331). Even though physical change is evident to Jim as he views her at this time, still to him ". . . Antonia had not lost the fire of life. Her skin, so brown and hardened, had not that look of flabbiness as if the sap beneath it had been secretly drawn away" (p. 336). In every instance cited, the vital dark brown hue of Antonia's skin remains dominant and constant, an emblem of the qualities of endurance and fecundity reflected in the land itself, the same land to which she has cast her destiny. In short, such recurring color imagery implicitly establishes the strong link between Antonia and the land and thus highlights the endearing naturalness and durability of her character — qualities which Jim (as well as Cather) seems to admire.

Antonia's "curly," "wild-looking" hair can by association also be shown to correspond to the land, particularly its qualities of spontaneity and freedom — seemingly unwieldly, natural attributes — that Jim often assigns to the land in his descriptions of it.[10] Such attributes are usually viewed positively, almost idealistically, by Jim; and in Book II, the Black Hawk section, he emphasizes this attitude by pointing out the strong harmony that exists between Antonia and Mrs. Harling, the cultured Norwegian lady for whose family Antonia temporarily works and with whom she shares so many similarities: "They had strong, independent natures, both of them. They knew what they liked, and were not always trying to imitate other people. They loved children and music, and rough play and digging in the earth. . . . Deep down in each of them there was a kind of hearty joviality, a relish of life, not over-delicate, but very invigorating" (p. 180).

This invigorating quality of Antonia's personality — in part suggested by her eyes, described in terms of fire imagery as "fairly blazing with things she could not say" (p. 25) — is described in the first section of the novel when Jim relates her manner of temporarily arousing her father from one of his frequent states of depression: "Tony ran up to him, caught his hand and pressed it against her cheek. She was the only one of his family who could rouse the old man from the torpor in which he seemed to live" (p. 41).

Another facet of Antonia's personality — her stability and fortitude — suggestive more of a man than of a woman — personality traits that become pragmatic for her to adopt in the spring following her father's suicide, is also presented impressionistically through the use of apt natural images. "Her neck," Jim remarks, "came up strongly out of her shoulders, like a bole of a tree out of the turf" (p. 122).

Book V, the final section of *My Antonia,* represents the culmination of Jim Burden's impressionistic rendering of the heroine, the quintessence of Antonia's idealization within a mythic perspective as an "earth goddess, mother earth, the madonna of the cornfields," to use James Woodress's designation.[11] The image of Antonia as earth goddess fittingly reveals, John H. Randall III observes, "the final fruition of both woman and land, which comes about because Antonia is able to combine the vitality of nature with the order of civilization, both in her own life and in the life of the land."[12] In Book V, to be sure, Antonia is portrayed in her greatest glory. She is the mother of a large and happy family and the matron of a fertile and prosperous farm, the very epitome of her vitalty and triumph which serves as a counterpoint to Jim's own failure and unhappiness. In this section, moreover, Antonia's maternal care and control of her children are viewed figuratively by Jim in terms of animal imagery which suggests that Antonia, in her role as mother, acts naturally, almost instinctively: "She pulled them [her children] out of corners and came bringing them like a mother cat bringing in her kittens" (p. 332). In addition, Jim sees several of her children as displaying some of the same exurberant vitality which he has always associated with Antonia herself. For example, one of her sons, whom Jim meets when he nears the Cuzak farm, is described as "fair-skinned and freckled, with red cheeks and a ruddy pelt as thick as a lamb's wool, growing down his neck in little tufts" (p. 330). Another of her sons, Leo, as he runs up to his mother, is impressionistically seen by Jim as "like a little ram" as he "butted her playfully with his curly head" (p. 333). And finally when Antonia's children emerge from the fully stocked fruit cave, as Jim and Antonia patiently wait outside, Jim's impression of them — an impression in accord with the fertility myth — is that they are "a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight" (p. 339).

Such strikingly impressionistic descriptions of Antonia's children and her relationship with them are just several of many indicators in the novel that serve to shape the reader's attitude toward the Cuzaks so that what he sees of them is, in fact, strongly affected by Jim's own impressionable sensibility.

As Jim concludes his visit at the Cuzak farm, though he fully realizes that Antonia is now "a battered woman, not a lovely girl" (p. 353), he at the same time recognizes that "she still had that something which fires the imagination, could stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture" (p. 353). This climactic portrait of Antonia is significant, for in lucidly reinforcing the image of Antonia as a symbol of fertility, Jim perceives and comprehends the harmonic relationship she has with the land, an association, James Woodress acknowledges, that relates Antonia "to the old story of man and the earth."[13] As Jim nostalgically discloses, "She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab apple tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things came out of her body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotions. . . . She was a rich mine of life. . ." (p. 353). In referring to Antonia as a "mine of life," Jim chooses an appropriate metaphor which interestingly relates back to Antonia's association with the land at the novel's outset when she and her family lived in a dugout cave hewn from the very earth itself.

Though Jim Burden also portrays some of the other foreign immigrants through sometimes provocative impressionistic images which serve to establish certain distinguishing characteristics in aiding the reader to gain insight into their personalities, none is idealized to the extent that Antonia has been. And in fact as many critics of *My Antonia* have noted, many of these characters, especially Lena Lingard, though they exhibit some of the heroine's vitality — since they too spend their first years on the Divide on family farms — they, unlike Antonia, eventually permanently withdraw from the land, the very source of their vitality.

Of the two Norwegian girls that Jim portrays most fully, Lena Lingard and Tiny Soderball, Lena is, through the imagery used to describe her, shown to be the very antithesis of Antonia.[14] Lena, one of the hired girls whom Jim affectionately admires and

to whom he is enamored for a brief period during his college years at the University of Nebraska, is consistently described in very light color tones that contrast to the brown tones so often associated with Antonia. Lena, whose first name derives from the Greek appelation, Helena, meaning torch or light one, is aptly named and thus is described as a "plump, fair-skinned girl. . . , demure and pretty" (p. 159). "Her yellow hair," Jim observes, "was burned to a ruddy thatch on her head; but her legs and arms, curiously enough, in spite of constant exposure to the sun, kept a miraculous whiteness. . ." (p. 165). Another physical feature that Jim stresses about Lena is her eyes, "candid eyes, that always looked a little sleepy under their long lashes. . ." (p. 163). Lena, we learn, is repeatedly depicted in relation to soft, gentle, delicate things — silks, satins, fine clothes — and when Jim meets her at the Harlings, he makes note of her being attracted to the "cheerful rooms with naive admiration" (p. 163).

Yet Jim's relationship with Lena is far from Platonic; he is charmed, in a romantic sense, by her beauty, by her radiance, and by her delicate nature. And while still living in Black Hawk, Jim has a recurring dream about Lena, a dream that reflects his erotic view of her. When he describes this dream, he does so using natural, light-related imagery: "I was in a harvest-field full of shocks, and I was lying against one of them. Lena Lingard came across the stubble barefoot, in a short skirt, with a curved reaping-hook in her hand, and she was flushed like the dawn, with a kind of luminous rosiness all about her. She sat beside me, turned to me with a soft sigh and said, 'Now they are all gone, and I can kiss you as much as I like'" (pp. 225-226). If the soft, romantic imagery is not enough to create the impression Jim seeks to convey and to establish a contrast with Antonia, his afterthoughts about this dream make the contrast intended blatantly clear: "I used to wish I could have this flattering dream about Antonia, but I never did" (p. 226).

Later, when Jim carries on a brief romantic affair with Lena in Lincoln, where she has set up her own dress-making shop, he again describes her, using predominantly gently soft, natural, light imagery. For instance, when Jim used to meet Lena in downtown Lincoln after his morning classes, she seemed to him "as fresh as the spring morning" (p. 280), and frequently her

delicate vitality would be enhanced by the jonquils or the hyacinth plants she carried with her. The tone of her voice he views as "soft," "with her caressing intonation and arch naiveté" (p. 281). To hear Lena's voice, moreover, becomes a pleasant diversion for Jim, for she "was almost as candid as Nature" (p. 281). "Lena," Jim further muses, "was never so pretty as in the morning; she wakened fresh with the world every day, and her eyes had a deeper colour then, like the blue flowers that are never so blue as when they first open" (pp. 281-282).

Lena, the converse of Antonia, like Jim, leaves the land, becoming, James Woodress points out, "a Benjamin Franklin type who works hard, builds a business, prospers, and remains devoutly attached to the work ethic."[15]

Some of the other characters whose physical traits, particularly the color tone of their skin, are enhanced in part through natural imagery, are not given extended portraits; albeit a strong resemblance exists between the images used to describe them and their dominant personality traits. In several of the descriptions of Mr. Shimerda, Antonia's father, for example, some fine suggestive touches can be recognized in the images Jim selects to delineate him. In the first scene in which Jim describes Mr. Schimerda's physical features, he observes that "he was tall and slender, and his thin shoulders stooped" (p. 24). While his hands are "white and well-shaped" (p. 24), "his eyes were melancholy, and were set back deep under his brow. His face [Jim continues] was ruggedly formed, but it looked like ashes — like something from which all the warmth and light had died out" (p. 24). Mr. Shimerda's listlessness, his broken spirit, is suitably complemented by the image of ashes, the waste product of a consumed fire. The vital elements of warmth, light, activity — some of the very qualities of life embodied in his daughter Antonia — are noticeably absent in him. In fact, Mr. Shimerda seems to have lost all purpose for living; he is sick and very despondent. When Antonia and Jim confront him late one afternoon as he is hunting rabbits on the prairie, Jim observes that he "looked at Antonia with a wintry flicker of a smile" (p. 41), a well chosen metaphor to capture the old man's depressed spirit as well as the overbearing inertia characterizing his present life.

Another character whose personality is partially disclosed through natural imagery is Otto Fuchs, an Austrian immigrant who is the Burdens' hired man. When first seen by Jim on the night of his arrival at the train station in Black Hawk, Otto is viewed as resembling a desperado, someone who "might have stepped out of the pages of 'Jesse James'" (p. 6). A former cowboy, stage driver, bartender, and miner, who "had wandered all over the great Western country and done hard work everywhere" (p. 67) and who "had drifted back to live in a milder country for a while" (p. 12), Otto is an adventurer, a lover of the outdoors, "one of those drifting case-hardened labourers who never marry or have any children of his own" (p. 84). Furthermore, Otto seems a man of firm constitution, ready and apparently completely able to use his fists, his brute strength, when necessary. Interestingly, one of his favorite pastimes is to tell tales of titillating escapades about his experiences in the Black Tiger Mine and "about violent deaths and casual buryings, and the queer fancies of dying men" (p. 111). Otto's physical features fittingly give the impression of just such a man. As Jim readily perceives at the time of his first encounter with Otto, "the ends of his moustache were twisted up stiffly, like little horns. He looked lively and ferocious. . . . A long scar ran across one cheek and drew the corner of his mouth up in a sinister curl. The top of his left ear was gone, and his skin was brown as an Indian's" (p. 6). Several natural images stand out in this passage: his moustache shaped like animal's horns, presumably a bull's, and his brown skin tone; both of these references serve to suggest Otto's ruggedness and durability, his assertive nature, and his untamed vitality, a vitality that may be representative of the prairie land of the Divide itself. Though his fierceness and aggressiveness have for the most part been subdued while in the employ of the Burdens, these traits, so important to his sense of being, may, Jim implies, assert themselves again—this time in the wilds of the Colorado mountains. When the Burdens decide to leave the land (a harmonious agricultural existence), rent their farm, and move to Black Hawk, the necessary stimulus is provided; and Otto and Jake Marpole depart for the "the Wild West" (p. 144), seeking further adventure as silver prospectors.

And lastly, Mr. Cuzak, Ántonia's husband, a Bohemian immigrant with a similar background to Mr. Shimerda, Ántonia's father, is, like the other characters examined thus far, a person whose physical constitution and lively personality are in part accentuated by natural imagery. When Jim first sees Mr. Cuzak, he states that "he moved very quickly, and there was an air of jaunty liveliness about him. He had a strong, ruddy colour, thick black hair, a little grizzled, a curly moustache, and red lips" (p. 356). Furthermore, he has "strong teeth" and a "hard hand, burned red on the back and heavily coated with hair" pp. 356-357). Such details as his liveliness, ruddy skin color, grizzled hair, and generally weathered demeanor—either when considered individually or as a collective unit—can be associated with the primitive naturalness of the land itself, a quality, it should be recalled, previously illuminated in Ántonia's character through markedly similar image clusters.[16] Of some slight interest as well is Mr. Cuzak's habit of glancing sidewise at people to whom he speaks, an idiosyncracy that Jim implies is sincere, innocent, and almost habitually instinctive as the behavior of an animal. As Jim remarks, Mr. Cuzak "always looked at people sidewise, as a workhorse does at its yokemate. . . . This trick did not suggest duplicity or secretiveness, but merely long habit, as with a horse" (p. 358).

Though farm life is not the kind of existence the city-bred Cuzak necessarily preferred, still he has managed to adapt, having learned to live in a relatively happy harmony with his wife and children. As Jim reflects, "Cuzak had been made the instrument of Ántonia's special mission" (p. 367), a mission of a woman, her husband simply acknowledges, with "'such a warm heart'" (p. 367).

Edith Lewis, a life-long friend of Willa Cather, noted in her commemorative biography on the author that Cather felt *My Ántonia* "was the best thing she had done—that she has succeeded, more nearly than ever before, in writing the way she wanted to write."[17] In adopting as one facet of her artistic strategy, her philosophy of composition, the imagistic method in order to delineate personality traits of some of the characters impressionistically—characters who make up the *dramatic personae* of *My Ántonia*, Cather ably demonstrated that she could give solid substance to her precept: "that in writing novels as in poetry, the

facts are nothing, the feeling is everything,"[18] feeling, we have seen, that can be most effectively evoked and artfully transmitted through carefully selected and skillfully wrought imagery. True to her own high standards of artistic integrity, true to her conception that the novel is an art form, Willa Cather, in the discerning judgment of Dorothy Tuck McFarland, created in *My Ántonia* a novel with a "seemingly artless surface [but which actually] is . . . the result of the most careful artistry."[19]

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NOTES

1. H. L. Mencken, rev. of *My Ántonia*, by Willa Cather, *Smart Set*, Feb. 1919. Quoted in *Willa Cather and Her Critics*, ed. James Schroeter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 8.
2. Willa Cather, "The Novel Démeublé," in *Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies of Writing as an Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 40.
3. Ibid.
4. Dorothy Tuck McFarland, *Willa Cather* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972), p. 3.
5. Quoted in James Woodress, *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), pp. 182-183.
6. E. K. Brown, *Willa Cather: A Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 206.
7. Significantly, Willa Cather, like many outstanding twentieth-century practitioners of the novel form, including such notables as James Joyce and William Faulkner whose major novels exhibit poetic qualities, began her literary career as a poet, her first published book being *April Twilights* (1903), a collection of thirty-seven lyric poems. James Woodress in *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art*, p. 104, notes that Cather had been writing and publishing poems since she was a student at the University of Nebraska. And some of her poems appeared in magazines such as *Home Monthly*, the *Courier*, the *Library*, the *Critic*, *Lippincott's*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Youth's Companion*.
8. John J. Murphy, "Willa Cather: The Widening Gyre," in *Five Essays on Willa Cather: The Merrimack Symposium*, a volume which he also edited (North Andover, Mass., Merrimack College, 1974), p. 55, only generally points out that Ántonia is described in "earthy imagery."
9. Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1954), p. 23. Subsequent references to *My Ántonia* will be to this edition, and page numbers will appear parenthetically in the text of the essay.
10. David Stouck, *Willa Cather's Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 48, notes that Ántonia's "wild, impulsive, and generous nature is so much a part of the untamed landscape." Stouck, moreover, sees freedom as a key element in Jim's landscape descriptions in Book I. Note especially the description on pp. 19, 29, and 48. Also observe Jim's description of Ántonia and her sister Yulka while they are with him on a winter

sleigh ride: "The great fresh open, after the stupefying warmth indoors, made them behave like wild things" (p. 64).

11. James Woodress, "Willa Cather: American Experience and the European Tradition," in *The Art of Willa Cather*, eds., Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), p. 51.
12. John H. Randall III, *The Landscape and the Looking Glass: Willa Cather's Search for Value* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1960), p. 145. Randall's analysis of Ántonia as a fertility goddess is the most thorough and persuasive interpretation of this facet, particularly his treatment of the vegetation myth in relation to the seasonal cycle that structures the novel. Also, see Evelyn Helmick, "The Mysteries of Ántonia," *Midwest Quarterly*, 17 (1976), 173-185.
13. Woodress, "Willa Cather: American Experience and European Tradition," p. 51.
14. What Philip L. Gerber in *Willa Cather* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 104, says about Tiny Soderball is also suitably applicable to Lena Lingard: ". . . her story is one of a series of separate panels whose effect is to illuminate Ántonia's triumph."
15. Woodress, "Willa Cather: American Experience and European Tradition," p. 49.
16. See *My Ántonia*, especially p. 23.
17. Edith Lewis, *Willa Cather: A Pictorial Record* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 107.
18. Cather, *Willa Cather on Writing*, p. 84.
19. McFarland, p. 40.

BELGIAN SOURCES OF BRAND WHITLOCK'S "FRENCH" EXPATRIATE NOVELS

Paul W. Miller

Following his retirement from public life in 1922, Brand Whitlock, American author and diplomat (1869-1934), wrote two novels reflecting his considerable experience as an American expatriate in Belgium and France.[1] These novels, *Uprooted* (1926) and *Transplanted* (1927), are linked by the character of American expatriate Leslie Waldron, a talented, refined, world-weary artist reflecting the post-World War I outlook of Whitlock himself in retirement on the French Riviera.[2]

In both novels, Waldron is involved in love triangles reminding him of his lost opportunities to marry and providing him with what may well be his "last chance" to change the solitary pattern of his life. In the first novel, *Uprooted*, he is simultaneously attracted to Betty Marsh, a small-town, Midwestern siren on holiday in France, and to the American expatriate heiress Dorothy de Granvallon, widow of the French Count de Granvallon killed in World War I. In the second novel, *Transplanted*, set in France before the war, Waldron has a commission to paint the lovely but unhappily married Countess de Granvallon, the former Dorothy Manning he had once had a chance to marry. Then she had met and married the Count, whose title and aristocratic charm proved irresistible. Eventually she learned that her marriage to the Count was no more than a marriage of convenience designed to restore the family's ravaged fortunes; meanwhile the Count, with the tacit approval of his family, was continuing his long love affair with his cousin Helene. Into this emotionally charged atmosphere stepped Waldron, privileged by his artist's commission to spend long hours alone with the desperately unhappy Countess, and perhaps to renew his long-abandoned court-

ship. Both novels deal with the philosophic question to which Robert Frost gave a memorable answer in his poem "The Road Not Taken." Does the course of our lives depend on a choice made at one critical juncture along the way? Or alternately, are our lives very much of a piece regardless of particular choices we make, and regardless of how many chances we have to take one direction rather than another? Whitlock suggests in these novels that the latter answer comes closer to the truth than the former (Frost's).

Along with reflecting the expatriate attitudes of an important American diplomat, these novels are interesting as they recall actual places and people Whitlock knew during his eight years as U.S. Minister and Ambassador to Belgium (1914-22) and as they illuminate the process by which Whitlock transformed the raw materials of his Belgium experience into absorbing novels with French settings.

One first learns of his intention to write a novel with a Belgian setting in a letter to his editor Rutger B. Jewett dated May 19, 1922: "Then I have broken ground on two more novels—European scenes, one Belgium, the other France. . . ."[3] By August of the following year, he had made no progress with either novels—or with the third of the linked novels, of whose projected existence we first learn in an unpublished letter to Jewett of March 12, 1925[4] Unsure which to begin, he thought he would start "this Belgium story . . . as in my own mind I call it: I planned it years ago when we were living here" [in Brussels].[5] Later he decided it would not do to write the Belgian novel because of the restrictions imposed by his relations with the Belgians. "I should not be free, artistically, for I should not dare be realistic so far as Belgian characters are concerned."[6] Still later, after several false starts on both novels, he decided to write the so-called French novel, which was published as *Uprooted* in 1926.

On January 30, 1925, a few weeks after finishing the manuscript of *Uprooted,* he indicated he would at last begin, or recommence his "Belgian novel" about Dorothy Manning. Although he had been thinking of writing this novel for six years, he had been kept from writing it by "a silly fear of offending the Belgians. But I have hit upon a plan of making Georges de Granvallon a Frenchman, and not a Belgian, and so *éviter* that objection, and

feel free, and, too, the novel must not be one about Belgium, but one about life."[7] Not until July of the following year do we learn that Jewett has received a draft of it.[8] On November 21, 1926 he reports to Jewett in the course of his revisions that he has decided to change the novel's setting from Belgium to France:

> I am going to change the scene of the story, moving the chateau across the border into France, and the old house to Paris. I find that it will be comparatively simple to do this, and it will relieve me of that uneasy feeling I have always had about the Belgians. While in Brussels I showed the MS. to two or three persons, and they thought that the society was so well done—that sounds conceited perhaps—that it might possibly offend some of the old French [speaking] families in Brussels.[9]

Completing his change of scene and his other revisions by December 14, he again reports to Jewett: "It has been a terrific task to change the whole scene, and transfer it from Belgium to France. . . . However, tant pis, I shan't offend my Belgians, anyhow."[10]

Whitlock's use of what he called his "Belgian materials" in these novels, especially in *Transplanted,* may be conveniently divided into 1) his fictional treatment of actual Belgian persons, 2) his conscious departures from Belgian customs intended to accommodate *Transplanted* to its French setting, and 3) his errors reflecting an understandably imperfect knowledge of Belgian and French customs, or of the differences between them.[11]

Whitlock's adaptation of fictional characters from Belgian originals constitutes his chief debt to Belgium in these novels. His character development of Dorothy Manning and Count de Granvallon in *Transplanted* is particularly interesting, shedding light as it does on his fear of offending the Belgians, since his portrayal of these characters is not altogether complimentary to them *or* their recognizable Belgian prototypes.[12]

My first clue as to the probable originals of these characters came in an interview with the Baroness Albert Houtart of Brussels, who as a young lady knew the Whitlocks and their circle of aristocratic friends quite well. She pointed out that as chief American diplomat in Brussels, in a period when its international set was still small and comparatively intimate, Whitlock was in

a singularly good position to meet and observe any American heiresses who had married into the Belgian nobility in the first decades of the twentieth century, the chronological setting of *Transplanted.* And indeed, the Baroness recalls at least five titled Belgians, all but one of them ambassadors or engaged in some other form of diplomatic service, who were married to American heiresses while Whitlock was U.S. Minister to Belgium.[13] The one not involved in diplomacy was Count Paul Cornet de Ways-Ruart (1866-1951). He is the one who, according to the Baroness, most closely resembles the fictional Count de Granvallon of Whitlock's novel.

Like the fictional Count of Granvallon, but unlike the four other titled Belgians married to American heiresses, Count Cornet "did nothing" but pursue his pleasures and avocations. A "beau" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Count Paul loved horses, shooting parties, horse races, card playing and pretty girls. The fast pace he kept afforded him no time or money for restoring his big, terribly run-down castle. It was even bruited about that he had more debts than money, though his nephew and heir, Count Arthur, denies the truth of this rumor. Sometime prior to 1914, in his late forties, Count Paul met the young, immensely wealthy Gladys McMillan of Detroit (1890-1967), who had come to Belgium to complete her education at Sacré-Coeur finishing school in Ostend.[14] Early in 1914, just about the time of Whitlock's arrival in Belgium, Count Paul married Gladys; they soon had their only child, Pauline, and settled down to an agreeable life of riding, attending the races and entertaining. They were both very generous and hospitable. Gladys was "très mondaine et très élégante."[15] According to Count Arthur, who inherited the castle and who still occupies it, this aging bachelor type and his wife were very much in love, the liaisons of his early years all having been abandoned. Though the Count kept his keen eye for a pretty girl to his dying day, he reserved his serious attentions for his wife, a habit that evidently got easier as he got older. So deep was his wife's love for him that from the date of his death in 1951 till her own death some sixteen years later, she insisted that his room in their castle be left undisturbed.[16]

In exchange for her title, Gladys used a considerable portion of her wealth to restore the castle; in addition, over a period of

years, she and her husband donated several charming, painted glass windows to the village church at Ways. One of them, in the florid style of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, shows the Count at prayer before an altar. A second window portrays the countess and her young daughter Pauline kneeling and giving thinks to God. At one side stands Saint Rose of Lima, holding in her hand a lily. As the first female saint to be cannonized in the New World, she could be aptly associated, no doubt, with Gladys McMillan of Detroit. In this window the Countess herself appears, holding what appears to be a purse or money bag.[17]

Although there are striking differences as well as similarities between the characters of Count Paul and the fictional Count Georges, their similar marriages, the restoration of their ravaged castles and fortunes, their lack of any serious purpose in life, their love of pleasure and riding and shooting, all suggest that Whitlock had Cornet in mind as he sketched Granvallon.

There are other details linking the Cornet family with the fictional Granvallons. For example ,when Whitlock was writing the twelfth chapter of *Transplanted,* he explained to Jewett that it concerned "Dorothy's early experiences as the wife of the Count of Granvallon and in the Chateau of Chenois, and in Brussels, and later, in Paris, society."[18] When the book finally appeared, the name of the castle had been changed to the meaningless "Chaunois," probably to disguise Whitlock's earlier allusion to the Cornet d'Elzius du Chenoy family, of which Cornet de Ways-Ruart was the first branch. Another detail linking the Cornet castle with the fictional castle of Chaunois was brought out in my second interview with Count Arthur, who said that the long avenue of beech trees remarked upon by Dorothy in the opening pages of *Transplanted*[19] is a rare feature among Belgian castles, absolutely distinctive of the Cornet castle as well as the fictional castle.

Most of the fictional elements that Whitlock introduces into the marriage of Dorothy and Georges, as contrasted with Gladys and Paul, initially take the direction of idealizing and romanticizing their union. For example, Dorothy is represented as coming from a distinguished family in New York, whereas Gladys' family came from Detroit. And Georges himself is represented in Whitlock's fiction not as an aging bachelor like Count Paul,

but as a near contemporary of young Dorothy. Later revelations about Georges probably invented by Whitlock, have the effect of intensifying the clash of European and American values in the novel, and heightening our sympathy for Dorothy. One such revelation is that Georges has a lover with whom he is determined to continue the liaison he began before marrying Dorothy for her money. To add a whiff of incest to his adultery, the fictional count turns out to be in love with his cousin, a relationship that the rest of the family knows about and tacitly countenances, so long as it is not made public. In contrast, so far as we learn from Count Paul's nephew, his uncle dropped all his early liaisons when he married Gladys.

Like the Cornets, the fictional couple have only one child, but theirs is a boy, to carry on the Granvallon name after Georges is killed in the war. For the historical Cornets, on the other hand, the war seems to have been no more than a disagreeable hiatus in their otherwise pleasurable early married lives.

Turning now from Whitlock's fictional adaptation of Belgian prototypes, one comes to his deliberate "Frenchifying" of Belgian attitudes in the course of changing his novel's setting from Belgium to France. Among such changes, one must surely include his portrayal of the Granvallons as a xenophobic family especially where the English and Americans are concerned. Although such an attitude may be characteristic of the French nobility, it scarcely applies to the Belgians. For the Belgian people, victims of repeated conquest, have long had to cultivate a tolerance for foreigners, often extending to genuine appreciation of their differences. Another departure from Belgian custom in order to accommodate *Transplanted* to its French setting is Whitlock's portrayal of the "grande maison," the "hotel particulier," of the Granvallon family in Paris, where all or most members of the noble family live under one roof, even after the children are married. One can mention one or two old Belgian families, such as Merode or D'Ursel, who lived that way, but they were exceptions to the rule. In portraying this style of life, Whitlock was probably dependent on his reading in Balzac, or in Proust, who was his great enthusiasm at the time he was composing his Belgian novels. Another noteworthy departure from Belgian custom has to do with his portrayal of the *concierge* as a trusted confidant

of the entire household, almost like a member of the family, with keys to every room. While this role for the *concierge* of a noble family still prevailed in France at the time Whitlock was writing, it was not at all typical of Belgian usage, where the typical *concierge* had a key to the apartment building but not to the apartments in it. (An alternative approach in Brussels was for the *concierge* to be given apartment keys in a sealed envelope, to be opened and used only in case of fire.) In addition to the literary sources cited above, Whitlock may have drawn his notions of the French *concierge* from a turn of the century American novel, Lilian Bell's *The Expatriates,* which assigns an extremely privileged role to this household functionary.[20]

Along with these deliberate changes intended to make credible the change from a Belgian to a French setting in *Transplanted,* Whitlock falls into some errors reflecting his incomplete knowledge of European culture, or his confusion of French and Belgian customs. Going unrecognized by the typical American reader, these errors would doubtless be irritating to a European reader, so it is perhaps merciful to Whitlock's literary reputation abroad that *Uprooted* and *Transplanted* have not been translated.

Along with a few minor errors, he makes two more serious mistakes, the first reflecting his confusion of Belgian and French customs, the second reflecting a surprising ignorance, in view of Whitlock's legal training, of Napoleonic inheritance laws. His first error of assigning the title of baron or baroness to each of Mardanne's children in *Transplanted* probably reflects Whitlock's confusion of French and Belgian customs. For while in certain ancient Belgian families titles are passed on to all the children, such is not the case in France. Finally, in assuming Dorothy's absolute control of the disposition of the Granvallon castle which she purchases, Whitlock follows the American rather than the Napoleonic inheritance laws requiring even foreign wives of French nationals to pass on half of their real estate to their husbands, and the remainder to their children.[21]

Summing up, one sees that Whitlock, though drawn to the European nobility like a moth to the flame, could not write about them with sufficient knowledge and conviction; as a Midwestern realist with a limited imagination, he lacked the birth and breeding to know what it felt like to be one of the nobility. As the

Baroness Houtart said quite precisely, Whitlock did well with things, and types of people, he knew first-hand — *femmes de chambres* and the other servants of his own and others' houses;[22] he was a good observer, "tres observateur." But he did not do equally well writing about the nobility, which he had to observe at a distance or on state occasions. As a result, his novels contain a number of "petites fautes" from a Belgian, aristocratic, point of view. Insignificant in themselves, they are important as they reveal his lack of sufficiently profound knowledge of and feeling for Belgian life, particularly of the nobility. What particularly flaws his treatment of the Belgian nobility is his one-sided judgmental, one could almost say puritanical, excoriation of the nobility for laziness, for lack of serious purpose in life, for endless pursuit of pleasure, lack of social conscience, and a patriarchal value system tending to deny the rights of women. (Ironically, this judgmental, puritanical approach to life is exactly what Whitlock had castigated in a previous novel, *J. Hardin & Son.*) Whether or not Count de Granvallon is intended to be representative of the Belgian nobility, his very existence in a novel constitutes a harsh indictment of some significant portion of that society. No wonder Whitlock was afraid of offending his Belgians, and especially his noble Belgians, with whom he had ostensibly maintained most amicable relations.

He is much more convincing in his portrayal of American characters than with aristocratic European types. He is best of all, and superior to Hemingway, in conveying the deep nostalgia, the inevitable alienation of the expatriate who, like Whitlock himself, had cast his lot permanently with foreigners in a foreign land. Compared to Leslie Waldron and Dorothy in *Transplanted,* Hemingway as spokesman for the "lost generation" was almost a tourist, confident of returning one day to America, there to be comforted by the soothing presence of other Americans with similar values. With Waldron and Dorothy — and with Whitlock himself as he grew older — it was quite otherwise, as the following unvarnished but poignant passages make plain:

> Waldron, like all his countrymen residing abroad, still played with the idea of returning, of going home, as they like to say, for the comfort it gives in those inevitable hours when they come to realize their alien state in a foreign land, and a certain nostalgia floods in upon them. He was going back in the spring, he said, and after a visit to Virginia, he thought of opening a studio in New York.[23]
>
> She [Dorothy] had that feeling of frustration which came over her every so often in her relations with these foreigners, that want of reciprocity and understanding, which, on all vital topics, made intimate conversation impossible. Notwithstanding her facility in French—"But you speak it just like a Parisienne!" the Marquise had assured her that very morning—there was always that veil between them, which could not be penetrated and was never withdrawn.[24]

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NOTES

1. Although *Uprooted* was the first to be published of the three linked novels using Belgian materials that Whitlock projected (*Transplanted, The Storm, Uprooted*), its distinctively Belgian content is largely derivative from the second novel published, *Transplanted,* and is relatively slight, involving the post-World War I life of the American-Belgian Countess Dorothy Manning de Granvallon, the protagonist of *Transplanted,* a novel set in the period before the war. The third novel projected, *The Storm,* which was to deal with Dorothy's life during the war, was never completed.
2. *Uprooted* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926) and *Transplanted* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927). Though Whitlock's protagonists Dorothy Manning in *Transplanted* and Betty Marsh in *Uprooted* are both American expatriates in Europe, their economic and social backgrounds are different. Whereas Dorothy comes from a sophisticated, well established East Coast family with almost unlimited wealth, Betty is a naive Midwestern girl whose newly rich father indulges her every whim. A tourist to the core, she is determined to have a once-in-a-lifetime fling in post-World War I France before returning to the dullness of Macochee, Ohio, her American values virtually untouched by her European experience. Dorothy, however, living in pre-World War I France, has used her money, her social position and her good looks to secure the title of countess by her marriage to Count Georges de Granvallon. She has been "transplanted," so to speak, but the soil around her is foreign; she feels deeply alienated from the family into which she has married, especially when she learns that Georges has a mistress — an open secret that his family has known all along — and that he has married her, Dorothy, not for love but to restore the family fortunes.
3. *The Letters and Journal of Brand Whitlock/The Letters,* ed. Allan Nevins (New York: D. Appleton Century Company, 1936), I, 337.
4. Setting forth his outline of *Transplanted* he writes: "It concerns Dorothy's early experiences as the wife of the Count of Granvallon . . . I hope to follow it with a story of her experiences during the war. . . ." (Brand Whitlock Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Container 44). We learn of the eventual abandonment of this last project in a letter to his old friend Octavia Roberts on Jan. 15, 1929: "I intended to write a novel to complete the

trilogy that I had in mind when I planned *Transplanted.* It was to be the first, and *Uprooted* the third; the second was to be called *Storm,* and take the same characters, or some of them, through the war, but the publishers say that America doesn't wish to hear of the war any more" (Letters, p. 431).

5. Journal, 19 August 1923, Library of Congress, Container 5.
6. Journal, 28 August 1923, Container 5.
7. Journal, 30 Jan. 1925, Container 5.
8. "To Rutger Jewett," 2 July 1926, Container 44.
9. "To Rutger Jewett," 21 Nov. 1926, TS in Container 44.
10. "To Rutger Jewett," 14 Dec. 1926, Container 44.
11. I am here and everywhere in this article indebted to the Baroness Albert Houtart of Brussels, Belgium for the knowledge, the sound judgment, and unfailing courtesy with which she responded to my many questions about Whitlock's use of Belgian materials in *Uprooted* and *Transplanted.* She is the daughter of the late Count Henry Carton de Wiart (1869-1951) and Countess Juliette Verhaegen Carton de Wiart (1872-1955), both of whom were friends of the Whitlocks, as were the Baroness and her late husband. Indeed she took pride in showing me on her mantel two exquisite Chinese porcelains presented to her and her husband by the Whitlocks in 1922, as an engagement present. Count Henry was a distinguished Belgian jurist, statesman and author; his wife, besides having initiated successful legislation to end child labor in Belgium, translated Whitlock's *Forty Years of It* in 1915 while imprisoned by the Germans in Berlin, a work published in 1917 as *Un Américain d'aujourd'hui.*

    I am also grateful for the opportunity afforded me by a grant from the Commission for Educational Exchange Between the United States of America, Belgium and Luxembourg (Fulbright Commission) to study Whitlock at the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier in Brussels during the summer and fall of 1979, and a grant from Wittenberg University for brief study at the Library of Congress in June, 1980.
12. Other possible prototypes include the American Irone-Goldy Hare, wife of Viscount Ferdinand de Beughem de Houtem, who resembles the English Lady Agnes in *Uprooted,* and Marcel de Vigneron, a well known Belgian hunter and man of the world, resembling Baron Heusden in *Transplanted.* (The figure of the successful American expatriate artist Leslie Waldron in both novels is a barely disguised *persona* of Whitlock himself.)

    The Baroness Houtart, my chief source of information on these correspondences, emphatically made the point, however, that neither of these novels is a *roman à clef;* Whitlock's characters are in general a *mélange* of the characteristics of people the novelist had observed in his years in Belgium and France.
13. The Baroness listed the following, married to titled Belgians engaged to diplomatic service: Washington Irone-Goldy Hare, married in 1909 to Viscount Ferdinand de Beughem de Houten (1861-1926); Mary-Daisy Holman, born in Baltimore, married in 1887 and Charlotte Clayton, born in Lakewood [Ohio?], married in 1902 to Baron Ludovic Moncheur (1857-1940); and Alice Draper-Colburn, married in 1907 and Marie Dow, born in New York, married in 1919 to Baron Emile de Cartier de Marchienne (1871-1946). (The above details may be found in *Etat Présent de la Noblesse Belge* for the years 1971, 1966 and 1961.)

14. A letter I received from Mrs. Alice C. Dalligan, Chief, Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, where the McMillan family papers are stored, contains the following information concerning Gladys and her family: "Gladys was the granddaughter of James McMillan, the wealthy United States Senator from Michigan whose fortunes, entrusted to his family after his death in 1902, were made in the railroad, forging, banking, and manufacturing industries. Gladys came into the bulk of her inheritance upon the death of her father in 1902, twelve years before she married Count Cornet de Ways-Ruart in 1914." She was eleven years old at the time of her father's death.
15. Quoted from the Baroness Houtart.
16. Count Arthur Cornet de Ways-Ruart graciously granted me two interviews devoted to the lives and characters of his Uncle Paul and Aunt Gladys and to the changes made in the Château of Ways-Ruart over the years. For such information from him as I have included above, I am most grateful.
17. G. Lambert and Raoul de Hault, *Autour d'un Vieux Clocher* (Malines, 1930), pp. 173-75. Pictures of the painted windows are shown facing pp. 128, 144.
18. "To Rutger Jewett," 12 March, 1925, Container 44.
19. *Transplanted,* p. 3.
20. Lilian Bell, *The Expatriates* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1900). There is a good chance that Whitlock knew and was influenced by this bitterly anti-French novel, of which Countess Carton de Wiart had a copy now in my possession, a gift of the Baroness. In her letter of October 20, 1928 to Whitlock among the Whitlock papers at the Library of Congress, the Countess thanked him for a copy of *Uprooted,* then compared it with *The Expatriates,* to the disadvantage of the latter.
21. Information from the Baroness and from Attorney Marcel Slusny of Brussels, with appreciation and thanks. (See *Transplanted,* p. 311, where Dorothy says that her marriage contract calls for a separate estate.)
22. The Baroness cited an example in *Transplanted,* pp. 112-13, where Whitlock briefly but vividly describes the concierge's bustling wife in her lodge at the entrance to the great Granvallon house in Paris.
23. *Transplanted,* p. 159.
24. *Transplanted,* p. 69.

MICHIGAN PROLETARIAN WRITERS* AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAVID D. ANDERSON

In his preface to *The American Earthquake,* a documentary of the twenties and thirties published in 1958, Edmund Wilson commented that it is difficult "for persons who were born too late to have memories of the depression to believe that it really occurred, that between 1929 and 1933 the whole structure of American society seemed actually to be going to pieces."[1] It was the shock of this recognition, of this American Earthquake, as Wilson termed it, that gave rise to the equally sudden emergence of a literary movement that pridefully called itself proletarian, that flourished briefly, reaching its apex in the mid-1930's, and that then, confused or refuted by Stalinism, by the rise of Fascism, and the signing of a mutual non-agression pact by Germany and Russia, faded into an oblivion that permits it to emerge only as a social, historical, or literary curiosity.

Nevertheless, during its brief history, proletarian writing captured the leadership as well as the imagination of much of the intellectual establishment in the United States, and its effects, largely through the influence of the Federal Writers Project and the lively intellectual press of the period, were felt in every state of the forty-eight. In each — and Michigan, caught between agricultural decline and industrial chaos, was admirable suited to be prominent among them — writers, young and not so young, proclaimed themselves proletarian and proceeded to write books — essays, poems, novels, plays — that they were convinced were truly proletarian.

*An earlier version of this essay was presented at "A Half Century Ago: Michigan in the Great Depression," a symposium held at Michigan State University on January 19, 1980, and published in the Symposium Proceedings.

Nevertheless, at the time and since, there has been a good deal of debate about the meaning of the term in a literary context. Although its origins are in ancient Rome and its use in English as a term for the lowest social and economic classes in the modern sense dates to the mid-nineteenth century, its literary meaning began in this century, and in use it has taken on connotations of social action and commitment rather than description. Almost invariably it has become read as Marxist, revolutionary, or communist.

What appears to have been its first literary use in America was, however, descriptive rather than ideological. In *The New Republic* for September 20, 1917, in his review of *Marching Men,* Sherwood Anderson's novel of a purposeful revolutionary, Francis Hackett comments,

> The chief fact about *Marching Men* is not, however, its rhetoric, its grandiloquence. It is its apprehension of the great fictional theme of our generation, industrial America. Because the subject is barbarous, anarchic and brutal it is not easy for its story to be told. . . .
>
> . . . it seems to me, the proletarian has had small place in American fiction. Under the ban of negligible ugliness, as the eminent novelists see it, comes the majority of the people. They, the eminent ones have principally been the children of circumspect parents. . . . Outside their view lies the life of the proletarian except as it impinges on the middle class. . . . The proletarians are in a different universe of discourse. . . .
>
> Where *Marching Men* succeeds is in thrusting the greater American realities before us, seen as by a workingman himself. It is . . . a narrative that suggests the presence in our fiction of a man who knows our largest theme.[2]

When Hackett's definition of proletarian literature as based on subject matter is applied to other novels of essentially the same generation — Stephen Crane's *Maggie,* Brand Whitlock's *The Turn of the Balance,* Frank Norris's *The Octopus,* or Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle,* for example — it is evident that Anderson's novel was by no means the first American proletarian work of fiction, but it was apparently the first to be perceived as such. Not only was *Marching Men* apparently the first to be defined

in the context of a proletarian subject matter, but it was to remain so until the call for a proletarian literature by Michael Gold and V. F. Calverton nearly a decade later.

By the mid-1920's, the concept of a proletarian literature had been taken up by leftist writers and critics, among whom the most prominent were Gold, writing in *The New Masses* and Calverton in the *Modern Quarterly*. Both were Marxists, although both were often at war with doctrine Communists, and both sought to fuse, in the literature, a new subject matter and an activist philosophy without surrendering to politics and becoming propagandistic rather than artistic.

As early as 1926, in an essay in *New Masses,* Gold challenged Lenin's statement in *Literature and Revolution* that a true proletarian literature was impossible, that the proletarian dictatorship would disappear in the classless society before such a literature could evolve. He asserted that "It is not a matter of theory; it is a fact that a proletarian style is emerging in art,"[3] a style he was later to define in the term "proletarian realism." This style, he declared, "deals with the *real conflicts* of men and women . . .;" it "must have a social theme or it is mere confection . . .;" it rejects "drabness, the bourgeois notion that the Worker's life is sordid . . .;" it must reject "all lies about human nature . . .;" it must recognize that "life itself is the supreme melodrama. . . ."[4]

V. F. Calverton's concept of proletarian literature was, however, less doctrinary than evolutionary as a natural, organic development in literature and a movement toward freedom in American culture. In *The Liberation of American Literature,* published in 1932, he wrote:

> What is needed in America today is a renewed faith in the masses. American literature has to find something of that faith in the potentialities of the proletariat which Emerson and Whitman possessed in the nineteenth century. It was Emerson . . . who was so enthusiastic about the civilization which was being created in the West by men in shirt sleeves, men of unexalted station and plebian origin, and who looked to that civilization with its democratic spirit to transform the country. It was Whitman who was ecstatic about the fact that it was democratic America which had elevated the poor man into the lord of creation, and had made the world recognize "the dignity of the common people. . . ." But the faith in the common man which Emerson and Whitman entertained was faith in him as an individual and not as a mass. . . . What we need today is a return to that faith in the common man, in the mass, but a faith founded upon a collective instead of an individualistic premise. . . . In that belief lies the ultimate liberation of American literature — and American life.[5]

Important to both Gold and Calverton was an insistence that the new literature be optimistic, that it celebrate the common man in the mass rather than as an individual, that it reject the prevailing naturalistic pessimism of American realism and return American literature to the note of affirmation that had characterized it in the past.

However, neither Gold's nor Calverton's pronouncements defined a clear path for proletarian literature to take. Not only did critical and political battles over its nature, substance, and emphasis continue throughout the decade of the 1930's, but echoes of them are with us yet, as became clear to me in a discussion with James T. Farrell not long before his death. More important, however, writers who are artists rather than propagandists refuse to be bound by doctrinaire pronouncements and orthodoxies, but seek to present their own private visions of truth, and the proletarian literature of the decade was as varied in that vision as the writers themselves. But the spirit of the age and the atmosphere that permeated it bind that literature together in a recognizable proletarian movement.

By the time Gold had published his essay in the *New Masses,* a proletarian literary tradition had already begun among Michigan writers in the works of two men, Lawrence H. Conrad, who drew his subject matter from the burgeoning automobile industry, and G. D. Eaton, who wrote of conflict and exploitation on the farm. Both of them, however, anticipated Gold's assertion that a true proletarian literature must deal with the real conflicts of men and women in a socially conscious context.

Conrad's *Temper,* published in 1924, is set in Detroit in a factory, the function and product of which are wisely not revealed in the novel, so that work itself rather than manufacturing a prod-

uct becomes the function of the men who — if they are lucky — spend most of their waking hours there, engaged in heavy, dangerous, repetitive work that has no meaning to them other than the job itself. In its mindless, dehumanizing effects, the novel has much in common with the world of work portrayed by Sherwood Anderson in *Marching Men.* In the novel, the overtones of brutality and an equally mindless but covert rebellion that infrequently becomes overt violence dominate the atmosphere of the plant.

The central character, Paul Rinelli, resembles two of Anderson's protagonists, Sam McPherson of *Windy McPherson's Son* and Beaut McGregor of *Marching Men.* Although Rinelli is an Italian immigrant, the son of an Italian father and an American school teacher mother, he brings with him to America and to the factory an excellent command of English and, like Sam McPherson, a firm faith in the opportunity open to him to rise. Like Beaut McGregor, he learns early that he can persuade men to act, and he dreams of great power, in the factory or out of it. He determines to rise by whatever means he can find. Completely self-centered, he is determined to use others — fellow workers, foremen, merchants, others whom he meets — in the process of advancement.

Very quickly, however, the struggle becomes one between himself and a system beyond his comprehension, of which the factory is only a part, but his determination to win carries him through brutal fights with fellow workers as well as foremen. It also sustains him through an aborted relationship with members of a society group who are determined to improve the lot of immigrant families by making them "good Americans," and for whom he becomes an organizer although he knows nothing about immigrant groups, even Italians, for whom he is presumably the spokesman. His willingness to use others leads him to seduce a poor, ignorant girl at his boarding house and when she becomes pregnant, he abandons her and she commits suicide. Through it all he takes refuge in dreams of what was to be.

He remains convinced that his life in the factory is temporary as he works in a variety of departments, each job heavier and more brutal than the others. Then, convinced that, as his fellow

workers say, "a man needs a woman," he marries the daughter of a co-worker, telling her in his confidence, that

> ". . . this isn't my battle any more; its *ours.* We are going to be something in this big country. We are going to be something up near the top somewhere. There are just millions of places on the way up, and we are going to take them steadily, we are going to keep going upward as long as we live. You don't know what a force I've got in me. . . . I have got the force, all right. Only I am not smart enough. Now you are smart, and we are going to go upward together."
>
> "I am not smart," she said. . . . "All I want is for you to get out of the factory before you are old like father is, because an old man has too hard a time there."[6]

He is transferred to the drop forge department as a furnace tender, where he spends two and a half years, "feeding and feeding the fire-fury within him, doing easily his hardest tasks, throwing off great power in the trifling things he did" (p. 217). There, too, he found a source and a sense of power in the furnaces he tended:

> Sometimes at night, when he would catch the glint of the fire in some worker's eyes, he would think that the men and the fires were playing some kind of game together, as children do, trying to stare each other out of countenance, trying to see which one could stare so intensely as to force the other one to turn away. . . .
>
> Then there was the way that the furnaces and the men breathed against each other. They stood hissing all night long, and there was deadly hate in the hot breath that each one breathed out. And there was a feeling, too, that some day this would have to end, that some day one of these breaths would fail, and every man knew that it would not be the breath of the furnace. . . . (pp. 196-197)

Transferred to the blacksmith shop as a helper after an altercation he is furious:

> He knew how to hate, now; the fire had taught him that. He hated, now . . . and some day he was going to get somebody good and proper. In the meantime, he took it out on the steel. What a blow he could strike! He could sink the

> nose of his sledge deep into an ingot, and he did, too, when the blacksmiths didn't get their tools there in time. They would look at him angrily, but they never said anything. That's what they had him there for—to swing the sledge—and wasn't he swinging it? They were blacksmiths; if they didn't get their cutters under his hammer in time, that was their lookout. . . . (pp. 222-224)

From this point, Paul's defiance and anger are challenged. His foreman, a Scot, determines to teach him a lesson by showing him who the better man is:

> In a moment they had squared off on a part of the floor that was clearer, and they began to pound each other. It was not a swift fight but a slow one. Each man had been trained to deliver sledge-hammer blows, and so they merely went to work, grimly. It was half an hour that they fought in this way, meeting each other with the terrible impact of their hard fists, staggering back for a new footing, only to come forward again. Sometimes one, sometimes the other and often both of them were thrown to the floor with the force of their blows. . . .
>
> At last Paul thought he would rather be whipped and have every man know it, than to suffer any more, so he stopped. He could stand the shame of defeat for a while rather than take any more punishment. . . . (pp. 226-227)

But his humiliation is more than temporary, and he determines to shut the machines, the factory, the foreman, and the men out of his mind. The foreman moves him to a small rolling mill; in a moment's inattention, a hot steel rod comes toward him; he grasps it, and faints with pain. When he awakens in the hospital, his hand is a misshapen mass.

Released from the hospital, he looks for a job outside the factory, but not only is he rejected by those whom he approached — the millionaire department-store owner who had financed the attempt to aid the poor, a young acquaintance who had invented a paper container for liquids, the young lawyer who had successfully used the attempt to aid the poor as a political base — but he learns that they are more frightened of the world than he. He returns to the mill, relegated, with his useless hand, to a lonely job as night watchman, knowing that whatever fulfillment he

may find can only be at home, with the wife he had ignored and the young son whom he determines will never go into the factory.

Although the end suggests that Rinelli has finally found a measure of peace — a suggestion that his character throughout the novel denies — the novel does not deal with a search for fulfillment, but it deals with conflict: a battle very nearly to the death between the factory and the man, each determined to dominate the other, and with the conflict that lies beyond: that between the exploiters and the exploited who would himself become an exploiter. Rather than dealing, in Michael Gold's terms, with the real conflicts of men and women, with a solid social theme, or, in V. F. Calverton's terms, affirming a faith in the potentialities of the proletariat, Conrad deals instead with competition — the competition for power — that characterizes the capitalistic-industrial system as defined by John D. Rockefeller and other proclaimers of the Gospel of Wealth. But Conrad rejects Darwin's insistence that the fit survive in the world-jungle, and in the novel the victory does not go to the fit or the strong except on the lowest levels; instead it goes to those singled out by circumstances and chance, and Rinelli, in the final analysis, knows that he cannot win; he can only endure and find whatever peace is available to him.

The final sections of Conrad's *Temper* are as jarring and as unsatisfactory in the context of the novel as those at the end of Anderson's *Windy McPherson's Son.* In that novel the protagonist, after having risen to power and wealth, rejects that life, and seeks fulfillment by adopting the children of a woman who abandons them and taking them home to his wife. Here the protagonist goes home to find a similar fulfillment with his family. In both cases the conclusion is neither resolution nor denouement; it is simply an attempt by the author to promise peace and fulfillment in a context that has amply demonstrated that there is none.

Nevertheless, in spite of the weakness of its conclusion, the novel's subject matter is clearly proletarian, and, in the context of proletarian literature, it points the way toward the conflict that was to characterize proletarian writing in the future: the workman, glorying in his strength and his humanity, matching his strength against that of the exploiter. But Conrad saw the

conflict in terms other than the class struggle of the Marxist; he saw it as a battle in which there was neither glory for the fighters nor meaningful success for the winner. His vision was not doctrinaire but cosmic.

Whereas *Temper* is set in the factories of Detroit in the early 1920's, G. D. Eaton's *Backfurrow*, published in 1925, is set in the rolling farmland of Central Michigan at the time of World War I. But the novels have a great deal in common although *Backfurrow* is a better novel. The protagonist of *Backfurrow* is Ralph Dutton, a young farm boy, who, like Rinelli, is determined to rise in the greater world of Detroit. But Dutton's dream of the city is that of a world of ideas, of culture, of books, and at sixteen, after his grandfather's death, he escapes to the city to find his world of books and a young love with a prostitute scarcely older than himself. But he finds, too, little work, and that low-paying, and finally, no work at all. Broke but not discouraged, he returns to the country to work as a farmhand and save money for another assault on the city.

But the return to the farm was to be permanent and the city to remain no more than an interlude that faded to a dream. Like Rinelli, a hard worker who had the same physical desires as other young men, by twenty-one he is married and farming his disabled father-in-law's farm; by twenty-two he is a father and the owner of the farm at a time when, with war on the horizon, farm prosperity hovered there, too. But the work, ambition, and the vagaries of illness and weather keep prosperity on the horizon, and a brief, unrequited, but consummated affair with a neighbor's daughter, home from the city, drives him to melancholy, a nervous breakdown, and a curious detachment from reality. The novel ends with Dutton, childlike, explaining the wonders of the world to his uncomprehending children, while his wife is working the farm.

The novel is harsh in its depiction of the brutality and the evil that dominate life on the farm as well as in the city, so much so that the novel's pre-publication history is similar to that of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* a generation earlier. *Sister Carrie* had been accepted in 1900 by Walter Hines Page, then an editor at Doubleday, Page & Company, only to have it denounced by Frank Doubleday after his return from Europe and his wife had

read it and called it a celebration of evil. Doubleday nevertheless published it, and, although it was widely reviewed, it was characterized as evil, it was poorly promoted, and it sold only a few hundred copies.

Backfurrow, similarly, was accepted by G. P. Putnam's Sons while George Putnam was in Europe. On his return he was shocked by the graphic detail of Eaton's portrayal of rural society and demanded changes. Eaton toned down some of the more graphic passages, but Putnam still detested the novel, and, although he permitted its publication, he forbade publicity or sale in any of his retail stores, and it vanished quickly, to remain virtually unknown today.

Eaton's portrayal of rural Michigan and, by implication, rural America makes clear the reasons for Putnam's dislike although it certainly does not justify it. The novel focuses on a society tormented by its nature and by human nature; a society in which Ralph Dutton's dying grandfather can cry out, "God damn you, God!"; a society in which Ralph, on guard at the farmhouse to watch for an armed escaped convict, can, on seeing him, react as a good citizen should not:

> He had an impulse to shoot at him, but it was fleeting, and he was torn with extreme pity for the man. He thought of the reward, "dead or alive," but he knew he wouldn't shoot at the man, even if the reward were a million dollars. He knew that even if the man didn't have a gun he would never try to stop him. A man fighting desperately, blindly, for his freedom with all odds against him. Why! if the man *didn't* have the gun, Ralph would step before him and offer to hide him. He had an impulse to do it anyway, but he was afraid the man would shoot him.[7]

Ralph's relief when the man returns to the woods is tempered by the barrage of shots that he knows ends the man's freedom and his life.

Vignettes of the bitterness of farm life abound : Ralph and the hired man, Tim, go down to look at a new colt:

> . . . The mare bared her teeth and laid back her ears but Ralph laughed and tickled her nose. He noted that part of the umbilical cord was still attached to the colt, and he cut it off gently.

"He'll have to be gelded," Ralph announced to Tim as he straightened up. "Not for a while yet though," he added. Tim's eyes flamed.

"Gelded. God damn it, yes! Why in hell don't they geld men too! Old hired men like me." Then with extreme violence and bitterness, he said again, "God damn!"

"Why, Tim! You're not old," answered Ralph. "Only thirty or thirty-five."

"I might as well be a hundert," said Tim, and he walked rapidly away muttering. (p. 96)

But there are moments of tenderness:

> Then the two stepped outside and sat together a long while without speaking, gazing at the misty moon, sometimes casting shy glances at each other . . . (p. 161)

And frustration:

> In a stretch of woods he put his arm about her, kissed her again and again, and tried to put his hands on her breasts, under her frock. Again the indignation, and Ralph became impatient, sensing that she did not stop him because, as she pretended, she thought it was wrong.
>
> "Why is it any worse than a kiss?" he asked.
>
> "Because it is," she answered him. "At least till a person is married."
>
> Something within him brindled, and they drove home in silence. (p. 166)

Social change makes itself felt in the countryside:

> . . . they started to talk the news of the town. Prohibition, now in force, had brought about a number of changes. The old sheriff . . . had been impeached for not arresting a bootlegger and several young men who had bought from the fellow. The sheriff had merely warned the bootlegger out of town and sent the drunken young purchasers home. Led by the Methodist and Baptist church ministers, who for once got together, a band of citizens had caused the sheriff's dismissal. . . . Since then scarcely a week had passed but what someone went to jail. . . .
>
> "And now," said Doc, "they are preaching in the churches against bailing such fellows out. A fine neighborhood of jailbirds we are getting! . . . After they've been in jail they go around sullen as hell and defiant as the devil. . . . There are more young men gettin' drunk than before, and we're havin' too much trouble. . . . (pp. 377-378)

But the reality of the life cycle on the farm goes on:

> The proceeds from Ralph's harvest barely yielded him four hundred dollars. He took this and paid all but fifty dollars of his note, then borrowed two hundred more to keep him through the winter. He doubted that it would be enough. There were clothes to be bought all around, and another child was coming. Still, Ellen had again saved up about thirty dollars and she expected about fifty more before the cows ran low on milk and before the hens stopped laying. Perhaps things would be all right. (p. 288)

The novel's conclusion, like that of *Temper*, is an ending rather than a resolution, but the implications are clear: one does not escape, nor does he rise; he simply endures until the point where he must accept defeat or withdraw from life. Like Anderson's *Windy McPherson's Son* and Conrad's *Temper*, Eaton's *Backfurrow* concludes with the suggestion that whatever fulfillment is possible is that which one finds in a close association with his children. But both Anderson's and Eaton's protagonists have once been children, and children become adults. Yet neither author suggests that the fulfillment their people find is fleeting at best, and the cycle of life and defeat will go on.

Neither *Temper* nor *Backfurrow* was proletarian in the sense that Marxist and other leftist critics a few years later were to demand that a novel must be. Nevertheless, in the finality with which each protagonist is directed and eventually destroyed by his environment the novels are reminiscent of the first of the Studs Lonigan trilogy, *Young Lonigan*, which was already germinating in James T. Farrell's mind, and which, upon publication in 1932, was hailed as the prototype of what such a novel should be.

When *Temper* and *Backfurrow* were published, however, the word *proletarian* had not yet become part of American critical vocabulary, but by 1932 it had become commonplace, particularly by those on the left. In 1928 the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers declared, in conjunction with the first Soviet Five-Year Plan beginning in that year, that it was mobilizing prole-

tarian writers to support the cause. But although the Association's use of the term was vague, it quickly became a part of the vocabulary of American leftist writers and critics and by 1932, Michael Gold, Calverton, and others attempted to make their own definitions. No single definition other than that of subject matter was, however, to be agreed upon by American critics or writers, leftists or otherwise.

Nevertheless, two important, clearly proletarian novels were published by Michigan writers during the years of the depression. Both are set in the automobile plants of Detroit, a setting invariably approved by critics on the left. The two novels are *The Conveyor* by James Steele (Robert Cruden), published in 1935, and *F. O. B. Detroit* by Wessel Smitter, published in 1938.

The Conveyor is the story of the making of a proletarian hero in a novel that recreates the violence prone, totalitarian situation in the Ford River Rouge plant. A novel that comes close to the proletarian ideal as defined by both Gold and Calverton, it deals with the theme of social conflict and it celebrates the innate wisdom and courage of the American worker. At the same time, it carries on in the American tradition of social protest fiction by defining abuses as pointedly as Melville's *White-Jacket* and Sinclair's *The Jungle*, and as such, like them, it is more powerful as a social document than as a work of fiction.

The novel opens on the assembly line in the Pascal Motor Car Company on the eve of the Presidential election of 1928. The industry and the company are at the peak of Coolidge prosperity, but the workers feel only the effects of the speedup to meet production quotas:

> To work! The wet sanders swayed from side to side, rubbing their fingers bloody with the fine sandpaper. There must not be a spot, a scratch, on Pascal bodies! On the backs of the bodies, the sanders reached and stooped, up and down, up and down endlessly, rubbing the metal, with water on their legs, water on their chests, water all over them. Between their legs their scrotums tossed their leaden weights. In spite of their brave words there was not a sander who was not sore there at the end of the day.
>
> So with the polishers. Back and forth, up and down, they forced into the cloth and paste their blood and muscle until the dull steel glowed like a jewel.

> The vent assemblers had the best job, unquestionably. They took the ventilators, slipped them into pans in the cowl provided for them, tightened the screw with a ratchet and pushed the vent down. If it was straight so that it could not be distinguished from the cowl, then it was correct. If not, it was taken out, ground down, tried again. . . .[8]

Jim Brogan, the protagonist of the novel, is a vent man, and he is in a bad mood:

> . . . A lot of bad jobs had gone through and they were raising hell about it—as though he had dripped the paint and dinged the cowl! . . . And this had to happen just when he was getting his vents in so nicely and was looking forward to a big bonus on the next pay day. It would knock the bonus all to hell, having all them bodies sent back for repair! (p. 12)

The speedup continues, the straw boss shouts at a sander, "Jesus Christ, man, don't go to sleep! Get the rag out, damn it, faster!" and then, a few minutes later, the foreman shouts "Overtime tonight! Overtime tonight!" and three sanders lay down their sandpaper and quit. There are plenty of jobs. The foreman turns to Brogan, shouting "go on sandin' over there." (p. 18)

> Jim turned and looked at him. Then he very deliberately put a plug of tobacco in his mouth and squirted a brown pool near Stover's feet.
>
> "What d' yuh say?" he asked arrogantly.
>
> "Go on sandin' over there," Stover replied, with an attempt at a smile. "You'll get fifty-four cents."
>
> "Oh no I won't. I'm quittin'." Jim got down off the truck, took up his tool-box and walked past Stover. The foreman stared at him balefully and swore under his breath.
>
> Jim turned back — "Did yuh say somethin'?" Again he almost spattered Stover's shoes with tobacco juice.
>
> "Yeah, go an' get your time, 'ats what I said."
>
> Jim smiled insolently and departed.
>
> Every conveyor in the department was tied up! (p. 19)

There were plenty of jobs, as Jim well knew. In the years before his marriage he had worked in almost every auto shop in Detroit, and had left each one for a different reason — quit because of the danger of losing fingers at Bridges Body and a fight

with the boss at Crystal, fired at Rodgers for talking to the women on company time, laid-off for model changeover at Crystal again, quit, fired, and laid off at each of the three plants of Lawrence Body. But then he had married, and the former farm boy had been at Pascal ever since, and had a fine wife, a baby, a bank account, and a nice house full of furniture, neither yet paid for. But jobs were plentiful. He hated Reds and agitators in the plants, he had faith in the system, he planned to vote for Hoover in a few days.

But jobs are not plentiful; he quits as a retrenchment is beginning, and the rest of the novel is the story of Brogan's degeneration and conversion. The savings are spent, the house is lost, Jim begins to drink, and the marriage deteriorates. In desperation, Marie Brogan writes pleadingly for advice to "Miss Fairbanks," conductor of the *Your Problems* column in the *Herald.* The reply in the paper is no more and no less meaningful than they had received at the bank, the finance company, and elsewhere:

> "Cheer up, little mother. . . . Hubby will find work after a while and after a hard struggle you'll get the bills paid, too. It seems as if life is made up of stretches of catching up. That's what makes us strong in will and good citizens. Keep on being happy." (p. 50)

The irony of the reply infuriates Marie — at Miss Fairbanks, at Jim, at the world — and she determines to find a job in spite of Jim's protest that her place is at home with the child. Bridge's is hiring women instead of men because they're cheaper and more tractable, and she goes there and is hired at once:

> She was put on a fast stamping job, which curved metal in three planes. The safety guard on this was also tied up, she noticed, but she made no comment.
>
> "D' yuh know how to run one o' them?" the boss asked.
>
> She nodded.
>
> "Awright. Go to it." The boss walked off.
>
> . . . She inserted the metal, saw it was in place, pulled over the lever and the die came speeding down. Crash, cling, clang—crash, cling, clang! The shiny, greasy press block flew as she got into the rhythm of the work. . . . Her arms darted from the levers to the tongs to the dies, up, down, across. . . .
>
> She was nervous with [the boss] back of her, watching every move. She fumbled the pieces as she tried to set them on the die. When she tried to right them with the tongs the latter slid over the greasy little pieces. . . .
>
> "Good God, throw them tongs away."
>
> Before she heard him he wrenched them from her and tossed them on a pile of stock. "Use yuhr hands. What yuh got them for?"
>
> Marie was nervous and distraught. If she were caught without the tongs, with the safety guard up, she'd be fired. But if she didn't obey the boss she'd be fired too! She looked at him, appealing. "I can't —"
>
> "I say, use yuhr hands!" He stuck his face in hers. "Go on now, get goin'!"
>
> His foul breath moved her to defiance.
>
> "I won't."
>
> "Yuh won't, eh?" His lips curled in contempt. Marie saw he was used to beating down women by sheer brutishness.
>
> "No, I won't," Her chin set. "An' I'm goin' right over to tell the safety man about it, too."
>
> He spat out a wad of tobacco. "Get to work, yuh goddam whore."
>
> Marie's cheeks flamed. Her fists landed between the boss's eyes. Dirty tobacco juice slavered over his chin. For a moment he staggered and stepped back. Then he strode up to her, bellowing. . . . (pp. 92-93)

That night, when Jim, having returned from a futile search for work at Bridges, is reading an old detective magazine, Marie comes in, laughing hysterically.

> . . . "I'm fired, I'm fired." She threw a crumpled check on the table. "We can eat now, anyway. I made 'at boss take to his heels." She took off her coat. "Ain't that high wages, though!"
>
> Jim smoothed out the check.
>
> A dollar ninety-eight for ten hours' work! (p. 96)

Then Jim learns that River Motors is hiring at their River Rohte plant; he joins thousands of men at the gate in the snow. When their fires are scattered by cops, the men storm the gate

and are driven off. Later, after cleaning himself up, he slips back through the line of cops, and is hired.

There he learns to endure the speedup and the "service men," plant spies who kept order in the plant and speeded up production:

> . . . "Keep yuh mind on your work! This ain't no picnic! Step on it now, goddam yuh, faster, faster."
>
> Jim was dizzy from the pace — fifteen pans of stock a day, 850 push rods an hour, 15 a minute, one every four seconds! Fifteen push rods spinning hot and gleaming from the speeding wheels every minute — pull, release; pull, release — 15 times a minute . . . (p. 165)

Finally, spontanously, as a layoff is announced, the men rebel:

> A gang of service men arrive, smiling contemptuously. One of them casually walked up to a worker and struck a cigarette from his mouth. In an instant, before Jim knew what was happening, there was fighting. Workers were running to the rescue of their mate; the service men went down under sheer force of numbers.
>
> Jim later remembered the fight that morning. "Take their gats!" he bellowed, and plunged into the milling crowd. A service man got behind him, tripped him. Jim rose, twisted, and jumped on his assailant. . . . felt a thud behind his ear. . . . stumbled, saw a blackjack drive at his mouth and then suddenly there was a roar at the back of his head, and black silence. . . (p. 219)

Later, battered and fired, Jim goes to the union hall, determined to fight, to find solidarity with his fellow workers, and to win.

The Conveyor was, in Marxist terms, the most clearly proletarian novel to come out of the automobile industry and Michigan in the Depression. The ingredients — exploitation, overwork, brutality, and rebellion — define, graphically and in detail, the proletarian as he is driven by capitalistic greed and inhumanity to join the revolution of the proletariat, the capture of the tools of production, and the establishment of a socialist order as the first major step toward a classless democratic society. In the novel Steele makes his point clear; with only the thinnest of disguises — Universal Motors (General Motors), River Motor Company (Ford Motor Company), Pascal Motor Car Company (Packard Motor Car Company), Lawrence Body (Fisher Body) — he indicts an entire industry whose God is profits and whose church is the assembly line. Rather than depicting a study of degeneration and defeat, however, as do *Temper* and *Backfurrow*, Steele's novel concludes with the note that most clearly marks the proletarian novel of the Great Depression: the identification of the oppressor and the determination to destroy him.

When *F. O. B. Detroit* was published three years after *The Conveyor*, the depression had eased although it was not over, and working conditions in the plants, dominated by the speedup and the layoff, were much the same as they had been before the nation plunged into depression. Although 1937 had been the year of the great sitdown strikes in General Motors plants, culminating in the recognition of the United Automobile Workers by the corporation as the bargaining agent for its workers, the union had not yet made inroads into Ford Motor Company, portrayed in this novel as Holt Motor Company. In the novel, "Mr. Holt," the provider of maxims and the supervision of morality for the company's workers, was as strongly opposed to unionization as his prototype.

The novel is the story of two young men employed on the same day in the Holt Motor Company: Russ, a newcomer from Northern Michigan, who hopes to earn enough to outfit himself as a clammer at home, and Bennie, who had worked in the shop before and considered himself an auto worker. Unlike *The Conveyor*, the novel is not a study of degeneration and redemption, but, like *Backfurrow* and *Temper*, it is a story of survival. The novel is narrated by Bennie, who is thoroughly familiar with the techniques necessary for survival and advancement under the maxims of Mr. Holt and the eyes of the H.P.'s — Holt Police, or, in the terminology of *The Conveyor*, the "service men." The novel opens as the two men stand in the employment line:

> I went up to the guard.
> "They hiring anybody?" I said.
> "Yesterday we put on a few. Got a paper?"
> "No."
> "Had a paper I might let you in. All these fellows ain't got no papers either."

> I knew what he meant. It was a paper showing that you had bought a new car. It had to be a Holt car, of course. . . . You buy the car and Mr. Holt gives you a job. It's like Mr. Holt says — "What is good for the manufacturer is good for the worker." But if you can't make the down payment, the system don't work.[9]

But in the momentary diversion of an altercation in the line, Russ and Bennie get inside the office and are employed, and the difference between the two men becomes immediately evident. Russ is determined to use the system in order to escape it — "Clamming, he said, was the most independent life that any man could get into" (p. 5) but Bennie is determined to use it to survive within the system itself. They converse:

> "Listen, partner," [Russ] said, "you don't have to worry about me. I want a job that'll give me a chance to show what I'm worth. In the woods — I've always been able to hold up my end along with the rest of 'em."
>
> "That's me, too,' I said. "I'm trying to work my way up. Some day I'm gonna be a straw boss in motor assembly. But right now, I'd take any job they got for me." (pp. 7-8)

Russ is hardworking, innovative, demanding, sometimes abrasive, as they work in various departments of the plant, whereas Bennie, equally hardworking, is unobtrusive as he attempts to work by the maxims of Mr. Holt. In an altercation at the gate, Bennie is suddenly afraid:

> . . . in a flash, my whole life came up before me; things that Mr. Holt is against, that he writes about in his book: fooling around with women — labor unions — gambling with wages — drinking and smoking cigarettes in toilets. I thought of his book and the golden text popped into my head: "Work hard and behave yourself." And here I was in a fight — and getting the worst of it — might even get killed. "Oh, Mr. Holt —" I dug the words out of myself — "Please get me out of this mess. Amen." (p. 47)

Neither Bennie nor the author is being ironic; adherance to the maxims are the path to survival and advancement, and, although Mr. Holt, like God, is never seen, he — or his agents — and his maxims are everywhere. While Russ is courting a girl, Bennie pursues his own vision of happiness:

> Sometimes when the weather was too dirty to go out I stayed up in the room and read Mr. Holt's book. For the first time I began making a real study of it — going through it systematic — learning whole paragraphs by heart. I made neat copies of some of the verses and stuck them up on the walls on my side of the room. One of Mr. Holt's favorite mottoes I pasted onto the edge of the mirror. It read:
>
> Machinery — the new Messiah (p. 74)

Russ marries, fathers a child, buys an outboard motor as part of his plan to escape, and in the factory he works hard, quarrels with those who resist innovation, demands raises as rewards, remains an individualist throughout speedups, slowdowns, and layoffs. He proclaims that machines should serve men rather than the reverse, while Bennie is willing to serve Mr. Holt and his machines. Transferred to a new department, the rolling mill, Bennie stands back, while Russ steps forward to master the job on his own terms:

> The whole business of the plant was to change short, heavy pieces of steel into light ones; short, fat snakes into long, thin ones. They came with incredible speed — slowed up a little as they came up to Russ standing on a steel platform beside the big rollers.
>
> . . . Russ seized the heads with his tongs — got the snakes started into the right grooves. . . .
>
> Water sprayed over the hot rollers and for a minute or two Russ would be lost to sight in the steam. . . .
>
> I could see it was not exactly the kind of job that he would have liked. "I like machines," he had said, "that I run — not those that run me." Well, he wasn't exactly running this one. . . .
>
> Learning a job like that a man has to keep his wits about him. A sudden turn — or jerk — and he might easily slip off the shiny steel platform. Those big motors could stop and reverse — but not quick enough. . . .
>
> I went down the long stairs and walked home, thinking that Russ was all straightened out and that he was going to get along swell. (pp. 325-326)

Later that night, Bennie is awakened by an H.P. There has been an accident; Russ is in the hospital; his legs have been amputated. There will be no clamming for Russ, Bennie reflects as he takes Russ's wife to the hospital, but it won't be so bad:

> There are lots of good jobs in a place like the Holt factory for a man without legs. . . .
>
> Russ would be a Holt worker again. The company would find a place for him. I'd help.
>
> That was one of the advantages of working for a big outfit like the Holt Motor Company — they took care of their men. They didn't have to kick out their cripples like the smaller outfits. . . .
>
> I thought of the salvage department on the top floor of a high building where the factory visitors never came — a whole department where every man lacked a leg or an arm or a nose or an eye; where the floor sweepings were dumped on a long belt, and the men sorted out bits of brass, cotter pins, bolts, lock washers, small pieces of copper. . . . (pp. 333-334)

With Russ's accident, the proletarian novel in Michigan had come full circle, returning to the predicament of Paul Rinelli in *Temper* and Ralph Dutton in *Backfurrow*. Like them, Russ was a proletarian victim, but he was less a victim of economics and the capitalist system — in fact, like them he had planned to use the system to escape it — than he was the victim of circumstances and his own nature. Unlike Jim Brogan in *The Conveyor*, there is for Rinelli, Dutton, and Russ no cause in which to be swept up, no conversion to experience, no solidarity with fellow workers to enjoy, no victory to anticipate.

With the end of the depression, the outbreak of World War II, the nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin, the return of prosperity, and the emergence of a national cause, proletarianism and the proletarian novel faded into literary and intellectual history. To many scholars, its only remaining significance is primarily documentary, and its artistic flaws are more evident now than in the past of which they are a part.

Nevertheless, proletarian novels in the decades of the 1920's and 1930's are more than documentary; they are vivid portrayals of a time, a place, and a people in a period of crisis, torment, and self-searching greater than any other in American history, with the single exception of the Civil War. They recreate a folk-drama difficult, as Edmund Wilson commented, for those who did not experience it, to believe in as human experience. In this sense, in their power to recreate that time, not only in moments

of violence, turmoil, and torment, but in vivid vignettes of human beings coping with a world they could not understand, the proletarian novels of America — and Michigan — deserve, at times like this, to be resurrected from the obscurity into which they have unfortunately passed.

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NOTES

1. Edmund Wilson, *The American Earthquake* (New York, 1958), n.p.
2. Francis Hackett, *To American Workmen, The New Republic* XII (September 29, 1917), pp. 249-250.
3. Michael Gold, "America Needs a Critic," *New Masses* I (October, 1926), p. 8.
4. Michael Gold, "Notes of the Month," *New Masses* VI (September, 1930) p. 5.
5. V. F. Calverton, *The Liberation of American Literature* (New York, 1932), pp. 479-480.
6. Lawrence H. Conrad, *Temper* (New York, 1924), p. 182. Other page numbers in reference to this work follow quotations.
7. G. D. Eaton, *Backfurrow* (New York, 1925), p. 78. Other pages numbers in reference to this work follow quotations.
8. James Steele (Robert Cruden), *Conveyor* (New York, 1935), p. 11. Other page numbers in reference to this work follow quotations.
9. Wessel Smitter, *F.O.B. Detroit* (New York, 1938), p. 2. Other page numbers in reference to this work follow quotations.

MARK SCHORER'S WISCONSIN WRITINGS

JOHN STARK

Ascertaining the essence of Mark Schorer's Wisconsin writing is no effortless task. First, Schorer, who was born in Sauk City in 1908, is only partly a Wisconsin writer and is known mainly for books that have little or nothing to do with this state. Second, a cursory analysis reveals much more diversity than unity in his Wisconsin writing: an early novel, six early short stories and several autobiographical sketches that are interspersed with short stories to comprise a book that he wrote late in his life and that was published posthumously. Thus, those works are in three genres and were written over a timespan more than forty years long. Luckily, however, Schorer himself provides a clue about a way to elucidate the details of his Wisconsin writing.

Schorer was struck by the aptness of a quotation that was written in a book presented to him when he graduated from high school by his eighth grade teacher, Josephine Merk, who was also the sister of both the Sauk City librarian and the noted American historian Frederick Merk. Schorer uses part of that quotation as an epigraph for *Pieces of Life*. The full quotation, from Emerson's "To J.W.," is:

> Life is too short to waste
> In critic peep or cynic bark,
> Quarrel or reprimand:
> 'Twill soon be dark;
> Up! Mind thine own aim, and
> God speed the mark!

The last line must have been particularly meaningful to the young Schorer. The wish for success in it is appropriate for someone who is commencing from high school and Sauk City to the University of Wisconsin and then beyond into the larger

world. The pun on his first name made the wish for success more personal and is significant also because Josephine Merk made it possible. Schorer's given name was Marcus; he was named for Dr. Marcus Bossard, an uncle he mentions in *Pieces of Life* who was Frank Lloyd Wright's physician and a leading citizen of Spring Green: the library in that village is named for him. Josephine Merk was the first person to call him Mark, a change he considered to be emblematic of an identity change, perhaps because the renaming signified to him attention by a respected teacher and separation from his family. That is, a teacher thought that he, at a critical age, had a slightly different identity than his family thought he had.

The desire for his success that he and his teacher harbored was realized. After obtaining a B.A. at the University of Wisconsin in 1929, an M.A. at Harvard in 1930 and a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in 1939, he set forth on a distinguished career as a professor of English and writer. He taught first at Dartmouth and Harvard, and in 1945 he joined the English Department at the University of California-Berkeley, which was his academic base for the rest of his teaching career and of which for a while he was chairman. He taught at other universities, both in this country and abroad, and held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Bollingen Foundation and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. His non-Wisconsin works include two novels: *The Hermit Place* (1941) and *The Wars of Love* (1954). In each he creates a group of cosmopolitans inextricably linked to one another by psychological ties, some of them neurotic. *The Wars of Love* is the stronger book because its characters are more vivid and more meticulously differentiated and because in it the theme of psychological bonds is more thoughtfully developed. His *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (1946) is one of the first incisive, book-length studies of that writer, and it helped focus attention on Blake's work. Schorer's other major scholarly work is *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (1961), a definitive biography. He also published briefer books, many short stories and dozens of critical essays, some of which are collected in *The World We Imagine: Selected Essays* (1968).

Schorer wrote one purely Wisconsin book and two hybrids. One summer as a relief from his graduate studies he wrote *A House Too Old* (1935), a purely Wisconsin book. One hybrid book is *The State of Mind* (1947), a collection of stories, the first six set in Wisconsin, the other twenty-six set elsewhere. *Pieces of Life* (1977), the last book he finished during his lifetime, is a hybrid in a different way. In it autobiographical sketches, mainly about his experiences in Wisconsin, alternate with non-Wisconsin short stories. This form is similar to that of *A House Too Old,* in which the main plot line is interrupted by historical accounts of that novel's physical setting. Of those two ingredients Schorer wrote, correctly I think, "thematic relationships are, as far as I can see, almost non-existent." Some of those stories, for example "What We Don't Know Hurts Us" and "A Lamp," are impressive.

The penultimate line of the quotation from Emerson — Up! Mind thine own aim. . ." — raises the issue of Schorer's relation to Sauk City, the aim of which he could have adopted as his own. He realized the importance of the place where one matures, the extent to which a person, especially a sensitive writer, is imbued with the values and the atmosphere of the first place that he or she comprehends. For example, Schorer devotes the first chapter of his biography of Sinclair Lewis to an account of Sauk Centre. One of Schorer's theses in that book is that Lewis never succeeded in his fervid pursuit of sophistication, that he took himself out of Sauk Centre but he never took Sauk Centre out of himself. The same cannot accurately be said of Schorer, whose sophistication is clear, but he was shaped, and knew he was shaped, by his early environment. His interest in that environment is evident in his writing about it. *A House Too Old* and the first six stories of *State of Mind* are set there despite his decision not to use the town's name and despite his disclaimer in that novel: "the scenes and characters in this fiction are wholly imaginary, and the historical passages are intended to refer to no specific community." The physical details of his fictional town are the same as Sauk City's: the river, the marshes to the south, Ferry Bluff. His fictional town's size, its high proportion of persons of German descent and its history also recall Sauk City. Thus, early in his career he used the material that lay at hand. becoming an expert in Sauk City by getting it down on paper.

Later, to achieve his "own aim" Schorer left Sauk City, both physically and spiritually. In these ways he is unlike his friend Derleth, who, after a brief interlude in the Twin Cities, returned to his home town to stay, using it as a source of much of his work and settling into a role as the town gadfly and leader of the loyal opposition: a role symbolized by his house's location at such a distance from the main cluster of the town's buildings that it was clearly separate but also clearly connected. For some time, except for a brief foray to Harvard for a master's degree, Schorer lived either in Sauk City or in Madison. As soon as he had his Ph.D., however, he was gone. As his residence changed so did his fiction's setting. By the time he began teaching at Dartmouth in the autumn of 1936 all but one of his seven works of fiction set in Wisconsin had been published and the other, "Long in Populous City Pent," appeared the next year. Although he published "To the Wind" in 1934 rather than a few years later when he was leaving Wisconsin behind, that story serves in two ways as a bridge from his Wisconsin fiction to his non-Wisconsin fiction. It is the last of the Wisconsin stories in *The State of Mind,* and it is other than a Wisconsin story. In it Schorer narrates the story of a young college instructor remembering the home town he left and some of the events of his youth.

Schorer's memories of his home town, however, did not take fictional form again. He reveals a major reason for his change in subject matter in "The World We Imagine: Notes on the Creative Act and Its Function": "the world we create . . . depends in large part on the world that we inhabit." This statement can be interpreted as an equivalent to the truism that the only possible basis for a work of fiction is its author's experiences. However, because of Schorer's comment in a letter to me that a writer is motivated by his or her *present* environment I think that his statement ought to be taken to mean that the world one presently inhabits is the source of one's fiction. Thus, Schorer did not abandon Sauk City as an unpromising source of material. Following Derleth's writing convinced him of the folly of that position. This is not to say that he maintained a uniformly high opinion of his native state. To the contrary, in a letter he mentions, that, after he left, both the natural setting and the politics of Wisconsin deteriorated. However, he did not absent himself

totally from Sauk City. He made occasional trips there even after both of his parents were dead, and as late as 1966 in a letter to Derleth he mentions reading the local newspaper. *Pieces of Life* is the last best proof that he did not sever himself from his home town.

The fourth line of the quotation from Emerson — "'Twill soon be dark;" — indicates the most salient theme in Schorer's Wisconsin fiction. That statement suggests that his work is unrelievedly bleak; at the outset it should be pointed out that that is not so. Schorer was not an inveterate pessimist or obsessed with gloom. One effective way to discern his sensibility is to use the method he himself uses in some of his best literary criticism. In several classic essays on nineteenth century novelists he analyzes recurring images and clarifies their relation to other elements of fiction, thereby revealing the inner workings of a novel and the characteristic attitude of its author. That kind of examination of Schorer's Wisconsin fiction reveals a less insistent and less dramatic cluster of light imagery that contrasts to and thereby ameliorates the more characteristic, sombre dark or nighttime images. Some of those light images are descriptions of manufactured light, such as street lights swaying in the breeze. The most important are of nature's light: fire. That image is particularly crucial in *A House Too Old*, an important event of which is a fire that destroys the store of a competitor of the main character, Selma. Unlike her sister Lisa, who is sympathetic to the victim, Selma is delighted and uses the interval before the rival store is rebuilt to capture a larger share of the market. That fire thus reveals the depths of her greed. Schorer also uses fire as a backdrop to devastating scenes for Selma and Lisa. In one Selma throws mementos of her husband into the fire when she discovers his unfaithfulness, and in the other there is a fire in the room when Lisa is the victim of a half-hearted sexual assault. Thus, in that novel fire may literally be a contrast to darkness but it also accompanies disasters.

The less literal but more effective contrasts to the nighttime world in Schorer's Wisconsin works are nature and certain other persons. In "Long in Populous City Pent" the name Schorer gives to his fictional Sauk City, Green Glade, and the title suggest that

the story is a contrast between, on the one hand, nature and the small town that has accommodated itself to it and, on the other hand, cities, which kill nature's spirit. One of the characters takes this view when she says, "'in the country the personality has a chance to survive, to achieve its form. In the city it is only confused'." In *A House Too Old* nature is frequently described in the historical interludes. A scene in which Karanszcy, the founder of the town, tosses a rock into the river soon after he views for the first time the site where he wishes to build a town is repeated several times. Schorer counterpoises this scene, in which nature and idealism are prominent, with other historical sections and with the main narrative, in both of which pragmatism, often of a barbaric sort, reigns and nature is one of the many things that the townspeople and the characters forget. Nature finally triumphs, however. As the town's favorite son, a plutocrat who is the descendant of one of the settlers, begins to speak at a celebration of the town's centennial, rain begins. Later, as the rain terminates the festivities, Schorer makes his point a bit too blatantly: "it almost seemed at last as if some old gods of the place had suddenly risen in wrath and tried to wash back into the earth the effort of a hundred years."

Some of Schorer's characters avoid becoming denizens of the nighttime world. He paints a vary flattering portrait of Karanszcy, who is a fictional representation of Agostin Haranszcy: liberal Hungarian nobleman, founder of Sauk City, early sheriff of San Diego County and father of the California wine industry. In *A House Too Old* he is a selfless humanitarian offering help to others in order to build not only a town but also a just society. The main characters in the Wisconsin short stories are admirable for the most part, although they do not provide very good evidence of a less pessimistic side to Schorer because most of them are fictional versions of Schorer himself. In *Pieces of Life* he sympathetically portrays many real persons. He was closely attached to his long-suffering, sensitive mother, who is the model for the mother in "In the Night." Another relative whom Schorer liked is his uncle Dr. Bossard. He also favorably mentions a boyhood friend who became a high school teacher: "if I lived in Wisconsin today, he would still be that, the most amusing, the most tolerant, the best of men."

Despite these glimmers of light, the world of Schorer's Wisconsin writing is dark, as, he claims, are the worlds created by most writers. He considers recognition of darkness to be a trait characteristic of writers. In "The World We Imagine: Notes on the Creative Act and Its Function," for example, he discusses the primitive or nighttime world that is invisible to most persons but is manifested in the works of writers. Schorer began to delineate that world as early as his first works. The epigraph of *The State of Mind* is a suitable quotation from Wallace Stevens: "It was evening all afternoon." Stevens' allusion to the power of blackness that has gripped many writers introduces the night theme that is prevalent in the stories collected in that volume.

The first story in *The State of Mind*, "In the Night," as its title indicates, describes the nighttime world; it also portrays that world's primary feeling: fear. Many details are appropriate to such a frightening trip. The main character, at thirteen years of age, is on the brink of adolescence, and it is autumn, one season away from a Wisconsin winter. Moreover, the story opens at the approach of night, which is hastened by a heavy mist. More frightening than portents of those future times is the trip backward into the past that the boy takes through his memory. Trying again and again to remember one event that happened during each year of his life, he mentally composes a reverse chronicle beginning with the year when the story takes place. He remembers only negative experiences: a death, a sicknss and, most disturbing of all, his mother's temporary, albeit short, flight from the family. That event occurred when the boy was eight and he can remember back to his fifth year, but then "he always came finally to the place where was nothing but darkness in the room under the eaves and the wind blowing and the train's whistle in the night, a sound that made him afraid in the lonely dark, as if he were all alone in the house and as if there were no people in the world, and sometimes he called his mother." These themes — fear, train, mother, dark, loneliness — recur in the story, but he never can quite understand their interrelations or find their cause.

Later the boy walks to the station to observe the evening train come in. Its "monster engine" frightens him and, although he does not realize it, that reveals the cause of his fright earlier in

the story. Now the boy has traveled all the way into the night world: when he returns home "the night [is] black." Again he tries to remember an event that happens before he was five years old, and he does recall his father's meanness and his mother's threat to leave, which he thinks happened not at a definite time but "once." Because of this memory he fearfully runs home to make sure that his mother is there. It thus becomes clear — and he recognizes it at least unconsciously — that his mother's threat to leave for good is the memory that he has repressed. He had associated it with the train, the means of escape from the village. Although he is not fully conscious of his discovery, he has established the etiology of his fear, has found the entrance to the nighttime world.

"Obituary" is a quiet little story that makes the point that nighttime often is other people. In it a widow helps her clergyman prepare an obituary about the man to whom she had been married for fifty-nine years. The central problem for the widow in this story is not his death, however, but the evaluation of her life with him that occurs as she helps prepare the obituary. The traditional form of the obituary, its list of dates and conventional events, precludes a statement of the truly worthwhile events in their lives. As the clergyman elicits those dates and events she admits, " 'I guess nothing much ever did happen to us'." Schorer could have ended there, making a banal point about the emptiness of many lives, but he uses a surprising reversal to make a more interesting point. The widow resists the clergyman's trivializing efforts and stands up for the meaningfulness of her married life, declaring about herself and her husband " 'there never [were] two people who had a better life, and now you want to read that scrap with nothing on it but four or five dates'." She begins to recall happy moments that were important to her but do not fit into the form of the obituary. At this point she takes a stand that will repel the world of the night, but then Schorer makes one more reversal, at the end of the story describing her staring "out coldly at the accumulated vanities of her lifetimes." Thus, despite her earlier resistance, at the end she accepts the clergyman's denigration of her married life. She falls victim to the non-understanding observer, the clergyman, who is similar to the character who comes on the scene at the end of Heming-

way's novels. In so doing she falls victim to the world of the night, not because her husband has died but because she allows herself to be convinced that her life with him was in vain.

In "Long in Populous City Pent," where Schorer plays a variation on the theme of intrusion that he sounds in "Obituary," a marriage is still intact. Indeed, it is thriving in the natural setting of Green Glade, and the writer-husband and painter-wife are flourishing. This situation is observed by the young narrator, to whom the married couple is an attractive contrast to the more mundane townspeople. The intruder is their friend Nickie, whose letter announcing his imminent arrival disconcerts the couple. The narrator thinks that Nickie is only a little unusual, and he is baffled by the chilling effect Nickie has on the husband. His confusion is exacerbated by the wife's departure. When Schorer clarifies the threat that Nickie poses and the reason for the breakup of the marriage, the reason why he uses a naive narrator also becomes clear. The narrator reports on a scene in which the husband caresses Nickie but he does not dwell on its significance, his reticence being a logical concomitant of his youthfulness. Schorer's narrative strategy allows him to describe a homosexual incident at a time, 1937, when that was not common. That theme is important much less in itself than as an example of the nighttime world intruding into and destroying two apparently sunny lives.

Although it was published four years earlier than "Long in Populous City Pent," "For Winter Nights" is more weighty. That is so to a large extent because Schorer uses a more sophisticated narrator: a twenty-two-year-old writer who has returned to Green Glade for a visit with his aunt after an absence of ten years. In the first four stories in *The State of Mind* Schorer, except for very minor characters, uses only four character types: a married couple (in "For Winter Nights" they are almost married), an intruder and an observor-narrator. In "For Winter Nights" there appear only the fiancée and the narrator, who takes a more active role than do the narrators in the other three stories. This story differs from the other three in that, because of the events that occur, the narrator changes. This story's main external event is the narrator's meeting with Anna Bretly, whose mind is addled because her anticipated wedding did not take place. She continually searches for a ring on a hill near town, reenacting the traumatic

scene during which she lost her fiancé. The main internal event is the narrator's generalization from Anna's plight to his own relation to a woman with whom he vows to try a reconciliation. However, Schorer ends as he does in "Obituary": with a second, pessimistic reversal. The narrator explains that "searching the ground for a mad woman's ring that was not there, I was anticipating the certain failure of a letter which I had not yet written but would surely write." Again, Schorer describes the nighttime world, where relations between men and women fail. The title, although it may seem inappropriate to readers unfamiliar with his work, signals Schorer's main theme, and the "winter" in it connotes a longer, more debilitating night, which is suitable for this story, in which the observer confronts the night more directly.

"Where Nothing Ever Happens" is a companion to "For Winter Nights." Again a young man who is visiting his aunt in a fictionalized Sauk City narrates. Rather than losing her man before marriage, the woman whom the narrator meets has lost him after marriage, and she is left alone with many children. When one of them drowns, the townspeople do not know how to respond. Most of them think that the mother's stoic resignation is callousness, and they are ill at ease because of her poverty. When she begins to wail at the funeral some women, finally receiving a cue about the way they should act, rush to comfort her. This story, however, is not just a re-telling of Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party." It is not only in the guise of death that the nighttime world enters this story. That is, the narrator detects in that wail more than a mother's grief. When he and his aunt visit the woman, he notices a photograph of her as a young woman, at a happier, more hopeful time. Seeing this photograph, he realizes that she "had not wept for her son." The clue to her reason for weeping is the subject that the minister is discussing when she begins: the supposedly comforting theory that an early death diminishes unhappiness. That is, it is the mother's contemplation of her own life, not of her son's death, that breaks down her reserve. The epiphany of the story occurs, therefore, when the narator sympathizes not with the discrete, fortuitous drowning but with the woman's persistent suffering. He sees that for her it *is* evening all afternoon.

"To the Wind," the transition between his Wisconsin stories and his non-Wisconsin stories, is about a college instructor who refuses to give a "B" to a student despite the student's desperation and who feels guilty when the student commits suicide. In reaction to that event he remembers his childhood, which at first he considers his idyll, perhaps because his present is grim. Later, however, he remembers a time when he was six or seven years old and had been thought lost, even though he was only in a rarely-used room in his own house. Not realizing that he was sought, he was not worried, but later he was terrified by the experience. This memory impels the teacher to talk to the student's mother and to confess to her his guilt and to himself his self-righteousness and naiveté. In this story, too, a disaster befalling someone else causes the narrator to recognize the night, but this time night is within himself.

In *A House Too Old* the night has two main causes: historical developments and the motivations of individuals. These causes are intertwined, as Schorer indicates by means of the structure of this novel, which alternates historical recapitulations and narrative accounts of the characters' lives. As to its historical dimension, this novel is part of the flight-from-the-village movement that was important in American literature of the 1920's and 1930's. In his afterword to a major document of that movement, Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street*, Schorer states a tenet of those writers: by 1915 "the village in the United States had become an economic and hence a cultural cipher, set in the rigidities of its own past." Sauk City, as Schorer portrays it in this novel, is somewhat different in that its citizens are controlled not by their real past but by their distorted version of it, which excludes the humanitarian and optimistic vision of Kararanszcy, its founder. Even at the beginning of the story it is clear that "already the town has forgotten much," a point that is reiterated throughout. The epigraph, from a poem by Stephen Spender, indicates the reason for this selective forgetting and the dominant motive of this novel's main character and of other characters as well:

> it is too late now to stay in those houses
> your fathers built where they built you to build to breed
> money on money

That is, greed eradicates the memory of Karanszcy, which, honored, may have saved the town. However, other manifestations of human behavior survive: "despair had not died, nor drunkenness, nor madness." In this respect Schorer's portrait of Sauk City is very much like Derleth's portrait of it in *Walden West* and other works. Two other important motifs in *A House Too Old* are also reminiscent of Derleth. One is the repeated failure of men and women to establish satisfying relations with each other. The other is loneliness, which is poignantly expressed in Schorer's account of the contents of the life of the main character as she reaches old age: "and now nothing — only the thin staccato days of her age, with nothing in them but a sharp emptiness."

In the autobiographical portions of *Pieces of Life* Schorer not only maintains his interest in the theme of the nighttime world but also divulges the cause of that interest. The most revealing comment along these lines occurs as he explains the relation between those autobiographical portions and the short stories: "I wanted the characters in the stories to act out their problems before a darker backdrop than the stories themselves provide, nothing lugubrious, nothing narcissistic certainly, nothing self-pitying, I trust, but yet something more shadowy, bleaker, than what goes on downstage." He creates that shadowy, bleaker backdrop by describing his boyhood and youth, particularly his interactions with his family. His grandparents had obvious flaws, the same ones as the couple in *A House Too Old*, which suggests that they are the models for those characters. Schorer's maternal grandmother, Selina Jaeger, owned a variety store and had the first divorce in Sauk City, later marrying a man who owned a cattle brokerage business. They were "quite miserly and were thought to have a fortune." Although he is detached about his grandparents, Schorer understandably could not achieve that kind of relation to his parents. Rather, decades after he escaped it he writes about the "horrid tension that at most times positively vibrated in our house." For this Schorer blames his father, a "rigid innocent" who believed that he had been "betrayed into marriage" and that his wife had been promiscuous before their marriage. To retaliate the father continually taunts his wife. Schorer describes one incident in which she cannot endure it longer and rushes from the house, pursued by young Mark, just

as does the mother in "In the Night." That tension appears to have made Schorer for the first time acquainted with the night.

Pieces of Life is also the book in which for the first time Schorer exhibits the attitude stated in the first two lines of the quotation from Emerson:

> Life is too short to waste
> In critic peep or cynic bark,

One of Schorer's main projects in that book, the work of his final years, is to balance his accounts by demonstrating his magnanimity toward anyone who may have been the target of his critic peeps or cynic barks. To one such person, his father, he had made a similar gesture on a much smaller scale in the dedication of *A House Too Old* "For parents from a prodigal." His final gesture toward his father comes after he recounts a disastrous attempt by them and his brother to raise rabbits. Schorer writes, "how, remembering that folly, I do forgive him, if I had not years ago." This forgiveness is undercut by the revelations about his father in this same book and by its own terms: Schorer offers forgiveness, not understanding, self-blame or an acknowledgement of positive traits.

Schorer makes a more gracious gesture toward August Derleth. After a summary of their relationship before Schorer left Sauk City, he complains about Derleth's fictionalized portrait of him, as Robin, in *Evening in Spring*, calls that novel "a curious sentimentalization of that town as I remember it" and writes that in it Derleth is "quite good on the nature business . . . but wildly false about his own family background." His summing up of Derleth is also undercut: "He died too early and his death left a real hole in my life, even though, in his later years, I no longer saw very much of him. It was a strange friendship, to be sure — part affection, part jealous rivalry on both sides." Their earlier relation in print had included the stories on which they worked together during the summer after Schorer's first year at the University of Wisconsin. Derleth mentions Schorer in "The Canning Factory" episode in *Walden West*: "one of my closest friends was Mark Schorer, the son of the factory manager." Will Schorer, Mark's father, however, is the center of attention in that episode. Derleth pictures him as a fuss-budget whose harassment of his

workers and "erratic decisions" precipate a comic war against management led by Derleth. Derleth includes Schorer's "Blockbuster" and some generous comments on it in his *Writing Fiction*, and each reviewed the other's work.

The most intimate view of the relation between these two writers is evident in Derleth's papers in the archives of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Those papers contain two letters from Derleth to Schorer and ninety-seven from Schorer to Derleth. The first dated letter was written in 1937, the last dated letter in November 1969, twenty months before Derleth's death. Schorer's comments are both professional and personal. In many of the early letters Schorer comments ambivalently on Derleth's writing. For example, on April 8, 1938, he writes that some of Derleth's poems are "very pleasant" but that *Any Day Now* is "less good than your prose usually is." Later his evaluations are more positive. In 1952 he refers to a collection of Derleth's poems as "a very distinguished volume," and his comments in 1963 on *The Only Way We Live* are all positive. After the early, professional letters, Schorer occasionally becomes more personal. From Italy during 1952, for example, he tells about his wife's losing a watch on Isola Maggiore, which was found by a boatman named Fausto; here is the germ of one of the stories in *Pieces of Life*.

One can trace in these letters the ebbs and flows of the relation between the two men. In addition to the negative professional comments, a letter written in 1954 indicates difficulties in their personal relationship. Schorer writes that he wishes to talk to Derleth about a poem in *Pysche*, implying that the poem appeared to Schorer to be about himself. In the mid-1950's there is a gap of three and a half years between letters, and in the letter that resumes the correspondence Schorer writes, "you were very kind to write me, out of the blue." The sudden changes in the relation are seen in two letters written during 1961. On November 12 Schorer, commenting on Derleth's note in *Colonel Markesan and Less Pleasant People* about their collaboration, says that "I don't remember things going as smoothly as you suggest." However, eight days later he expresses delight about the portrait of his father in *Walden West*. The letters from the mid and late 1960's are mellower, containing mainly positive remarks on Derleth's books, a fond memory, occasioned by Helen White's death,

of a course the two of them took from her, friendly comments about expecting to see Derleth or about having just seen him and a sympathetic letter after Derleth suffered a seizure in 1967.

Of the two letters from Derleth to Schorer included in the historical society's collection one, dated September 16, 1961, is full of praise for Schorer's biography of Sinclair Lewis. The other is very revealing in its explanation of a cryptic comment in an earlier letter. He writes that he knew Margery Latimer, to whom he introduced Schorer. She and Schorer corresponded and visited each other. In 1932 Schorer went to the funeral home after her death but advised Derleth not to come along because he might not know how to act, a comment that Derleth remembered bitterly for thirty-seven years. Having broached the subject of pain inflicted by Schorer, Derleth goes on to recount a day spent in Madison with Schorer on December 30, 1925: he even cites the exact day almost forty-five years after it occurred. He graciously mentions that Schorer shared money with him and describes Schorer falling asleep in his arms on the way back. Derleth's point is that Schorer did not reciprocate Derleth's affection. This incident is the basis of the reference to Robin and Steve near the end of *Evening of Spring* and is one source of Steve's nostalgic reverie about Robin in that book. These letters do indicate an imbalance of affection. Derleth was the more faithful correspondent and sent Schorer a copy of most of his published books. and in a letter Schorer asks him to keep his eye out for certain kinds of books to send him. In 1952 Schorer writes from Perugia, Italy, requesting Derleth to send him lighter fluid, ball point pen fillers, kleenex and toilet paper. Less than a month later he writes to the solicitous Derleth thanking him for his prompt attention to that request. In general, Derleth seems to have wanted a close professional and personal relation, and Schorer seems to have wanted to keep Derleth at arm's-length.

The strangest document about the two writers in the historical society is an article, 110 pages long, by Edward Klein called "A Plagiarism of Mind," which was written in 1936. It contains references to letters and manuscripts that Derleth must have supplied to Klein. On occasion Klein makes a convincing case that Derleth suggested ideas for plots to Schorer, and he points out that the source for the historical portion of *A House Too Old* is

Derleth's *The Heritage of Sauk City*. At other times he is less convincing. For example, some of the imagery he finds in both writers probably results from things both observed in the same small town rather than from plagiarism. Klein's argument that Selma's final loneliness in *A House Too Old* is borrowed from Steve's loneliness at the end of *Evening in Spring* is less likely to be true than is the theory that Schorer began with memories of his own grandmother. Plagiarism is too harsh a term to apply to the literary relation between those two writers, but Klein's article would be a useful guide for a much-needed study of that relation.

The final account that Schorer balanced is the one with his wife. This is not to suggest that he mistreated or underestimated her; on the contrary, he mentions that friends often admired the strength of their marriage. Rather, he wants to make sure that he acknowledges her in print while there is still time to do so. Ruth Page Schorer is the daughter of William Herbert Page, a University of Wisconsin law professor, prolific writer and eccentric about whom stories are still told at the law school. In *Pieces of Life* Schorer describes being swept off his feet by the first sight he had of her on the steps of the Memorial Union in 1935, when he said, "that is the girl I want to marry." The next year he did marry her, and *Pieces of Life* ends poignantly on their fortieth anniversary as Schorer proclaims, "I don't think that she has ever recognized my devotion to purest grace of body and of mind, any more than she has ever been aware that she is the total mistress of that double blessing. I feel like crying." That account balanced, four days before their forty-first anniversary would have occurred, the final nighttime descended on Mark Schorer.

Madison, Wisconsin

OHIO BOYHOODS: A STUDY OF ADOLESCENCE IN NOVELS BY ROBERT McCLOSKEY, VIRGINIA HAMILTON, AND DON MOSER

LINDA R. SILVER

Through the literature a society creates for its children can be discovered in a particularly lucid form many of that society's attitudes about both its children and itself. As writers respond to changes in social conditions and values, their books become to some extent mirrors, reflecting shifting images of what it means to be a child, an adolescent, an adult. The purpose of this paper will be to discuss how three fictional portraits of adolescent boys show differing views of adolescence and of the relationship between young people and the midwestern societies in which they live.

The critic Sheila Egoff describes the children's books written during the first half of the twentieth century as characteristically "set in a world of delight and innocence . . . The world of childhood is separate from that of adults: the children are busy and happy about their own affairs while the adults hover on the periphery . . . ready to step in at times of danger and need. But the children are generally equal to most situations. There is little introspection and less ugliness or downright hardship . . . Childhood, it seems, was the best of all possible states."[1]

HOMER PRICE by Robert McCloskey was published in 1943 and the setting Egoff describes is certainly true for McCloskey's novel. HOMER PRICE is a series of comic adventures set in and around the town of Centerburg. No exact reference to Centerburg's geographic location is given but it is generally assumed to be set in the southwestern part of Ohio that McCloskey, a native Ohioan, remembered from his own boyhood. The lack of specificity as to location or time frame is obviously intended. Centerburg is archetypical rather than typical, illustrating what was once a common vision of the Midwest: a place of farms and small towns populated by resourceful provincials who worked and played in a spirit of cornball earnestness. Centerburg is the quintessential Midwestern small town, where the sheriff plays pinochle over at the barber shop, where the Ladies Club holds box socials, and where the populace turns out for the sesquicentennial pageant to celebrate with equal sincerity the "forty two pounds of edible fungus" that saved the original settlers from starvation and a newly constructed housing project. The creation of a suburb for Centerburg is regarded by its residents, child and adult alike, as a sure sign of "up and comingness," with absolutely no traces of regret for the trees and fields that have been destroyed to make way for row after row of pre-fabricated, identical houses. The Centerburg newspaper calls the housing development "a modern miracle" and one of the residents exclaims, "Simply marvelous . . . Just think. Last week there were only grass and trees and squirrels on this spot."

The building of the housing project is the culminating episode of HOMER PRICE, a climax to chapters of rising action that indicate the novel's comic nature and its author's attitude toward the rural Midwest as a land of beneficence and unbounded opportunity. Success is measured in material terms — the winning of a reward for capturing robbers or the winning of a wife who can cook — and if not inevitable, is usually assured to anyone with good sense and ingenuity. The spirit of Centerburg is above all practical and when the town's children are in danger of being lured away by a latter-day Pied Piper, the mayor justifies paying their ransom on the grounds that "we can't lose all these children with election time coming up next month."

In Don Moser's A HEART TO THE HAWKS, land development causes the central conflict between the fourteen year old protagonist and the society in which he lives, marking the destruction of the wildlife that Mike loves and in a symbolic sense, the end of his innocence. Set in approximately the same time period as HOMER PRICE, that is, in the middle 1940's, Moser's novel was published in 1975 and shows decided changes in attitude toward progress, the nature of adolescence, and the rela-

tionship between society and environment. In contrast to the vagueness of HOMER PRICE's setting, it is stated very clearly in A HEART TO THE HAWKS. "For someone who intended to be a polar explorer, falconer, first conqueror of Everest, oceanographer, Eagle Scout, field herpetologist, big-game hunter (for scientific purposes only), and frequent contributor of articles to the National Geographic Magazine, as well as the world's greatest living authority on freshwater biology, it wasn't a bad place to grow up. (Mike's) home, in a suburb east of Cleveland, Ohio, was surrounded on three sides by defense plants, just converted back from the manufacture of tanks and airplane engines to the making of automobiles and refrigerators and the other truck of civilian life; and by streets of orderly, close-set houses with small yards in front and back. But on the fourth side were woodlands and old farms, many of them abandoned and gone back to second-growth timber, and a net of dirt and gravel roads that stretched away into the rural counties beyond. It was a wedge of country driven into the heart of a city, or to say it better, a city hammered down over a last remaining spike of country, its development halted by years of war and the shortage of construction materials. On a summer night, if he looked north from the house, Mike saw the lamps of progress; if he looked south, he saw racoons."

Mike prefers the southern view. This "last remaining spike of country" has been his field laboratory and he knows it intimately, with a far greater awareness and appreciation than is ever given to Homer Price to feel for his more bucolic surroundings. And whereas, in the latter book, the leveling bulldozers are welcomed as one further sign of modern achievement, in A HEART TO THE HAWKS, their first menacing presence is indicated by "a kind of guttural roar, but so softened by distance that it seemed no more than a hoarse whisper, with an overlay of sharper sound, like the clanking of armor of a far-off battalion."

The tone of HOMER PRICE, on the other hand, is consistently up-beat and if McCloskey views life in Centerburg with touches of irony, his characters never do. Homer's Uncle Ulysses, a man of "advanced ideas," takes pride in his "up and coming" lunchroom, filled with modern labor-saving devices, while the judge expounds on "women's rights" after Miss Terwilliger is allowed to enter a string winding contest at the County Fair. Although

in each chapter a problem occurs, it is usually caused by a stranger or some outside force and it is always solved by Homer acting in concert with his elders, who are sensible enough to recognize and defer to his intelligence. These problems, while necessary for dramatic effect and the showcasting of character, are definitely not considered to be part of Centerburg's normal life, during which "the children concentrate on arithmetic and baseball and the grown-ups tend to business and running the town in a peaceful, democratic way." Implicit in McCloskey's good humored portrayal of a small Ohio town is the idea of a society at one with itself, sharing a common purpose, common values, and a firm faith in the future. It is a society shown to offer its children opportunities to develop self-reliance, industriousness, and generosity while allowing them the benevolent separteness that Egoff described as characteristic of books written in the first half of this century. Alienation or isolation, conditions that occur frequently in books written for older children since the 1960's, are inconceivable in Homer Price's world.

In Moser's A HEART TO THE HAWKS, the setting is the 1940's but the perspective is of the 70's, and the theme is one of disillusionment, as epitomized by the title, taken from Robinson Jeffers', "Give your heart to the hawks for a snack of meat, but not to men." As his struggle to stop the destruction of his childhood paradise grows progressively more desperate, Mike Harrington is forced from innocence into experience. Contemplating his passage, one is reminded of Gerald Manley Hopkins' elegiac poem "Spring and Fall," which begins:

> "Margaret, are you grieving
> Over Goldengrove unleaving?"
> "It is the blight man was born for.
> It is Margaret you mourn for."

Mike's friend, an aging scientist, tells him to forget his pond and woods, that there will still be some places to go, "somewhere, where the heathen have been spared our civilization and our technology," but his words, meant to comfort, acknowledge that Mike no longer has a place in the concrete and asphalt landscape growing up around him.

Isolation from society is viewed more favorable in Virginia Hamilton's novel M. C. HIGGINS THE GREAT, which takes

place in the hills of southeastern Ohio. The time of the story is contemporaneous with the 1974 publication date and for the thirteen year old protagonist, a carefree childhood has ceased to exist.

Again, the "deep cough and hum" of bulldozers strikes an ominous note. Like HOMER PRICE, this novel also has a rural setting but by now, the fields and woods have been levelled, the hills are gashed by strip mines, and the streams, which for Homer provided fishing, run polluted. Virginia Hamilton lives in southeastern Ohio and about it she has said: "Appalachian hills are flattened; the Belmont counties of Ohio are decimated by the GEMs (Giant Earth Movers) of Hanna Mining Company. Acids released by mining destroy wells, crops, livestock, and land. Because of them people starve and people die."[2]

M.C. and his family live on an outcropping of Sarah's Mountain, named for their ancestor, a runaway slave. To the south are the smoking chimneys of a steel town and beyond it, the Ohio River. To the north, hidden by the mountain but present in M.C.'s mind's eye, is a scarred and desolate landscape, ravaged by strip mining. When the family leaves the mountain, it is by necessity, not choice. At the least, the outside world is disappointing; more often, it is degrading. M.C.'s proud parents have menial jobs in town and school is described thus: "Boys M.C.'s age endured school . . . Awkward, with twitching hands and no pine needles to touch or branches to hand from. In class, tongue-tied, they thought themselves stupid. Their teachers thought them slow. They endured it all. Until time to go home, to live again ingenious in the woods." Ingenuity was valued in Centerburg as a social good. Here it has become a means of preserving personal integrity from the demeaning effects of an alien culture.

But because of the incursions of that culture, even the woods and hills have become corrupted. Looming above the house on Sarah's Mountain is a spoil heap created by strip mining. M.C. is obsessed by fear that the heap will slide down the mountain and crush them. He takes upon himself the burden of removing his family from the danger, and in so doing becomes pitted against his father, whose ties to the mountain are deep and mystical. " 'These old mountains,' Jones said . . . 'They are really something . . . It's a feeling . . . Like, to think a solid piece of something big belongs to you. To your father, and his, too.' Jones rubbed and

twisted his hands, as if they ached him. 'And you do it, for a long kind of time.' " As well as he knows the footpaths and gullies of his home, M.C. tries to deny the kind of feeling that his father expresses. " 'You can believe it or you can disbelieve it. But I know and your mama knows. Times, in the heat of day. When you not thinking much on nothing. When you are resting quiet. Trees, dusty-still. You can hear Sarah a-laboring up the mountain, the baby, whimpering. She say "Shhh! Shhh;" like a breeze. But no breeze, no movement. It's just only Sarah, as of old.' " When M.C. admits that he has also sensed Sarah's presence and been frightened, his father says, " 'Don't you be afraid. . . . For she not show you a vision of her. No ghost. She climbs eternal. Just to remind us that she hold claim to me and to you and each one of us on her mountain.' "

M.C.'s plan to escape the spoil heap are doubly doomed: they depend on the help of the Dude from outside and more significantly, they deny the power of the hills. Nature, in Hamilton's novel, is neither the useful adjunct to human affairs that it is in HOMER PRICE, nor does it symbolize youthful ardor and innocence, as it does in A HEART TO THE HAWKS. Rather, it is a pervasive presence that liberates, challenges, and threatens. M.C. calls himself "the Great" jokingly but he assumes a hero's role by grappling with nature on its terms, through courage, cunning, and endurance, rather than by escape. The setting of the novel illuminates its larger-than-life characters and in Eudora Welty's words, by confining them, defines them.

When she accepted the Newbery Award, presented to her in 1975 for M.C. HIGGINS THE GREAT, (which also won a National Book Award), Hamilton described the character relationships she developed. "I began with M.C. atop a 40-foot pole, lofty, serene. Too serene, perhaps . . . and so I conceived Ben Killburn, created out of darkness at the foot of the pole. Earthbound, Ben is dependable in a way M.C. is not. Ben, in turn, is constructed by Jones Higgins, M.C.'s father, a man of strength and integrity yet superstitious and unyielding. So, too, is Jones illuminated by the Dude from out of nowhere, who clarifies for M.C. his father's inability to face the reality of the endangered mountain. . . . The Dude in his turn is made less imposing by the presence of M.C.'s mother, Banina. . . . Finally, how easily random

chance in the slim shape of a whimsical teenage girl might have brought tragedy to Banina's beloved family."[3]

The pole that M.C. sits on is a prize given to him by his father for swimming across the Ohio River. On it, he watches over his younger brothers and sister at play, catches sight of the two strangers who come into the hills, and surveys the land as though it were his to command. In M.C.'s opinion, he is at his greatest 40 feet from the ground but he learns that the pole is more than a personal trophy. To Jones, who has planted it in the midst of the family burial ground, it is a monument to the Higgins past. Above it all, M.C. still cannot evade his heritage. When he accepts his responsibility as a part of Sarah's Mountain, he uses the soil and rocks of the mountain itself to begin building a wall to hold back the spoil heap. Heroism is found not in swimming, climbing, or impressing one's peers, but in joining the fight to survive.

M.C. is thirteen during the course of the summer when the story takes place. As a realistic character, he hovers between childishness and maturity. He cares for and helps to feed his family; he also sulks, shows off, and is jealous of relationships in which he is not at the center. Both M.C. and Mike, the fourteen year old protagonist of A HEART TO THE HAWKS, have strong sexual impulses; they share, too, an affinity for the macho ritual of hunting, gutting, and eating wild meat. Hamilton draws explicit parallels between hunting and sex: when M.C. sights the girl who has come camping in the hills, his response is to stalk her. Their first blood-letting encounter is compared with his hunting of a possum.

As an idealized character, M.C. is "grasped by a mystic sense of significance and purpose"[4] that casts him in a hero's role. Hamilton sees him as a symbol of hope and in the speech quoted earlier, she went on to say: ". . . young people reading M.C., particularly the poor and the blacks, have got to realize that his effort with his bare hands to stay alive and save his way of life must be their effort as well. For too long, too many have suffered and died without cause."[5] Written thirty-one years after HOMER PRICE, this contrasts sharply with McCloskey's vision of boyhood in rural Ohio. The physical differences between Centerburg and Sarah's Mountain are readily apprehendable but the change in attitude

from youth as a state of grace to youth as a state of siege bears pondering.

Hamilton places her characters in a highly charged emotional atmosphere and imbues the hero with the extraordinary powers he needs to deal with external odds and inner, personal turmoil. In comparison with the unrelieved seriousness of M.C. HIGGINS THE GREAT, McCloskey's characters are ordinary, unpretentious folks and his style is one of comic understatement. We see Homer Price from the outside, through what he does and seldom through what he thinks or feels. His life is eventful but orderly and his psyche—what little of it is revealed—is untroubled. Homer appears to be eleven or twelve years old, an age at which the protagonists of more recent books for children are beginning to feel the dual stress of sex and society. But whereas many contemporary writers for children take as a prototype for character Holden Caulfield, McCloskey clearly models Homer Price out of an older tradition, that of Tom Sawyer. Lacking Tom's wild imagination and deviousness, Homer is a somewhat sanitized version, to be sure. But in essential ways, among them cheerfulness, ingenuity, and a boyish innocence devoid of all sexual impulses, Homer corresponds to what Leslie Fiedler has called "America's vision of itself . . . the Good Bad Boy"[6] embodied in the image of Tom Sawyer.

Rebelliousness, isolation, resentment of authority, sexual confusion—all typical of adolescence—are not merely missing from Homer Price, they are impossible to even imagine in a character who attends school, does odd jobs, plays with other boys, works on his hobby of radio building, and has milk and cookies in the kitchen every night before going to bed. Homer may at times circumvent authority, he may at times be skeptical of conventional wisdom, he may bemusedly observe his elders' romantic rivalries, but he is impervious to self-doubt or psychic conflict. His relationships with his peers, all male—there are no girls in Centerburg, it seems—and with adults is comfortable and unstrained. Many of the characters of the book are stock comic types, the flustered sheriff and the pompous judge, for example, who serve as foils against which Homer's unusual abilities are illuminated. His virtues sound like the Boy Scout Manual but McCloskey renders his characters lightly and deftly avoids all suggestions of

priggishness. The novel is a closed statement about boyhood and small town life, filled with hope and the promise of renewal. It offers an image of what Fiedler calls "immaculate childhood," the shattering of which is the main theme of A HEART TO THE HAWKS.

Mike Harrington, the 14 year old protagonist, is a more sharply individualized character than either Home Price or M.C. Higgins. His thoughts, emotions, and intellectual interests are delineated so as to place him very clearly in the world of experience. As the author sees it, youth's progress from innocence into a consciousness of this world is painful but inevitable.

"Immaculate childhood" is symbolized by the acres of unspoiled woodland around Mike's suburban Cleveland home and by Mike's guileless faith in human reason. The woodland is his field laboratory and if he spends time there camping, smoking grapevines, and dreaming of manly adventures, he also identifies, captures, labels, and collects its abundant wildlife with genuine scientific curiousity and skill. Capable of long periods of intense concentration, as when he gentles and trains an injured hawk to hunt, Mike is also distracted by thoughts of Angeline Karman, whose "conical breasts" and "long silky legs" compensate for her failure to distinguish between Franklin Roosevelt and Mike's rugged hero, Theodore Roosevelt.

The twin pulls of sex and science on Mike's mind are treated with rueful humor, as when he leaves Angeline stranded in the scummy pond after his attention turns from her to a rare aquatic insect. Although not as preoccupied with sex as his friend Corcoran, who describes himself as a "knockers fiend," Mike is aroused by his own biology while being unsure of what to do about it.

As Mike's passion for Angeline begins to contend with his passion for science, so civilization begins to encroach on his woodland. His efforts to stop the building of a housing development and shopping center are based upon a concern for the environment and a naive belief that reasonable persuasion will cause profit-minded adults to change their values. Confronted throughout the story by evidence of his own limitations, Mike exalts in the fierce power of his hawk and receives the ultimate blow to hope when the hawk hits a newly strung utility line and is killed.

After one last, desparate but futile attempt to stop the destruction of the woodland, he resigns himself to his loss. As the book ends, Mike thinks, "Well, winter's coming anyway, so I guess it's time to let things go."

In showing the contrast between ideals and reality, Moser creates characters who fall short of their aspirations. Mike's father is an amateur inventor whose gadgets never quite work; his friend Dr. Oberman works in a shabby museum office and dreams of expeditions filled with "fer-de-lances . . . bushmasters . . . tropical nights and dark rum and beautiful women." Shaded by nostalgia for a lost and better past, A HEART TO THE HAWKS sees its adolescent protagonist as a victim of life who must learn " to let things go."

HOMER PRICE, M.C. HIGGINS THE GREAT, and A HEART TO THE HAWKS all have as main characters boys of approximately the same age and by their structures the novels suggest their authors' vision of the nature of adolescence. HOMER PRICE is a comedy, M.C. HIGGINS THE GREAT is a romance, and A HEART TO THE HAWKS is an irony. Although the first two end with hope, they show very different views of childhood, adolescence, and of the relationship between young people and society. In the thirty-two years that have elapsed between the publication of McCloskey's novel and Moser's, profound changes have occurred in the real world and in the fictional worlds found in books for children. As America's faith in human progress has faltered, so has our belief in a carefree youth.

Cuyahoga County Public Library

NOTES

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SINCLAIR LEWIS VS. ZANE GREY: *MANTRAP* AS SATIRICAL WESTERN

ROBERT E. FLEMING

When Sinclair Lewis published *Mantrap* in 1926, many reviewers felt that the novelist was either reaping the financial rewards of the reputation he had already established or merely relaxing from his serious labors to write a piece of frothy adventure fiction reminiscent of his earlier novels, *The Innocents* (1917) and *Free Air* (1919). Most critics agreed with Lewis's former professor at Yale, William Lyon Phelps, that *Mantrap* was a distinct disappointment after Lewis's successes.[1] Reviewer Dorothea Laurance Mann, however, read the latest Lewis offering not in the context of his own canon, but in that of popular western fiction; Mann suggested that Lewis failed in this apparent attempt to compete with Zane Grey because his satirical bent made him a very bad writer of westerns.[2] Mann's identification of *Mantrap* as a popular western is a provocative point, but she seems to have misread Lewis's intentions in writing such a novel. It seems doubtful that Lewis would have merely imitated Grey when one recalls that *Mantrap* was written during the decade in which Lewis produced not only his greatest achievements as a novelist but also his most pointed satires. Lewis had already assured himself of a prominent place in American literature with *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922) and *Arrowsmith* (1925), and *Mantrap* would be followed by *Elmer Gantry* (1927) and *Dodsworth* (1929). These five major novels were all carefully planned, and, with the possible exception of *Dodsworth*, each satirized some aspect of American life. Thus, it seems logical that in writing *Mantrap* Lewis intended, not to compete with Zane Grey as Dorothea Mann suggests, but to contradict and satirize some of the basic assumptions of Grey's western novels.

In one sense, Lewis had in fact been competing with Zane Grey for some years, for a Grey western was almost assured of a place on the year's best-seller list. In 1918 Grey's *The U.P. Trail* was the number one best seller for the year, and in 1919 when Lewis's well-promoted *Free Air* failed to make the list at all, Grey's *Desert of Wheat* placed third. *Main Street* was published too late to achieve best seller of the year in 1920, when Grey was again at the top of the list with *The Man of the Forest*. Lewis surpassed Grey the next year, when *Main Street* climbed to the number one spot, but even then Grey's *The Mysterious Rider* was not far behind in third place. The success of *Babbitt*, which tied for tenth place in 1922, was somewhat diminished by the reception of *To the Last Man*, in ninth place. Though *Babbitt* moved up to fourth place, by that time Grey had yet another best seller, *The Wanderer of the Wasteland*, which placed eighth. In 1924 Grey was again on the list with *The Call of the Canyon* in sixth place; Lewis had to wait until 1925 to see another of his novels, *Arrowsmith*, on the best-seller list, and it was merely in seventh place.[3] These facts about recorded sales would not have been ignored by Lewis, to whom commercial success meant a great deal; thus it is not surprising that in his letters the novelist frequently made derogatory remarks about Grey, whom he considered a "lowbrow," a writer that he easily surpassed on the artistic level.[4] Nor is it surprising that the novelist who viewed himself as competing against Theodore Dreiser for the critical audience and the Nobel Prize would also see himself as competing against Grey for the popular audience.

Still another probable reason for Lewis to be annoyed by the western writer's success is the fact that Grey's fiction, like that of James Fenimore Cooper, owed much of its popularity to its presentation and support of certain American myths. By their very nature, such myths were anathema to Lewis, who had already satirized a Cooperesque Maine woodsman in Babbitt: Joe Paradise, whom George Babbitt envisions as the ideal woodsman, shatters Babbitt's illusions by displaying insensitivity to the joys of the wilderness, by proving to be in worse physical condition than the pampered Babbitt, and finally, by admitting that, if he were able to do anything in the world, he would move to town and open a "swell shoe store."[5] If Lewis's sniping at the mythic

American hero had no effect on the book-buying public, it had even less on Grey, who had achieved success by transforming Cooper's American dream of rugged male existence in the wilderness into a slick formula and was selling his books faster than Babbitt could sell property in Zenith's Floral Heights.

The formula that Grey used so effectively has been summed up by Ann Ronald in her pamphlet *Zane Grey:*

> An Easterner — that is, an innocent — arrives in the West. He, or she, has been a failure in the past and seems unprepared to meet the challenges ahead. The land at first seems harsh and unforgiving — the sun is too hot, the canyons too deep, the peaks too rugged, the rivers too swift. Problems are compounded by the appearance of evil, of men who live by their guns and who care nothing for the rights of others. Gradually, however, the neophyte becomes a man. Rather than be beaten by the environment, he learns to conquer the elements, and in doing so he acquires a deep appreciation for the land. Rather than see innocent people tormented by evil, he learns to fight and to protect those he has come to love. The West, seeming almost a Garden of Eden, becomes a proving ground for man. Here he loses his innocence and gains knowledge.[6]

Ronald points to John Hare of *The Heritage of the Desert* as an exemplification of the easterner who comes west, adding that Hare is not really a failure but suffers from respiratory problems. Needless to say, in the course of the novel Hare's lungs are transformed along with his character. Grey readers may also think of Glenn Kilbourne (*The Call of the Canyon*), who moves to Oak Creek Canyon, Arizona, where he recovers from the effects of gas and shell-shock suffered in World War I, or of Richard Gale (*Desert Gold,* 1913) who is physically healthy but needs the maturity that he gains while working on the Arizona range, where his abilities and character are more important than his wealth or social position.

Grey's heroines most often require the same sort of maturity and awareness of relative values that Gale finds in *Desert Gold.* Glen Kilbourne's fiancée, Carley Burke, illustrates much of what is wrong with "society girls" in Grey's fiction. Her life in the East has been a round of parties and ephemeral amusements, but it is

only after her first trip west, in search of Glenn, that she realizes the emptiness and waste of her city existence. Sisters Bo and Helen Rayner of *The Man of the Forest* present a more fair-minded composite view of the eastern woman. Bo is daring because she is still childish enough to be unaware of the possible dangers of the West, but she shows signs of the same spoiled attitude Carley Burke exhibits. He older sister Helen is characterized at somewhat greater depth: mature and refined, she is shocked by the dangers and rawness of the West, yet she comes to see the beauty of the country and finally to acknowledge that violence is sometimes unavoidable. All three of these heroines are changed for the better by their initiation into western values.

Like Ann Ronald, Carlton Jackson emphasizes the importance of Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest in Grey's westerns. No scientist, Grey viewed the process as operating within the life span of individuals, who faced the tests of survival in the wilderness:

> He used the desert to show men away from civilization pitted against nature in much the same way as Joseph Conrad used the sea. It was to the barren wastelands that a man must go to transcend mere existence, to find his soul, and to grasp the idea of what Charles Darwin called "natural selection." After the desert, the mountains intrigued Grey; they complemented the desert by showing that nature was larger than human life, causing the pensive man to ponder his origins and his fate.[7]

In addition to being lonely and barren, western settings are frequently squalid from the point of view of uninitiated dudes, whose character development in the course of the novels is paralleled by their growing appreciation of the rugged charm of those settings. When Carley Burke first arrives in Flagstaff, she is dismayed at the lack of courtesy accorded her by the hotel staff, the absence of hot water in her room, and even the lack of heat in the cool mountain climate. Yet later, after she has been toughened by hardships, she regards even less comfortable surroundings as ample.

Finally, Grey's formula also includes the western characters who serve as tutors for the easterners. Sometimes, as in Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), these figures become major char-

acters in the novel, while elsewhere they remain secondary to the newly arrived easterner who is undergoing transformation in the west. In *The Man of the Forest*, for example, Milt Dale not only serves as a teacher to the Rayner girls but has a major romantic role. On the other hand, the mysterious Yaqui of *Desert Gold* has no function apart from being a tutor to Richard Gale. These characters—cowboys, hunters, and frequently Native Americans —are usually somewhat crude and uncouth in personal appearance or manner, yet the easterner comes to appreciate their less obvious qualities—their natural morality as well as their specialized knowledge of woods, desert, or mountains.

None of the factors in these formula westerns is new with Zane Grey. The paradox of the wilderness as both Eden and harsh proving grounds appears in James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking tales and passes through the works of Owen Wister before Grey inherits the tradition. The same tradition includes the character types, particularly the heroic frontiersman and the noble savage, but also the flawed or naive eastern hero and the over-civilized heroine, both of whom are initiated into the deeper meaning of life when they must confront it directly. Thus, Grey was merely one of the more recent contributors to the western myth; but the fact that he was a contemporary of Lewis's and was competing for the same popular audience as Lewis made him a particularly attractive target for the satirist.

Like Zane Grey, Lewis took a research trip to collect local color for his "western." In 1923, during a stay in England, he had met an officer of the Canadian Pacific Railroad and a relative of the Governor General of Canada.[8] Through these acquaintances Lewis was able to arrange for himself and his brother Claude to accompany an annual treaty party of the Indian Affairs branch of the Canadian government on a trip into the wilds of Saskatchewan during the summer of 1924. It is not certain that Lewis knew when he set out that he would be writing a novel; in fact, he suggested that he might do a series of factual articles on the trip.[9] However, the trip may have suggested a satirical treatment by giving Lewis more local color than he desired, for Lewis cut the trip short after almost a month of outdoor hardship — beginning with a filthy hotel in Big River, Saskatchewan, and featuring much rain, little conversation with the non-English

speaking Cree canoe-men, a forest fire, plain food, hard beds on the ground, and no alcohol — all of which he was eventually to incorporate into *Mantrap*.[10]

In outline, Lewis's wilderness novel is remarkably similar to Grey's westerns. Both an eastern weakling and a heroine who has been affected by some of the worst featurse of civilization appear, as well as Indians and modern versions of the frontiersman. The wilderness itself is present throughout and, as in the novels of Zane Grey, it exerts a major influence on the easterners. Finally, the plot, though undercut by Lewis's satirical treatment, bears a resemblance to those melodramatic plots favored by Grey.

The main character of *Mantrap*, Ralph Prescott, is very much the sort of character one would expect to encounter in a Grey novel. A New York attorney who enjoys an undistinguished popularity among habitues of the Yale Club, Ralph is a bachelor whose principal physical exercise is an occasional game of golf. However, Ralph, in a modern parallel to the lung trouble which afflicts the Zane Grey hero, gradually realizes that he may be on the verge of a nervous breakdown: clients have begun to irritate him; he finds that the slightest excitement, such as a narrowly avoided traffic accident, leaves him with his heart pounding; life is no longer fun, and he is vaguely annoyed when acquaintances in the country club locker room laugh and brag. At this point in Ralph's life fellow golfer E. Wesson Woodbury invites Ralph on a fishing trip to a remote area in northwestern Canada. Woodbury, a virile stocking magnate reminiscent of George Babbitt, adds a challenge to the invitation when he suggests that Ralph's ignorance about the wilderness reveals a certain effete quality in his character: "Ralph was both nettled and conscience-ridden. It was true. He knew nothing, nothing whatever, of the trappers and prospectors who still guard the frontier. He had never slept on the ground. He was soft. He was soft and timorous — he with his pretty little vacations in Brittany and Devon and the Bavarian Oberland! But also he was irritated by Woodbury's superior manner. . . ."[11]

Ralph attempts to envision himself in the rugged circumstances of the popular "yarns" of his day, but what finally convinces him to join Woodbury is a ridiculous incident in which he is frightened to the threshold of heart-failure by his own image

in a full-length mirror. Like Grey's pampered but sickly easterners, Ralph needs a Teddy Roosevelt exercise cure — sleeping on the ground, breathing fresh air, and associating with rugged outdoorsmen.

En route to the wilderness Ralph and Woodbury stop at a small frontier town where Ralph displays many of the reactions of the Zane Grey heroine on her first trip west. Instead of finding Whitewater picturesque, he finds it squalid and dull. The Bunger House, sole hotel and restaurant in town, proves to be even worse than the hotel Carley Burke encounters in Flagstaff. It is unpainted on the outside, dirty and stuffy on the inside; its rooms are chiefly decorated with dust, dead insects, and broken-down furniture, and its lobby with the only usable bathtub in the house. After a dispute over having missed dinner, Ralph and Woodbury leave the hotel and its moldy odors to sleep in the relative luxury of a tent in the camp pitched for the adventurers by their Indian guides. These experiences are as disappointing as those in the frontier town. After a meal of indigestible bannock — "a variety of bread. . . . well thought of as ballast, as a missile or an anchor" (p. 47) — Ralph settles down to sample the curative powers of sleeping on the ground, which proves to be "curiously hard. In ratio as he grew more drowsy, it thrust up the more viciously against him. It fought him. It heaved up and hit him" (p. 54). While the spartan Woodbury grumbles about the same problem, Ralph begins to resent his benefactor and reflects that he has been taken in by the "most blatant of all our American myths: roughing it in the wilds!" (p. 56).

The concept of deliberately seeking out hardships to build the character comes in for further satire later in the novel. A piece of camping equipment pressed on Ralph by his New York outfitter is a down-filled pillow, but Woodbury insists that a he-man merely kicks off his shoes, rolls up his coat for a pillow, and sleeps without the comfort of such reminders of civilization as down pillows. Ralph, to whom the rolled coat feels "like a pine board to his ear" (p. 54), tries to comply. Yet when the adventurers meet Joe Easter, a real denizen of the wilderness, and Woodbury ridicules Ralph's desire to wear pajamas and use a real pillow, Easter replies:

> "When I come first. . . . I certainly did want to be a real, hard-boiled, dyed-in-the-wool roughneck. So I used to sleep in my pants, even on hot nights. But — well — tell you — here's how it is: getting old and rich. . . . summer nights I wear pajamas, especial' when I'm out on the hike. And they're silk pajamas, friend, and I'd rather give up my bowman. . . . than give up the nice pillow I've lugged around these five years." (p. 90)

After a series of hardships — some planned but most encountered against his will — Ralph tries to convince himself that he has developed the "powerful shoulders," "mighty hands," and even "hawk eyes" (p. 204) that adventurous dudes soon achieve in popular fiction:

> In fiction, all proper tenderfeet, particularly if they wear eyeglasses and weigh not over one hundred and thirty-seven pounds, after three weeks on a ranch, in a lumber-camp, or on a whaler become hardened and wise. Usually they beat the two-hundred-and-sixteen-pound bully and marry the boss's daughter. But Ralph was tonight rather more of a tenderfoot, and a bored tenderfoot, than when he had left Whitewater on the steamer. (p. 214)

Thus Lewis deliberately and overtly undercuts one of the myths which is a keystone in the conventional western plot.

Another direct reference to the influence of popular fiction concerns the preconceptions Ralph has about the Indians. The myths about the "noble savage" perpetuated by Cooper and modified by Zane Grey are deliberately contradicted by Lewis in the Cree guides Woodbury has hired for the trip :

> Ralph Prescott had been brought up on the Fenimore Cooper tradition of Indians. He expected all of them to look like the chieftain on the buffalo nickel, like the statue which in all proper parks stands between Goethe in marble and General Sherman in bronze — a sachem eagle-nosed, tall, magnificently grave. His heart was pinched as he saw shambling toward them four swart and runty loafers, introduced as Jesse, Louey, Charley, and Nick. (pp. 36-37)

Not only do Lewis's Indians not look like noble savages, but their very names contrast with the romantic names of Cooper's Chingachgook and Uncas or Grey's generic Yaqui. Lewis also attacks

the myth of solemn Indian comportment. Far from being silent and inscrutable, Ralph's guides

> exhibited a silence almost equal to their hatred of whiskey. They kept quiet enough during the labor of paddling, and the motor drowned their clack when it was blessedly working, but in the stillness of sailing, . . . then his bow-man and stern-man babbled like washerwomen, giggled like little girls, shouted witticisms across to the Indians in the other canoe.
>
> Some of their exasperatingly unending jabber was smutty stories, he concluded from their neighing; some of it, from their glances, certainly was poignant comment on Woodbury and himself. As his own Indians spoke only Cree, he could neither understand them nor tell them to shut up. (p. 66)

Lewis's depiction of the Indian contrasts sharply with Grey's characterization of the heroic Yaqui in *Desert Gold*: "In Gale's sight the Indian's stoicism, his inscrutability, the lavalike hardness of his face, although they did not change, seemed to give forth light, gentleness, loyalty."[12] The Yaqui teaches Gale a great deal, but Gale despairs of ever becoming the Yaqui's equal in knowledge of the outdoors or of the very fundamentals of life with which this primitive man is constantly in touch. Lewis maintains his satire of this fictional stereotype when Ralph meets Indians more removed from civilization than the guides. He learns that there is Indian trouble at Mantrap Landing, but the conflict is more reminiscent of Bret Harte's "Muck-a-Muck" than of anything Cooper wrote. A dispute about the Indians' credit at the local trading post causes a good deal of grumbling; rumors of a massacre circulate, but the action taken by the "hostiles" mainly consists of petty acts of vandalism such as blocking a footpath or stealing a canoe, and the eventual burning of Joe Easter's store is treated more as a prank that got out of hand than as an act of terrorism. Even the most noble of the Indians, their chiefs, are disappointing to one whose contact with Indians has been limited to the pages of popular fiction:

> The title of Chief, Ralph had discovered, was considerably less royal in real life than in fiction. It was about as important as the title of President of the Village Council in a hamlet of three hundred. The Chief could call meetings, and he served as intermediary between his wandering band and the Government, but he was elected by his people and he could be removed without trial by the Indian agent. His principal ducal prerogatives were receiving twenty-five dollars a year instead of five, when the Government paid the annual Treaty money to its wards, and wearing a vast gold band around his hat, a blue coat with brass buttons and a gold armband, and a medal so huge that it recalled a comic policeman in a burlesque show. (p. 197)

As Ralph contrasts the reality of these exotic primitives with their depiction in popular fiction of his day, he becomes convinced that the popular novelists have lied to their readers.

The heroic frontiersmen of the formula western are also conspicuous by their absence. The closest thing to a bona fide mountain man at Mantrap Landing is Pop Buck, "the toughest old scoundrel north of Dauphin — been in the woods for sixty years . . ." (p. 122). But the impression given by Pop's broad shoulders is undercut by his "huge paunch," and any heroic exploits in his past have given way to long, windy speeches alternating with Babbit-like jocosity. The two younger versions of Pop, Pete Renchoux and George Eagan, are currently trappers, but the only sign of heroism they display is in the deadly amounts of moonshine whiskey they consume before lapsing into a stupor. Another potentially heroic figure, according to western myth, might have been the Canadian equivalent of the western sheriff, Curly Evans; while Joe Easter calls Curly a competent policeman, Ralph and the reader must form their opinion on the basis of the lawman's rather flamboyant uniform, drunken antics, and banal small talk.

Joe Easter comes closest to Ralph's preconceived notion of the ideal outdoorsman. Although Joe is now merely a trader and fur-buyer, he has put in an apprenticeship as a trapper and is thoroughly competent in all the manly tasks of the trail: shooting, fishing, pitching camp, and boating. Moreover, like his ancestor Natty Bumppo, Joe is able to verbalize much of what he feels about the wilderness: "Through Joe's halting stories, Ralph saw that great white unknown land. The crackle and shimmer of the Northern Lights in a vast darkness over dark vast forests. The savage stars of the winter night. The joy of a cabin's yellow

lights seen far down a frozen and snowy river when a fur-buyer was numb with hunger. High noon, and the frozen tundras a field of diamonds under the roaring sun" (p. 169). But Lewis seems to have permitted Joe to approach the ideal only so that he might bring him down to earth by depicting him in the most ordinary and unheroic situations. Unlike Cooper's Natty Bumppo, Joe has married; he allows his wife to browbeat him and to embarrass him in public. When Joe is forced to go into the city, he carries none of the dignity that he has in the wilderness and degenerates into an awkward bumbler. Like Joe Paradise of *Babbitt*, Joe Easter has the basic personality of a small shopkeeper rather than that of a heroic frontiersman.

Joe's wife Alverna illustrates yet another contrast with the characters of popular westerns. Zane Grey's women, frequently spoiled and selfish when they encounter the wilderness, are strengthened and matured by their experiences in desert, mountains, or woods. Alverna bears little resemblance to these heroines. As a manicure girl in Minneapolis, Alverna was so impressed by Joe's stories of his "dandy little house . . . at Mantrap Landing" (p. 107) that she married him the next day. However, the girl Ralph meets at the trading post one year later has not been gentled by the proximity of nature. After a dull social evening, Alverna, who is as uncomfortable at Mantrap Landing as Carol Kennicott in Gopher Prairie, expresses her dissatisfaction more forthrightly than Carol:

> "But honest, Ralph," she begged, "you got no idea how hard it is for me here, with nothing but these poker parties. I'd rather have nice dances — like we used to have in Minneapolis, at Lake Harriet — with a live bunch — but *you* know: respectable. Maybe I wasn't anything but a manicure girl in a barber-shop . . . but I was brought up real nice . . . And believe me, a manicure girl meets more swell birds and interesting people and everything than an old turkey-buzzard like Ma McGavity ever heard about." (pp. 152-53)

Although Alverna's constant use of city slang grates on Ralph's nerves, he finds her flashy good looks attractive; however, he is disturbed when he realizes that Alverna is an unrelenting flirt and has quite probably had an affair with Curly Evans. Alverna

welcomes a diversion from the monotony of her life and sets out to captivate Ralph, giving a second and ironic dimension to the term "mantrap."

Thus, Lewis shows that the moral influences of the wilderness, so salubrious in the pages of popular fiction, may have deleterious effects on the city-bred. While she was not immoral in Minneapolis, Alverna has been transformed by boredom as well as by the emptiness of life in the woods into a flirt and an adulteress, while her frustration and anger turn her into a raging harpy when Joe reproaches her for her behavior.

The fact that Ralph is attracted to Alverna in spite of her flaws sets into motion the melodramatic plot of the final third of the novel. Hoping to leave Alverna and the temptation she represents behind him, Ralph sets out for civilization with an Indian guide in a canoe borrowed from Joe. Alverna intercepts him and persuades him to take her along to the city. A chase ensues. But once again Lewis inverts the moral implications of a staple of adventure fiction: whereas Grey would have the villains pursuing the virtuous, this chase has the justly irate husband attempting to overtake his runaway wife and her apparent lover.

The chase through the wilderness, over a route which includes many portages and dangerous rapids, provides Lewis with opportunities for satiric reversals of other traditional elements of such plots. Since they have only one Indian guide, both Alverna and Ralph have to share the labor of carrying canoe, food, and camping equipment on the portages — hard manual labor that should be quite improving, according to popular fiction. Instead, although Ralph finds the first day or two of the trip to be romantic, the dirt, sweat, and exhaustion soon begin to outweigh the sexual excitement of Alverna's presence. The food supply begins to run out. But Lewis is not content with the conventional hardships in his testing of the couple; their Indian guide, who seems suspiciously unconcerned about a distant forest fire which is heading their way, deserts during the night, leaving the couple with no food and no canoe. Lewis has given Ralph and Alverna the ultimate opportunity to benefit from the rigors of survival in the wilderness.

Both behave well during the worst of this test, but on the second day after the guide's desertion, when rescue appears to

be at hand as an airplane lands on the lake, Alverna's character flaw asserts itself; she teases and flirts with the pilot and the two forest rangers in the plane before she and Ralph realize that the plane cannot take them away. They are left with a supply of food, an inadequate folding boat, and a generous supply of bad feeling brought on by Alverna's flirting. Shortly after this false climax, Lewis sets the stage for the classic showdown scene between the two men vying for the romantic heroine. When Joe's canoe is seen in the distance, Ralph must consider his course of action. He soon comes to the unmelodramatic conclusion that he will not fight for Alverna by trying to shoot Joe; his time in the wild has not been sufficient to overturn the habits of civilization. He also thinks too much of Joe to wish to injure him further — and besides that, Ralph would be almost certain to miss Joe with a gun.

Ironically undercutting the conventional confrontation to which he has been building, Lewis substitutes conversation for shooting. Joe explains to Ralph, " 'I didn't come to save her. I was aiming to save you! . . . I guessed she'd coaxed you to lug her along with you. I know you're strong on duty. I figured that once you were Outside, in New York, you'd feel you had to stick by her. And then there'd be hell to pay. That's what I been planning to save you from. You'd come to hate her. . . . She's sweet, but she's rotten' " (p. 269). The novel concludes with each of the three characters basically unchanged: Joe settles down in Winnipeg, probably as bookkeeper for a large trading company; Alverna sets out for Minneapolis and her old job as manicurist; and Ralph, only slightly sadder and wiser after his adventures, boards a Pullman for home.

Lewis was rewarded for his parody of popular western fiction, but not by the plaudits of the literary critics. He sold the story to *Collier's* for $42,500,[13] and saw it serialized in that magazine from February through May, 1926. The work came out between hard covers in June, and in July a movie version starring Clara Bow and Ernest Torrence was released. Readers and most reviewers accepted the novel as a romantic, even sentimental, adventure story in the popular mode; though some reviews noted that there were occasional satiric touches in the work, none suspected Lewis of parody or even extensive satire. While reviewers

did not rank it with Lewis's best work, they did not treat *Mantrap* harshly; however, later literary critics showed no such restraint. Perhaps Mark Schorer sums up the critical reaction best when he says, after allotting only two pages to a critical discussion, that Mantrap is "a thin cut above *The Innocents*, the most deplorable of all of his books."[14]

However, the fact that Lewis, as artist and satirist, had made such undeniable progress since *The Innocents* makes it difficult to accept *Mantrap* as a dismal failure which Lewis unaccountably produced while at the peak of his ability. It seems unlikely that, so soon after writing *Arrowsmith*, Lewis could have lost his eye for false values in American life and his satirist's skill in exposing them, especially since he was to follow *Mantrap* with *Elmer Gantry*, which was published less than ten months after the hardcover edition of *Mantrap*. It is much more likely that Lewis, irked by the popular success of a lesser novelist mining an outworn mode, sought to ridicule by means of satire and parody the formulaic characters, melodramatic situations, simplistic values, and false assumptions inherent in the western romances so often found on the best-seller lists. Read as parody, *Mantrap* makes perfect sense and provides one more example of Sinclair Lewis's versatility as a humorist and a novelist.

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NOTES

1. William Lyon Phelps, "Sinclair Lewis Takes a Holiday in Canada," *Literary Digest International Book Review*, 4 (1926), 485, 487.
2. Dorothea Laurance Mann, "Sinclair Lewis Pays Tribute to the He-Man," New York *Herald Tribune Books*, 4 July 1926, p. 11.
3. Alice Payne Hackett, *Fifty Years of Best Sellers: 1895-1945* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1945), pp. 36, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51-52.
4. See *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis 1919-1930*, ed. Harrison Smith (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952). Grey is referred to as "lowbrow" (p. 277), and in writing to Alfred Harcourt about the advertising for *Free Air* (1919), Lewis specifies, "Please—PLEASE—think very carefully about giving the keynote of the book in future ads and descriptions, so that it may stand out from the typical Zane Grey ads" (p. 15). See also pp. 273, 274, and 301 for derogatory references to Grey.
5. Sinclair Lewis, *Babbit* (New York: Brace and Company, 1922), p. 300.
6. Ann Ronald, *Zane Grey* (Boise, Idaho: Boise State University, 1975), p. 13.
7. Carlton Jackson, *Zane Grey* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), p. 50.

8. Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 388. For a summary of the Lewis trip, see pp. 400-405.
9. D. J. Greene, With Sinclair Lewis in Darkest Saskatchewan: The Genesis of *Mantrap*," *Saskatchewan History*, 6, no. 2 (Spring 1953), 48.
10. For the most complete account of the Lewis expedition, see Donald Greene and George Knox, eds., *Treaty Trip: An Abridgement of Dr. Claude Lewis's Journal of an Expedition Made by Himself and His Brother, Sinclair Lewis, to Northwestern Saskatchewan and Manitoba* in 1924 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959).
11. Sinclair Lewis, *Mantrap* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), p. 15. All future references are to this edition and will be inserted in parentheses within the text.
12. Zane Grey, *Desert Gold* (New York: Black's Readers Service, 1941), p. 266.
13. Schorer, p. 399.
14. Schorer, p. 422.

THE CHICAGO LITERARY TIMES: A DESCRIPTION AND A BOOK REVIEW INDEX

Ray Lewis White

The Chicago Renaissance produced and nurtured several periodicals that entered the mainstream of American literary history, among them *Poetry*, *The Little Review*, and *The Dial*. As the Renaissance faded in the early 1920's, *The Dial* and *The Little Review* left Chicago, along with their editors and their best Midwestern contributors. Yet toward the end of the Chicago Renaissance period there appeared a full-fledged literary newspaper of which Bernard Duffey says, ". . . the *terminus ad quem* of the whole course of the Chicago renaissance can most clearly be marked by the short lived *Chicago Literary Times*, published and edited by Ben Hecht between March 1, 1923 and May 15, 1924."[1] Decades after 1924, Hecht recalled the *Chicago Literary Times* as his personal creation: "I printed and published the newspaper called *The Chicago Literary Times* by myself for a year and a half. I also sold and wrote the advertising copy and helped distribute the paper. The policy of my paper was to attack everything. I enjoyed myself perhaps more than my readers."[2]

Issue number one set the pace for Hecht's paper. In a column called "Salutation On the Saxophone" (*pace* Carl Sandburg), Hecht greeted his readership: "Chicago, the jazz baby—the reeking, cinder ridden, joyous Baptist strong-hold; Chicago, the chewing gum center of the world, the bleating, slant-headed rendezvous of half-witted newspapers, sociopaths and pants makers—in the name of the Seven Holy and Imperishable Arts, Chicago salutes you." The *Times* would be "a gazette dedicated to the Sacred Ballyhoo," a medium asserting that "Art is the watchword and Beauty the bride of the soul."

The first issues of *The Chicago Literary Times,* edited by Hecht and backed and managed by Pascal Covici, shared with Covici McGee Publishers an address at 158 West Washington Street, Chicago. By issue number seven Hecht had relocated his paper at 322 South State Street, Chicago, working probably by now without the active help of Covici. By issue number 20, the paper was located at 644 South Clark Street, Chicago, where it remained until its demise.

Always in tabloid-size format and garish layout, *The Chicago Literary Times* appeared in two volumes. In volume one (from 1 March 1923 through 15 February 1924), issues one through three were of four pages; issues four through eight were eight pages; issues nine through ten were twelve pages; and issues eleven through twenty-four were eight pages. In volume two (from 1 March 1924 through 1 June 1924), issues one through five were of eight pages; issues six through seven were sixteen pages. Of the thirty-one issues of this twice-monthly newspaper, five were printed on white paper, four were on blue paper, eight were on pink paper, and fourteen were on green paper.

The personnel of *The Chicago Literary Times,* besides Hecht and Covici, included at various times Maxwell Bodenheim, S. P. Rudens, Isadore Edelson, Louis A. Samuels, and James L. Renshaw. Contributors inclued Hecht, Bodenheim, Ring Lardner, Samuel Putnam, Rose Caylor, Lloyd Lewis, Vincent Starrett, Wallace Smith, and George Grosz. Free-lance contributors were warned: "*The Chicago Literary Times* Solicits No Manuscripts and Will Return None."

Given the appearance and content of *The Chicago Literary Times,* Hecht's readers must have derived enjoyment at least equal to that of the writer-publisher's. Where else could readers have found a Picasso drawing parodying the *trompe l'oeil* "What's Wrong With This Picture?" Or a list of Impossible People including Karl Marx ("the beer-garden Jesus"), W. M. Thackeray (the "green grocer's Dostoevsky"), John Milton ("inventor of the wall-paper heaven"), and Thomas Carlyle (the "Leroico moral interpretation of dyspeptic moods")? Or a list of "The World's 25 Worst Books" that ranged from *Pilgrim's Progress* to *Pride and Prejudice* to *The Rise of Silas Lapham* to *Women in Love*?

Irreverent and blatant, Hecht in general columns assailed books that the did not like. *Women in Love* was "an amateur blue print of sexual impulses poorly remembered by the author"; *The Sacred Wood* was "a book of critical essays in which the pillars of yesteryear are coaxed into a few new postures"; *Many Marriages* was "The wistful idealization of the masculine menopause"; and *Cornhuskers* was "the climax of the vers libre vendetta in the U.S."

Yet the chief interest of *The Chicago Literary Times* is its more formal book reviews. Hecht chose for review books that interested him or — as likely — outraged him. Of the sixty-six reviews in the thirty-one issues of the paper, Hecht wrote forty-three under the names of Remy D'Or or Rene D'Or. Of the other reviews, Maxwell Bodenheim wrote six; Rose Caylor (the future Mrs. Ben Hecht) wrote six; Jerome Shoenfeld wrote one; "L.F." wrote one; and nine reviews are unsigned.

Hecht published reviews of several classic authors whom he especially liked, among them Petronius, Dostoevsky, Huysmans, Gourmont, and the de Goncourts; but he showed judgment in choosing for review promising contemporary authors: Djuna Barnes, E. E. Cummings, T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Luigi Pirandello, Upton Sinclair, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Virginia Woolf, and Eleanor Wylie received full review; and Zona Gale, John Galsworthy, T. E. Hulme, Edna St. Vincent Millay, George Moore, and George Santayana were not ignored. *Jacob's Room* was "the fifteenth uncertain imitation of Dorothy Richardson." *The Waste Land* was "Intellect engaging in a drunken commotion, and Erudition prattling with the husky candor of a vagrant in the back-room of a saloon." *Tulips and Chimneys* was "embraced by certain critics whose minds form a cross section between violent vaudeville and an advertising sign-board version of intellect." *Harmonium* was "mere classification of suavely worded visual appearances and the mischievous sound-wrigglings of an intellect chiding its insomnia."

Fitful and brash or perceptive and firm, *The Chicago Literary Times* deserves attention for its commentary on the books that made the Midwestern literary landscape in the early 1920's. The following index to the book reviews in the *Times* is the first atten-

tion paid to this material;[3] and the cultural historian, the secondary bibliographer, and the chronicler of critical reputations should enjoy the material now accessible.

Book Review Index

1. Adams, Franklin P. *So There!* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923.
   1, No. 8 (15 June 1923), 3. Rene D'Or.
2. Barnes, Djuna. *A Book.* New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923.
   1, No. 22 (15 January 1924), 3. M.B.
3. Baroja y Nessi, Pio. *Weeds,* tr. Isaac Goldberg. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923.
   2, No. 5 (1 May 1924), 6. L.F.
4. Bell, Clive. *On British Freedom.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923.
   1, No. 20 (15 December 1923), 5. R.C.
5. _____. *Since Cézanne.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922.
   1, No. 21 (1 January 1924), 4. R.C.
6. Bell, Violet Colquhoun. *Blindness of Heart.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1924.
   2, No. 1 (1 March 1924), 3, 4. Remy D'Or.
7. Bodenheim, Maxwell. *Crazy Man.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1924.
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NOTES

1. Bernard Duffey, *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters: A Critical History*, 2nd ed. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1956), p. 254. The last issue of *The Chicago Literary Times* is actually dated 1 June 1924.
2. Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 327.
3. The reviews as published usually carried only names of books and authors and retail prices. I have supplied data to complete these entries in standard bibliographical format.

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, in 1980. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence in the Midwest; fiction with Midwesten locales are included irrespective of their author's ties with this region. Citations which begin with an author's name in parentheses are writing *about* that particular author.

Citations for poetry, novels, short stories, etc. — as well as critical articles about them — should be sent to this bibliography's editors: Robert Beasecker, Grand Valley State College Library, Allendale, Michigan 49401, and for computerized literature searches, Donald Pady, Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa 50011. The editors and the bibliographic committee continually seek names and addresses of living Midwestern writers and poets, and readers are encouraged to submit names of individuals whose works could appear in future editions of this bibliography. Persons interested in becoming members of the bibliographic committee should address queries to the editors.

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New periodicals are listed here which first appeared usually in 1980 and in some way relate to Midwestern literature, either by content or locale. Descriptive notes follow each entry. Those entries marked with an asterisk have not been examined by the editor.

**Helicon Nine.* Vol. 1—(Spring/Summer 1979-), 3 issues per year, $14 per year. editor? Six Petticoat Lane, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.
"A journal of women's arts and letters."

Little Balkans Review. Vol. 1—(Fall 1980-), 4 issues per year, $10 per year. Gene DeGruson, Shelby Horn, Stephen Robbins and Ted Watts, editors; 601 Grandview Heights Terrace, Pittsburg, Kansas 66762.
This little magazine has the subtitle, "a Southeast Kansas Literary and Graphics Quarterly;" publishes fiction, non-fiction, poetry and art.

**Midwest Poetry Review.* Vol. 1—(July 1980-), frequency? price? Carl Stach, editor; P.O. Box 359, Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081.

Milkweek Chronicle. Vol. 1—(Winter 1980-), 3 issues per year, $6 per year. Emilie Buchwald, editor; P.O. Box 24303, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55424.
Subtitled "a Journal of Poetry and Graphics," this tabloid also publishes essays and commentaries in all forms of the arts.

North Country Folk. Vol. 1—(December 1980-), 4 issues per year, $10 per year. Philip Kucera, editor, P.O. Box 189, Ironwood, Michigan 49938.
The Publication of a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation and expression of the folk arts in the Upper Great Lakes Region."

Theaterwork. Vol. 1—(November-December 1980-), 6 issues per year, $5 per year. Dave Hage, Karen McCall, David Olson and Frank Sherman, editors; 406 South Third Street, St. Peter, Minnesota 56082.
Publishes articles and interviews on the Minnesota and national scene in theater; also some local poetry.

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