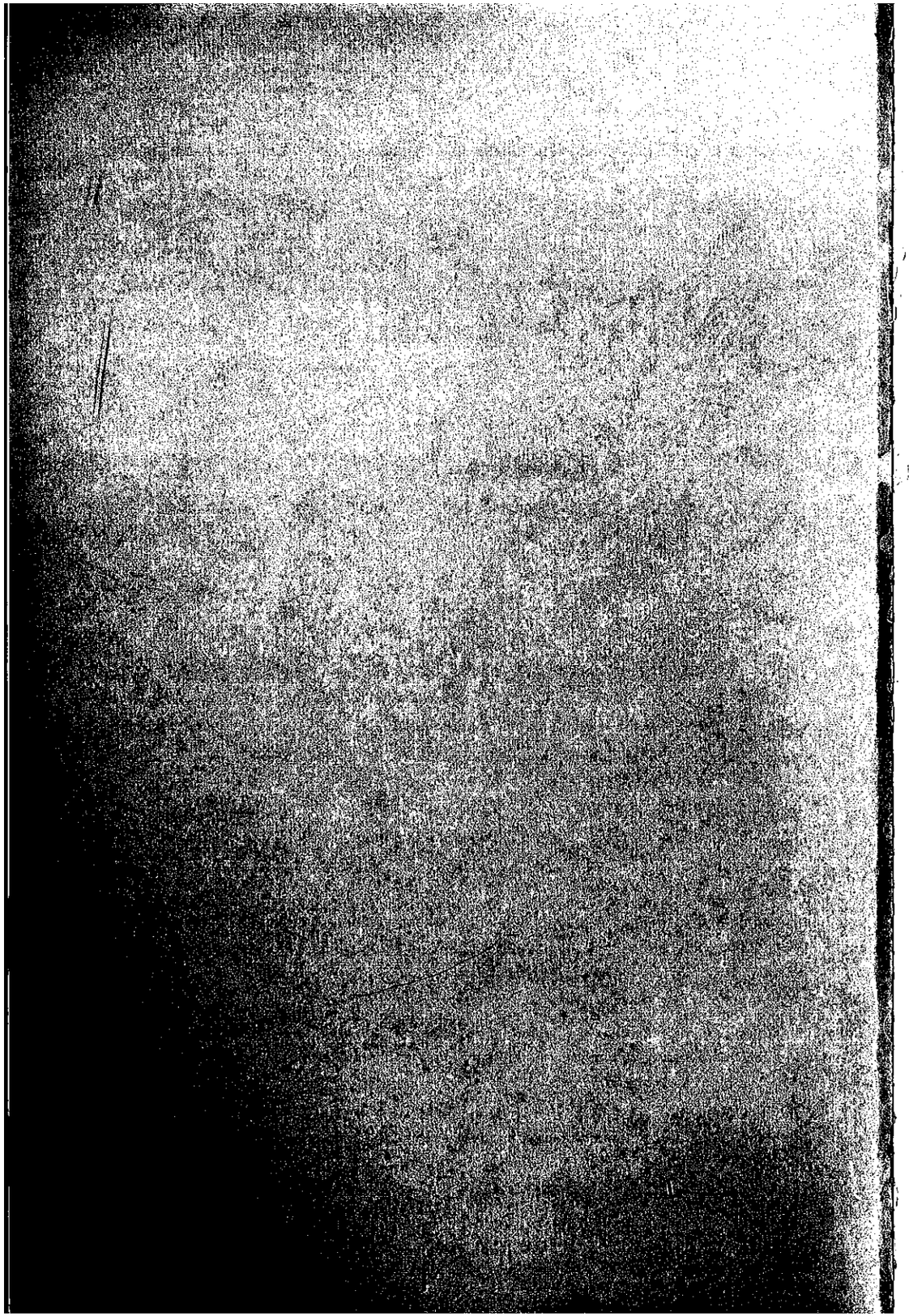

MIDAMERICA I

The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Edited by
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To Midwesterners
in fact and in spirit

PREFACE

The first issue of a new publication normally appears as the result of hard work by editors, writers, and countless others, but often it also appears because of hope and enthusiasm that outweigh either logical evidence or financial support. The latter is certainly the case with the publication of MIDAMERICA I, this first annual publication of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature. The yearbook is the product of a society less than three years old that, with little more than enthusiasm to support it in March, 1971, rather presumptuously dedicated itself to "encouraging and supporting the study of Midwestern literature in whatever directions the interests of the members may take."

Like its parallel publication, the Society's *Newsletter*, this first issue of MIDAMERICA gives considerable evidence of the variety of directions and interests that the members pursue. After an essay in definition of Midwestern dimensions other than literary—geographical, historical, mythical—the volume includes essays focusing upon such diverse writers as Ernest Hemingway and Edgar A. Guest, such varied subjects as black writers and literary theory, such concepts as utopianism and realism. In spite of this diversity, however, the essays are united in their dedication to some of the many dimensions of what can rightfully be called Midwestern literature. But MIDAMERICA I, in spite of its diversity, does not encompass all of Midwestern literature or exhaust its dimensions. Rather, as MIDAMERICA II, III, IV, and beyond will make evident, this first volume will have become the point of departure for further, even more diverse explorations that continue to reflect the dedication of the Society and its members to the study of the literature of the American Midwest, past, present, and future.

The existence of this volume and the Society that produced it is the result of much cooperation and support by many individuals and institutions: the writers, who contributed the essays

and much else to the programs of the Society: Bernard Engel, who has given support as a contributing scholar as well as Chairman of the Department of American Thought and Language; Mrs. Joan Brunette, Mrs. Yvonne Titus, and Mrs. Brenda Wickham for many hours of typing, duplicating, and other volunteer tasks; the six original members of the organizing committee—Bernard Duffey, Robert Hubach, William Thomas, William McCann, Merton Babcock, and Russel Nye; and my wife, Patricia Anderson.

DAVID D. ANDERSON

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THE DIMENSIONS OF THE MIDWEST

DAVID D. ANDERSON

In his Annual Message to Congress on December 1, 1862, Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States and a "Westerner" from Illinois, devoted the bulk of his remarks to two major issues, irretrievably fused into one: the state of the nation at the time and the war of secession then raging. In the message, in a denial of the right or possibility of secession, Lincoln first insisted that "There is no line, straight or crooked, suitable for a national boundary, upon which to divide [the nation]." Furthermore, he insisted, ". . . there is another great difficulty [that makes secession impossible]."[1]

> The great interior region, bounded east by the Alleghenies, north by the British dominions, west by the Rocky mountains, and south by the line along which the culture of corn and cotton meets, and which includes part of Virginia, part of Tennessee, all of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and the territories of Dakota, Nebraska, and part of Colorado, already has above ten millions of people, and will have fifty millions within fifty years, if not prevented by any political folly or mistake. It contains more than one-third of the country owned by the United States—certainly more than one million of square miles. Once half as populous as Massachusetts already is, it would have more than seventy-five millions of people. A glance at the map shows that, territorially speaking, it is the great body of the republic. The other parts are but marginal borders to it. . . . But separate our common country into two nations, as designed by the present rebellion, and every man of this great interior region is thereby cut off from some one or more of these outlets. . . .[2]

Intrinsic to this observation and, parenthetically, perhaps a further indication of the many dimensions of Lincoln's greatness is the fact that, virtually unobserved by the majority of the American people North and South, the passage of time and the westward course of manifest destiny had made the West out of which Lincoln himself had come, no longer the West but the American heartland. Perhaps it was inevitable that Lincoln, a sensitive product of the movement Westward that finally passed beyond him when he remained in Illinois, should be the first to articulate this fact of American history.

The astuteness of Lincoln's observation and the precision of his definition, based upon geopolitical fact, marked the point of departure for other, similar observations, punctuated by those of Frederick Jackson Turner, whose classic definition of the role of the frontier in American history led to his geographical and political assessment of the Midwest in the first years of this century. Simultaneously, at odds with Turner's observations, another attempt at definition emerges from the writings, fiction and autobiography, of Hamlin Garland, whose sensitivity perceives elements of definition beyond the physical.

To Turner, the region was first of all, historical and geographic:

> . . . Once "the West" described the whole region beyond the Alleghenies; but the term has hopelessly lost its definiteness. The rapidity of the spread of settlement has broken down old usage, and as yet no substitute has been generally accepted. The "Middle West" is a term variously used by the public, but for the purpose of the present paper, it will be applied to that region of the United States included in the census reports under the name of the North Central division comprising the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin (the old "Territory Northwest of the River, Ohio"), and their trans-Mississippi sisters of the Louisiana Purchase—Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. It is an imperial domain . . . Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Buffalo constitute its gateways to the Eastern States; Kansas City, Omaha, St. Paul-Minneapolis, and Duluth-Superior dominate its western areas; Cincinnati and St. Louis stand on its southern borders; and Chicago reins at its center. . . . The Great Lakes and the Mississippi, with the Ohio and the Missouri as laterals, constitute the vast water system that binds the Middle West together. It is the economic and political center of the Republic. At one edge is the Populism of the prairies; at the other, the capitalism that is typified in Pittsburgh. . . .[3]

Thus, although Turner's concept of the Midwest is smaller in geographical area than Lincoln's—Jackson substitutes a river boundary—the Ohio—for its southern boundary, whereas Lincoln's South is delineated by climate and agriculture—Turner perceives a unity and cohesiveness in spite of differences that become increasingly apparent as one moves West:

> Great as are the local differences within the Middle West, it possesses, in its physiography, in the history of its settlement, and in its economic and social life, a unity and interdependence which warrant a study of the area as an entity. . . .[4]

Nevertheless, Turner emphasizes the diversity of origins: settlers from New England and the South; immigrants from Germany, Scandinavia, and Ireland; Populism and capitalism coexistent; industrialism and agriculture competing for domination; geographical variety; and above all, constant change. Unity emerges from this diversity, however, because, like Lincoln, Turner sees the Midwest as microcosm and as heartland. As microcosm it is the eighteenth century Jeffersonian ideal transmuted into evolving reality in an open society:

> The ideals of equality, freedom of opportunity, faith in the common man are deeply rooted in all the Middle West. The frontier stage, through which each portion passed, left abiding traces on the older, as well as on the newer, areas of the province. . . . The peculiar democracy of the frontier has passed away with the conditions that produced it; but the democratic aspirations remain. They are held with passionate determination.
>
> The task of the Middle West is that of adapting democracy to the vast economic organization of the present. . . . At bottom the problem is how to reconcile real greatness with bigness.

Just as the Midwest is for Turner the interaction of frontier, nation, and democratic philosophy in microcosm, it is also the

American heartland, as demonstrated not only by its geographic position, but by its political and social reality and by the inevitability of its future:

> . . . the future of the Republic is with her. Politically she is dominent, as is illustrated by the fact that six out of seven of the Presidents elected since 1860 have come from her borders . . . the Middle West has indefinite capacity for growth. The educational forces are more democratic than in the East and the Middle West has twice as many students. . . . State universities crown the public school system in every one of these States of the Middle West, and rank with the universities of the seaboard. . . . There is throughout the Middle West a vigor and a mental activity among the common people that bode well for its future . . . if the ideals of the pioneers shall survive the inundation of material success, we may expect to see in the Middle West the rise of a highly intelligent society where culture shall be reconciled with democracy in the large.[6]

For Turner, as for a generation of Midwestern reformers—John Peter Altgeld, Tom L. Johnson, "Golden Rule" Jones, and many more—and two generations of American novelists, among them Brand Whitlock and Louis Bromfield—the Midwest represented the opportunity for the Jeffersonian dream of an open society based upon broad, democratic foundations to become real if men could find the strength within themselves to rise above the material and follow the path of moral progress and perfectability. In this context the role of the Midwest in reform activity as wide ranging as Populism and temperence is self-evident. But significantly, another element of definition, a psychological dimension, denied the implications of Turner's optimism or the reformers' faith. This dimension provided the definition of the Midwest as oppressor, made doubly so by a deceptively pleasing appearance. In fiction, autobiography, and verse the foundations of this vision were laid by Hamlin Garland, who in turn pointed to the grimness of Theodore Drieser, the irony of Sinclair Lewis, the paradoxical isolation of Sherwood Anderson and Edgar Lee Masters, even the tortured but clear vision of Vachel Lindsay.

Unlike most of his predecessors among writers and observers of the emerging American Midwest, Garland not only saw it as

"The West," the term by which it had been known for so long, but he saw and re-created it in the process of change. Crossed at first by "Main-travelled Roads," not only from East to West, but also turning North from those paths of empire to the upper lakes, he sees the area as it becomes the "Middle Border," a compendium of New England Puritanism and frontier drudgery, out of which a peculiar way of life, a peculiar ethic, and a unique identity have emerged. First, he defines the social framework that grew out of settlement:

> The main-travelled road in the West (as everywhere) is hot and dusty in the summer, and desolate and drear with mud in fall and spring, and in winter the winds sweep the snow across it; but it does sometimes cross a rich meadow where the songs of the larks and bobolinks and blackbirds are tangled. Follow it far enough, it may lead past a bend in the river where the water laughs eternally over its shallows.
>
> Mainly it is long and wearyful, and has a dull little town at one end and a home of toil at the other. Like the main-travelled road of life it is traversed by many classes of people, but the poor and the weary predominate.[7]

At the same time, to Garland, settlement along and at the ends of these main travelled roads brought not settlement but also change and a newer, lesser permanence into existence:

> The five years of life on this farm had brought swift changes into my world. Nearly all the open land had been fenced and plowed, and all the cattle and horses had been brought to pasture, and around most of the buildings, groves of maples were beginning to make the homesteads a little less barren and ugly. And yet with all these growing signs of prosperity I realized that something sweet and splendid was dying out of the prairie. The whistling pigeons, the wailing plover, the migrating ducks and geese, the soaring cranes, the shadowy wolves, the many foxes, all the untamed things were passing, vanishing with the bluejoint grass, the dainty wild rose and the tiger lily's flaming torch. Settlement was complete.[8]

Not only was it complete, but it had taken on a characteristic that was to provide at once the peculiar restlessness of the newly-emerging "Middle Border" as it became clearly identified in the

last decades of the nineteenth century and as it was to provide the solid foundations of a mature literature in the twentieth:

> Men who were growing bent in digging into the soil spoke to me of their desire to see something of the great eastern world before they died. Women whose eyes were faded and dim with tears, listened to me with almost breathless interest whilst I told them of the great cities I had seen, of wonderful buildings, of theaters, of the music of the sea. Young girls expressed to me their longing for a life which was better worth while, and lads, eager for adventure and excitement, confided to me their secret intention to leave the farm at the earliest moment. "I don't intend to wear out my life drudging on this old place," says Wesley Fancher with a bitter oath.[9]

This was the sense of drudgery, of purposeless, that led to the great migrations of the farm boys to the cities in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, a movement that has been described in near-epic dimensions by Sherwood Anderson in the last sketch of *Winesburg, Ohio* as George Willard, the protagonist, boards the train that will take him to Chicago:

> The young man's mind was carried away by his growing passion for dreams. One looking at him would not have thought him particularly sharp. With the recollection of little things occupying his mind he closed his eyes and leaned back in the car seat. He stayed that way for a long time and when he aroused himself and again looked out of the car window the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood.[10]

With the closing of the nineteenth century, what had been the "West" had become, instead of a goal, a point of departure for new places and for achievement of new goals. Just as Garland himself had gone out of the West to literary success in the East, as had William Dean Howells before him, Sherwood Anderson and others of his generation—Carl Sandburg, Theodore Dreiser, Brand Whitlock, and countless others—sought their success in the newer metropolis uniquely theirs—the city of Chicago at the foot of Lake Michigan and in the heart of the Midwest. Still

other writers, most of them younger than Anderson's generation, moved to the East and to Europe, often by way of the army and the volunteer ambulance units of World War I. Of them, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Louis Bromfield, Glenway Wescott, and others became synonymous with a new era, a new generation, a new Midwest, and a new America. With this movement the isolation that Garland's people had struggled against, the drudgery that threatened to destroy them, and the values that perverted their identities had become, as for George Willard, merely the background against which to construct a literature and ultimately a myth of time and place that still defies definition in terms other than geographic. Significantly, when a number of Midwestern writers sought to return to their origins after years of expatriation or exile, they found that, while they might return symbolically, they could not do so in fact. For Sherwood Anderson, this meant finding a refuge in the Virginia hills; for Louis Bromfield, it was an Ohio farm made possible not only by modern agricultural practices but also by a fortune earned by writing. The challenge of Ernest Hemingway's Big Two-Hearted River ceased to exist among the second-growth timber and motels of Northern Michigan, and the Gulfstream, the hills of East Africa, and the Idaho high country proved adult replacements in the life of action.

These writers suggest not only in their works—*Tar: A Midwest Childhood* by Anderson, Bromfield's *The Farm,* Hemingway's *Big Two-Hearted River*—but also in their lives that the Midwest out of which they came was historical as well as geographical and psychological, and that its time had passed. In drawing upon that period, that place, and that memory, they had, perhaps, contributed to its passage and ultimately perhaps to the creation of a myth of the Midwest.

This suggestion poses a question that has serious implications and perhaps undecipherable complexities for those of us who have inherited or absorbed a profound sense of place and identity in relationship to that area variously known as the Midwest, the Middle West (an interesting and perhaps important distinction), or, to Sherwood Anderson, "The place between mountain and mountain I call Mid-America. . . ." This is the question that still remains after more than a hundred years of attempts to

define the nature and extent of the Midwest: what are its dimensions? Are they geographical only? Are they historical or mythical? Are there psychological and literary dimensoins as well?

The decade of the nineteen-sixties and the first few years of the seventies have seen a number of attempts, perhaps the result of a search for origins or for identity, to come to grips with the basic question and the others that grow out of it. On April 8 and 9, 1960, a symposium at The University of Notre Dame addressed itself to the theme "The Midwest: Myth or Reality?"[12] While accepting its geographical reality, the members of the symposium agreed to disagree on the extent to which the Midwest was more or less than geographic reality, although the consensus ascribed more or less mythic proportions to Midwest progressive politics, industry, agriculture, literature, and psychology. At the same time, one detects from the contributions of the members, a sense that much of what gave the Midwest a peculiar flavor is past, and that the future suggests a diminishing role for regional identity.

Nevertheless, in instances as diverse as Lucien Stryk's 1967 anthology of Midwest poetry, *Heartland: Poets of the Midwest,*[13] in the founding in 1971 of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, in the increasing number of journals and college courses devoting themselves to the area, even in Earl Wilson's persistent self-portrayal of himself as Midwesterner on Broadway, there is evidence enough that, myth or reality, historical or present, the dimensions of the Midwest are real, that from the time when the frontier passed to the Rockies and beyond, the great, diverse valley that occupies the nation's heartland has had a peculiar identity of its own, an identity that continues to assert its significance and its continuation, perhaps even its permanence as part of the total American experience.

NOTES

1. Roy P. Basler, Editor, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* V (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), p. 528.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 528-529.
3. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Middle West," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), pp. 126-127.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.
7. Hamlin Garland, headnote to *Main-Travelled Roads* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899).
8. Hamlin Garland, *A Son of the Middle Border* (London: John Lane, 1917), pp. 187-188.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
10. Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919), p. 303.
11. Sherwood Anderson, *Letters* edited by Howard Mumford Jones with Walter Rideout (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 43.
12. Papers of the Symposium were published under the editorship of Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C. as *The Midwest: Myth or Reality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961). Participants included McAvoy, Russel B. Nye, Jay W. Wiley, Gale W. McGee, Donald R. Murphy, John T. Flanagan, and John T. Frederick.
13. Lucien Stryk, *Heartland: Poets of the Midwest* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1967).

"SLAVE NARRATIVE TURNING MIDWESTERN: DEADWOOD DICK RIDES INTO DIFFICULTIES"

RONALD PRIMEAU

Dominant in the setting and symbolism of Afro-American writers of the Midwest is the quest motif built around northern and western migration.[1] Moving into the Midwest as a cowboy, a small-town worker or farmer, or as part of a second generation of urban migration, the black man went West and Midwest—as Richard Wright says—to "transplant" his experience "in alien soil to see if it could grow differently."[2]

From the beginning, the Midwestern black writer has recorded his experiences in a variety of literary genres, ranging from the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Gwendolyn Brooks to the novels of Richard Wright, the autobiographical prose of Malcolm X, and the drama of Lorraine Hansberry. As an important part of his distinctive contributions to these traditional genres, the Midwestern black writer drew upon the slave narrative. Just as we find Midwestern elements in works by black Midwesterners of every era, so also the Afro-American tradition contributed significant modulations to what we now recognize as "Midwestern" characteristics. An understanding of this reciprocal influence increases our appreciation of the often neglected interaction between two seemingly unrelated traditions. In this paper I shall suggest ways in which the slave narrative evolved into something distinctively Midwestern. I shall refer briefly to major black writers in order to frame my discussion of Herbert Woodward Martin's "The Deadwood Dick Poems," a narrative sequence that draws upon historical documentation and manipulates the tradition of the dime novel hero to recreate the black Midwestern experiences of Nat Love.[3] While Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones place Love's adventures in the tradition

of the dime novel, his tales—and especially Martin's representation of them—create what might be called the slave narrative turning Midwestern.[4] After first examining the basic patterns of the slave narrative and the dime novel and then briefly discussing some representative major Midwestern black writers, I shall trace Martin's distinctive use of Nat Love's legend as he works it into the complex structure of a new genre. The extent to which "The Deadwood Dick Poems" draw upon and yet modify a variety of the traditional elements of the slave narrative and the dime novel shall therefore be my chief focus.

I

Once mentioned, it seems quite obvious that the slave narrative and the dime novel should interact in the works of Midwestern black writers, Intuitively, similarities in style, theme, and characterization in the two genres show them to be parallel vehicles for the expression of like concerns. The slave narrative for the black man embodied his desires to escape from bondage and seek freedom in a free land—generally the North. The dime novel for the white man (for urbanized Easterners especially) embodied his desires to escape from the restraints of industrialization and to seek the freedom of the open plains. Characterization, style, and theme developed along similar lines to complement these basic quests in the two genres.

Examination of the typical patterns of the slave narrative and the dime novel demonstrates their potential for interaction in works by later writers. Arna Bontemps' synopsis of the conventional pattern of the slave narrative illustrates the form many black writers combined with their use of history and personal experience in their own works:

> The Negro's suffering in his private hell of oppression was the point at which the narratives invariably began. Enduring this ordeal until he became desperate, or until he otherwise engaged the reader's interest or sympathy, the slave was eventually impelled to attempt perils of escape. The strategems used differed with the individuals, and the journeys varied as did the roads followed. A promised land and the chance to make a new life as a free man was always

the goal, even though sometimes the realization fell short of the expectation.[5]

Assuming that this is a valid representation of the content and structure of the typical slave narrative, analogs in the works of Richard Wright, Malcolm X, and Lorraine Hansberry as well as Martin's "The Deadwood Dick Poems" provide at least the raw material for a study of the slave narrative turning Midwestern. Further tracing the influences of the slave narrative, Bontemps argues that "from the narratives came the spirit and the vitality and the angle of vision responsible for the most effective prose writing by black American writers from William Wells Brown to Charles W. Chestnutt, from W. E. B. Du Bois to Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin."[6] It is not surprising, therefore, that the slave narrative influences contemporary Afro-American poetry, particularly Martin's poems, in which its effects are interlaced with the cultural significance of Nat Love and his quests.

A pattern of suffering and escape (for the reader especially) is at the center of the dime novel as well as the slave narrative. While the cowboy or outlaw replaces the slave as the main character and the "promised land" becomes the open plains, for the dime novel audience characterization and action prompt a similar "interest" or "sympathy." Long ago, James D. Hart focused on the appeal of the dime novel's "heroic deeds" that were "denied to readers who had to conform to anonymous urban life and the confining efficiency of a mechanized age."[7] The dime novel was, then—like the slave narrative in a different context—what Hart calls "literature of escape from the machine age." One major difference, however, between the two genres significantly influences works by Midwestern blacks. While the slave narrative concentrates on escape from a life of bondage rather than from all problems, the hyperbole of the dime novel often prompts withdrawal from ordinary experiential difficulties that the superhuman hero never really even was to face. In short, the dime novel became, as Hart proposes, "a glorious substitute for life, fulfilling the promises that reality broke." Exaggeration thus became the rule on "the pure open stretches of God's country" where the heroes were often "established American deities."

The extent to which the dime novel represented a "rejection

of societal restraint" and therefore provided escapist fantasy has recently been stressed by Daryl E. Jones.[8] As Jones points out, the hero of the dime novel represented not "the ideals of a progress-hungry, materialistic society" but rather "the suppressed fears and desires of that society." Jones also traces another pattern that can be linked with the slave narrative as the Western hero moves "away from the restraints of an artificial social order based upon birth and wealth, toward the unrestrained freedom of a more open order based upon the individual's innate worth as a person."[9] Such pursuit of freedom again parallels the typical quest in the slave narrative. According to Walter Prescott Webb "the frontier acted as an abrasive on the metropolitan institutions, wearing them down until man stepped forth with old human restraints stripped off, old institutions of aid or hindrance dissolved, leaving him relatively free of man-made masters."[10] The dime novel became, then, the white man's post Civil-War counterpart to the black man's and the abolitionists' ante-bellum slave narrative. As the dime novel developed, the hero as rebel flourished, and the audience projected its own frustrated goals onto him in the face of the increasing complexity of daily existence.

The slave narrative and the dime novel may thus be considered similar species of revolutionary literature, answering the different needs of different people and at different times. The note of revolution is especially clear in the characterizations of Deadwood Dick, whose "concern with social problems" is—in the view of Henry Nash Smith—"unique in the dime novels."[11] John G. Cawelti puts this another way when he sees the dime novel as a type of middle class revolution, "a collective imagining of a way of life in which the individual is freed from the frustrating pressures . . . of modern middle-class life."[12] Putting it still another way and in another context, Merle Curti some time ago identified "the favorite theme of the dime novels" as "emancipation of the rank and file from the grinding overloardship of feudal masters,"[13] In this view the slave narrative's concern for the freedom of the individual slave parallels the view in the dime novel that the American Revolution "freed new human energies previously confined by an entrenched aristocracy." While the slave narrative chronicled the black man's quest for some of the same things many white men found embodied in the dime novel hero,

differences in the pursuit as well as the goals emphasize cultural distinctions as well as interactions between the white man's and the black man's Midwestern literature. The themes, purposes, and methods of characterization in the dime novel and the slave narrative were often similar. It remained for the later Midwestern Afro-American writers to select what each genre reflected of a developing culture and to combine such elements in new ways.

Similarities between the slave narrative and the dime novel can be seen also in the exigencies of folklore style as well as in theme. Beyond the identification of the audience and hero, regularity of setting, and folk simplicity of dialogue, the two genres reveal other likenesses within the folk tradition. Harry Schein has outlined characteristics of the western that can be found also in the style of the slave narrative. These include the positive effects of repetition and stereotyping, the creation of a mythic hero, and the religious-like ritualization of action. Schein emphasizes the public's response to the western in reviewing its folk elements:

> The desire to experience the same thing time after time implies on the part of the public a ritualistic passivity similar to that which one finds in a congregation at divine service. It cannot be curiosity which drives the public to the Western; there is no wish for something different and unfamiliar, but a need for something old and well known. One can scarcely talk about escape from reality in the usual sense; it is a hypnotic condition rather than a complicated process of identification. The Western has the same bewitching strength as an incantation: the magic of repetition.[15]

Repetition, ritual, and rigid form are characteristic of the dime novel and the slave narrative—giving the two genres what Schein sees in the western as "mythological weight and significance."

Related to theme and style, Walter Prescott Webb has described the search for authority and the need for self-reliance in the Western hero's merging of religion and the work ethic. Webb demonstrates how nature on the frontier "went to work on" a "complicated culture complex" which the essentially European man brought with him as he travelled west, and how that same nature changed the culture complex into an ethic and a reward

of work and physical stress. As the "individual" developed, "the frontier furnished the substance, the god of work drove him with a relentless fury to his task, and he made folklore of his hardships."[16] Very little is needed to see links between this pattern and that of the slave narrative. If Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* is considered—as it sometimes is—to be the last of the slave narratives,[17] the work ethic and the quest for self reliance become a part of the thematic and stylistic links between the two genres at the turn of the century.

At first glance at least, the most obvious intersection between the two genres should lie in the anti-slavery dime novels and in slave narratives that depict superhuman traits of questionable authenticity. In considering its relation to "the American tradition and its importance to the historian of ideas and feelings," Merle Curti once again characterizes the dime novel as "an escape from everyday routine," that stressed "self reliance," "the possibility of achievement," and "sympathy for the underdog."[18] But not for all. In spite of the "democratization of culture and the commercialization of leisure," the black man was—as Curti points out—"sentimentalized" and described as "definitely inferior to the white man."[19] Although emphasis on escape from societal restraint would seem to make overt racism unlikely, the condescending attitude toward the black man was characteristic of what Daryl E. Jones has seen as the dime novelist's working out anxieties about changing social values: "the dime novel western reaffirmed traditional moral values while simultaneously providing mass purgation through vicarious participation in fictional violence."[20]

James D. Hart records that there were anti-slavery dime novels also written in what he calls "the pattern of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*"[21] Hart and Edmond Pearson *(Dime Novels)* refer briefly to the most famous of these, *Maum Guinea and Her Plantation Children* or *Holiday-week on a Louisiana Estate, A Slave Romance* by Metta Victoria Victor, published in 1861 at double the size and price of the usual dime novel. Mrs. Victor is called by Pearson "an author of considerable importance in our present investigation,"[22] who had published short stories and earlier novels before *Maum Guinea.* Although her anti-slavery work received praise from President Lincoln and Henry Ward Beecher, Pearson

devotes little space to what he calls "a good-humored story of slave life."[23] In "The Dime Novel in American Life," Charles M. Harvey reports that the prominent newspapers of the time gave space to *Maum Guinea* and that the work was especially influential when republished in London in aiding "the Union cause at a time when a large part of that country favored the recognition of the independence of the Southern confederacy."[24] Nevertheless, Harvey adds, "the very small claim which the black man had upon the dime novelists ended with Appomatox and emancipation."[25]

With sentimentalization and stereotyping the rule, links between the dime novel and the slave narrative are not forthcoming in tales of happy, docile "darkies" on the plantation. Neither are genuine links to be found in those slave narratives that record super human deeds on the part of the slave—as in the questionable account of Henry "Box" Brown's escape.[26] It is now well documented that slave narratives were often tampered with and hence in varying degrees inauthenticated by abolitionists who in the process created anti-slavery tracts at the expense of folk literature.[27] In such cases the slave narrative itself approximated heroic exaggeration and escape from difficulties characteristic of the dime novel. Because the two genres were not chronicling the same kind of escape, a study of the anti-slavery dime novel or the slave narrative with dime novel characteristics will not illuminate the intersection of the two genres in works by Midwestern black writers.

The slave narrative has significantly influenced the works of major Midwestern black writers for a long time. Brief review of a few representatives from among these writers will provide a context for discussion of Herbert Woodward Martin's use of the slave narrative and the adventures of Nat Love in "The Deadwood Dick Poems." The works of Richard Wright, Malcolm X, and Lorraine Hansberry illustrate some of the ways the black writer has dealt traditionally with experiences Martin translates into the metaphor of Nat Love's adventures.

II

The dominant theme of *Black Boy* is built on the sharp contrasts between Richard's imaginative awareness of his potential

and his confronting day to day a society that stifles his potential by prescribing everything he must do and how he must do it. In the midst of an intricate pattern of contrasts, "Chicago" becomes for Richard a symbol of everything inaccessible to him in the confines created for blacks in the South. Usually considered in terms of an opposition between North and South, Southern blacks' longings—like those of Richard—were often directed toward what would be better identified as "midwestern" rather than an undifferentiated "Northern" urban environment:

> I was leaving the South to fling myself into the unknown, to meet other situations that would perhaps elicit from me other responses. . . . So, in leaving, I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns, and, perhaps, to bloom.[28]

In sharp contrast, Wright analyzes the influence of Chicago also on the development of Bigger Thomas:

> The urban environment, affording a more stimulating life, made the Negro Bigger Thomases react more violently than even in the South. More than ever I began to see and understand the environmental factors which made for this extreme conduct. It was not that Chicago segregated Negroes more than the South, but that Chicago's physical aspect—noisy, crowded, filled with the sense of power and fulfillment—did so much more to dazzle the mind with a taunting sense of possible achievement that the segregation it did impose brought forth from Bigger a reaction more obstreperous than the South.[29]

The movement from *Black Boy* to *Native Son* re-enacts the pattern of the slave narrative transplanted in the Midwest. Richard and Bigger endure suffering and oppression to the point of desperation. Richard seeks escape to the North where at the end of his journey the promised land is to become a nightmare. Although freedom is the goal, its realization falls short of expectation. Just as Richard's hopes are akin to those of countless slaves whose quests are preserved, Bigger Thomas's revolt is—in what by now is obvious—very like Nat Turner's transformed into the twentieth-century Midwestern urban environment.

How the expectations of Richard in *Black Boy* become the realities Bigger Thomas faces in *Native Son* provides some clues to the Midwestern influences on Wright's fiction. Because so much depends on an understanding of the meaning of the black man's experience in the South and his quest for potential stifled by dreams deferred in the North, Wright makes his native son a Midwesterner. For Wright—as for many Afro-American writers—Chicago became the Midwestern focal point of the "American part of Bigger which is the heritage of us all." Often thought of in terms of its sameness, Midwestern life became identified in Wright's fiction with diversity:

> Then there was the fabulous city in which Bigger lived. . . . A city so young that, in thinking of its short history, one's mind, as it travels backward in time, is stopped abrubtly by the barren stretches of a wind-swept prairie! But a city old enough to have caught within the homes of its long, straight streets the symbols and images of man's age-old destiny, of truths as old as the mountains and seas, of dreams as abiding as the soul of man itself! A city which has become the pivot of the Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern poles of the nation.[30]

What comes together at this pivotal point—and what makes Midwestern Chicago conducive to the creation of Wright's native son—is a complexity and a typicalness resulting from the convergence of various people and idealogies, climate and even (to some extent) geography from the East and West, North and South. In her biography *Richard Wright,* Constance Webb records Richard's first impressions of the "flat black stretches of Chicago": "Chicago seemed an unreal city whose mythical houses were built of slabs of black coal wreathed in polls of gray smoke, houses whose foundations were sinking slowly into the dark prairie."[31]

Although Wright's characters became, as he was, "just a part of the landscape," they also came to know and love—as he did—the quality of black experience created even in the ghetto. In this way he encountered south-side of Chicago "jive talk"—the equivalent in many ways of the distinctive black perspective and the expression he was to remember in *Black Boy* as the passing down of a culture from one generation to another:

> To Richard jive meant fun, play, kidding, hiding things with words and stepping up the tempo of living through talk. He loved it because it was made up day after day by people on the South Side; made up on the spur of the moment during talk, picked up and tossed from one person to another, enriched, expanded or thrown away.[32]

A careful digesting of the differences between expectation and its realization caused Richard to identify with, and to feel deeply himself, the "passionate rejection of America" voiced nightly in speeches in Washington Park. Again Constance Webb records Richard's feeling that these Southern blacks transplanted into the urban Midwest "sensed with that directness with which only the simple are capable that they had no chance to live a full human life in America. Their lives were not cluttered with ideas in which they could only half believe; they could not create illusions which made them think that they were living when they were not; their lives were too nakedly harsh to permit of camouflage."[33] To some extent counterbalancing myths of supposed Midwestern lack of sophistication, such was the directness, simplicity, and naked harshness that might safely be attributed to a great extent to the Midwest they had become a part of; such also were the qualities Wright sought to capture in his "fictional" characters—qualities that in part caused Bigger to live where and when he did.

The Midwest for Malcolm X was a great many things—most of them negative. Malcolm's life in Michigan—recorded in detail in the first few chapters of *The Autobiography*—was an important part of a life he later called "a chronology of *changes.*"[34] With introspective precision Malcolm describes the Midwestern narrowness of Omaha's regard for "good niggers" as opposed to the radical followers of Marcus Garvey. Similarly, his experiences in Milwaukee and Lansing produce the "Nightmare" of his early life where he learns to be a "Mascot" and a restlessness he contrasts to what he had seen in Boston. When he finally does go East, he blames his Midwestern experiences for making him into a "Hick": "I looked like Li'l Abner. Mason, Michigan was written all over me." Thinking only of escape from a narrowness that had restricted his development, he even looks upon the famous encounter with a teacher who advised carpentry rather

than law as a fortunate path out of Midwestern "successfulness":

> I've often thought that if Mr. Ostrowski had encouraged me to be a lawyer, I would today probably be among some city's professional black bourgeoisie, sipping cocktails and palming myself off as a community spokesman for and leader of the suffering black masses, while my primary concern would be to grab a few more crumbs from the groaning board of the two-faced whites with whom they're begging to "integrate." (p. 38)

Such were the experiences that prompt the pivotal sentence "Thus in various ways, I learned various things" (p. 16). And such was the narrowness of Midwestern life that caused him to conclude: "All praise is due Allah that I went to Boston when I did. If I hadn't, I'd probably still be a brainwashed black Christian" (p. 38).

But Malcolm always learns more than what at first appears on the surface. About his Midwestern experiences in Omaha, Milwaukee, and Lansing, he discovers an influence beyond what his immediate impressions had afforded. In Boston, for example, he discovers as much about his Midwestern background as he does about a supposed Eastern sophistication. Thus begins a counter-movement that might be considered a reaffirmation of sorts of his Midwestern roots:

> What I thought I was seeing there in Roxbury were high-class, educated, important Negroes, living well, working in big jobs and positions. Their great homes sat back in their mowed yards. These Negroes walked along the sidewalks looking haughty and dignified, on their way to work, to shop, to visit, to church. I know now, of course, that what I was really seeing was only a big-city version of those "successful" Negro bootblacks and janitors back in Lansing. The only difference was that the ones in Boston had been brainwashed even more thoroughly. They prided themselves on being incomparably more "cultured," "cultivated," "dignified," and better off than their black brethren down in the ghetto. (p. 40)

As a working hypothesis, would it be accurate to suggest that Malcolm's counter-rejection of his shame at being a "hick" might be part of the overall structure of increasing awareness at the

center of the work—a Midwestern base to what Abdelwaab M. Elmessiri sees as the development of Malcolm "from being a practical, soulless hustler to becoming a visionary who discovers, through the help of an Islamic, pastoral norm, 'idealistic tendencies' in himself"?[35] The slave narrative pattern of suffering and endurance, quest and escape are too obvious to linger over in discussion of *The Autobiography*. But closer examination shows how Malcolm's strategies and his progressive realizations might be further influenced by Midwestern elements. While Malcolm's earliest experiences were simply too white-oriented for his later views to be considered a return to Midwestern values on the whole, his realization of fraudulent Eastern sophistication in Boston prompted his rejection of easy solutions in favor of a tough-minded grasp of fundamental issues. The Midwest remains in *The Autobiography,* then, a type of initiation in an underworld of trials, an initial stimulus to growth in a life that he recognized "never has stayed fixed in one position for very long" (p. 378). As such, the narrative is indebted to the slave narrative and itself influences a modulation of Midwestern themes and genres. *The Autobiography is* a slave narrative turning Midwestern because its pattern fits the tradition it grows out of while it modifies the assumptions of Midwestern experience.

Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* needs no summary or elaborate commentary to account for its Midwestern roots.[36] The play is immersed from the descriptions of the opening scene in the life of South Side of Chicago blacks—a scene of "indestructible contradictions" and of a "weariness" that has already won its battle. Its characters—from Lena Younger's unfulfilled dreams to Walter's search for a "gimmick" and Bernethea's involvement in what is portrayed as a Midwestern excursion into radicalism—are as much a part of their environment as is Bigger Thomas. Even the land becomes a peculiarly Midwestern symbol with Clybourne Park and Chicago housing as a dominant motif and Wisconsin's wide expanse forming a significant part of Walter's dream. From Mr. Linden's fast talk to Walter's longings to Ruth Younger's plant, *Raisin in the Sun* again depicts concerns and techniques of the slave narrative transplanted in the Midwestern urban scene.

III

While the slave narrative clearly influenced these representative works of fiction, autobiography, and drama, the genre becomes most distinctively Midwestern in Herbert Woodward Martin's exploration of the sufferings, endurance, and quests of Nat Love, "James Thomas Crowe, dude, singer, actor, et. al.," who "went riding West/in search of history."[37] A summary reading of the twelve "Deadwood Dick Poems" reveals the experiences of Midwestern prairie life chiefly through Nat Love's quest for the expanse of the plains, the adventure of new settlement, and the freedom of equality in the face of the elements. Further, through the use of a conversational interchange between Nat and a poet-persona, Martin transforms the fantasizing characteristics in many of the legendary accounts of Deadwood Dick into a facing of the difficulties typically recorded in the slave narrative.

In his long narrative poem Martin follows the account of Nat Love recorded by Durham and Jones in *The Negro Cowboys*.[38] Nat's story is not one of Edward L. Wheeler's original Deadwood Dick tales; in fact, it is not even strictly speaking speaking a dime novel at all. Wheeler's first dime-novel, *Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road,* or *The Black Rider of the Black Hills,* was published in 1877. His hero was not a black man. But long after Wheeler's death there appeared in 1907 *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love, Better Known in the Cattle Country as "Deadwood Dick"—By Himself.* The autobiography of a black cowboy, the tale was subtitled "A True History of Slave Days, Life on the Great Cattle Ranges and on the Plains of the 'Wild and Wooly' West, Based on Facts, and Personal Experiences of the Author." Martin's "facts" in "The Deadwood Dick Poems" are based, therefore, on Durham's and Jones' discussion of a book that was neither a dime novel nor a slave narrative but which shared elements of both. As Durham and Jones point out, Nat Love's adventures historically "lacked external verification." But as an historical account in which the "internal evidences of style and content seem to owe something, at least, to the dime novel," the narrative fuses seemingly disparate concerns in Nat's Midwestern experiences. Born into a Tennessee slave family in 1854, Nat gained

"freedom" at Emancipation, after which he cared for his family until they could survive the death of his father and make it on their own. Beginning with his first job breaking colts, Nat's history is preserved by Martin from Durham's and Jones' accounts. Examination of these events helps explain the sources Martin uses and the distinctive ways in which he blends the two genres.

Using the heroic exaggeration of the dime novel tradition as leverage, Martin's poet-persona stresses the creative toughness and liberating restraints of nature's hardness. In manipulating the legends reflected in Nat Love's tales, Martin undercuts heroic hyperbole in order to emphasize the creative dimension of confronting the difficulties of everyday experience. He thus establishes narrative and thematic patterns that approximate those of the slave narrative, now in a Midwestern setting. As Nat moved from Tennessee through Missouri and Kansas to Texas, his quest represents suffering and endurance, escape from and initiation into the trials of Midwestern geography and climate. Durham and Jones thus find major modifications in the "Deadwood Dick" legends:

> During those first few months with a cattle outfit, Nat learned that the work pushed a man to the limit of his endurance. He rode through hailstorms so violent that they would have discouraged a weaker man. . . . But after a series of trials he had so adapted himself to life in the cattle country that he could cope with any of these adversities. . . . He learned the value and satisfaction that came with companionship, and he noted that with the earth for a bed and the sky for a covering all men were more or less the same.[39]

Thus, at the end of a type of initiation rite, Nat was named "Deadwood Dick." Even after the 1880's, when he "traded his cowpony for an iron horse," as a Midwesterner Nat described the meaning of his experiences in his memoirs:

> Such was the life on the western ranges when I rode them, and such were my comrades and surroundings; humor and tragedy. In the midst of life we were in death, but above all shoun [sic] the universal manhood. The wild and free life. The boundless plains. The countless thousands of long horn steers, the wild fleet footed mustangs. The buffalo and

other game, the Indians, the delight of living, and the fights against death that caused every nerve to tingle, and the everyday communion with men, whose minds were as broad as the plains they roamed, and whose creed was every man for himself, and every friend for each other, and with each other till the end.[40]

Poem I is a dedication to a public quest—a salf conscious exploration undertaken by the poet in his reworking of history:

Between the spaces
Deadwood Dick
I vision you, man
Image within the pupils
Struggling somewhere in mid-life against the stampede
Odds of Texas, Arizona, Nebraska,
Horses, and other men. (I, 1-7)

Thus the poet stands on the plains of vision acting out through struggle an initiation rite: " I have found it necessary to walk through your blood" (I, 10). Once this pattern of quest and struggle is set, the next five poems review Nat's experiences:

Early your father died.
He made you man at twelve
Through death, through the discipline
Of breaking colts for 10¢ apiece. (II, 1-4)

Nat's pursuit of "the free" is disciplined through a process once again suggesting the narrative counterpart of the slave narrative:

That animal-will which
First introduced you to stampede;
The rough paths and pasture;
That throttled you almost to the ground
Taught your arteries tenacity. (II, 9-13)

This theme of development through response to the environment is embodied in Poem III in the metaphor of land as self discipline: "You, Deadwood, master of rope and gun,/ When the wind interrupts your sleep/ The ground, I know, in that instance is harder" (III, 1-3). Loneliness prevails as the mind moves, in an echo of Richard Wright, "between you and your dream" (III, 8). The poet-persona thus addresses Nat in the Midwestern imagery of contraries: dust storms of the heart, hail storms and ice, teaching

that "*A man can shoot everything but nature*" (III, 17). For Nat Love, nature was the strongest of Midwestern external liberating disciplines—prompting the poet-persona to ask ironically in an inversion of mythic heroics: "Was the open as free as history records" (III, 2-3)? Here the hardness of nature, death, loneliness, and pain coalesce as nature's discipline calls for Nat's response. The poet-persona thus challenges Nat to admit that his quest is difficult. To this end he taunts the hero ("You, man, were rough" IV, 2) and plays with the assumptions of dime novel accounts in his questioning: "What I want to ask is how . . . no, why?/ After so many years of riding/ You never recorded a single soft encounter" (IV, 5-7)? In his ironic commentary on Nat's quest, the poet-persona argues that such generally accepted hyperbole obscures the toughness of everyday ordinary difficulties.

In poems V and VII especially the commentary on Nat's experience becomes explicit:

Deadwood, these are thoughts I put to you, ultimately,
Because I wish I could ride a black horse into history . . .
I should like to ride out
Into the gallery of the world. (V, 1-4)

In poem V the poet-persona's request is the counterpart of Nat's search for freedom as he desires to make the journey himself. In terms of the sustained metaphor of the land and the imagery of changing seasons, the quest culminates for Nat and the poet-persona in poem VII:

In Tennessee you hunted rabbits.
In Texas you learned men shoot men.
Deadwood Dick
Yours is a metaphor to exhaust.
The earth is not mother enough.
This earth this mother
She
Carnivorous devours us whole when we die
We grow wise for that. (VII, 1-9)

The narrative and thematic pattern thus reinforces the toughness of the land that devours and instructs. Similarly, the poet-persona focuses once more on the dangers of hyperbole ("Where

did you bury the knowledge of your dark enemies?" VIII, 11)—and the dreams that keep a man going in the midst of difficulties: "Do not let me invade your personal dreams:/ They are the things which save us from bullets,/ Snakes, men, and other dangers" (IX, 5-8). Setting up a tension between the fantastic tales Nat records and the realism inferred by history, the speaker gathers together the quest and the metaphor of land as discipline in a symbolic face: *"You can look into the hands of a man ninety/ And see the places he has traveled"* (IX, 15-16). Quests for new experience and recorded past experience thus merge in a calm crystallizing scene:

> Sunday night.
> Deadwood,
> The roads are deserted.
> We discuss ourselves. (X, 10-13)

In a further expansion of the metaphor of the land and a distinctively Midwestern fusion of disparate elements, Nat and the poet-persona find answers to their search:

> Carefully, Nat Love was overheard to say:
> "Man, imagine
> you come beating your ass out here
> on a horse's back
> talkin' 'bout questin'
> for some kinda history or nother,
> well,
> I don't rightly know much about where it is
> but it's out here
> somewhere,
> I guess
> in the blood of the people
> in the water of the land
> between the length of life
> inhale and exhale
> which reminds me
> speaking of life
> 'cause I ain't much on death
> 'though don't get me wrong
> I done seen a lot of men die
> a heap more put away
> life is something else!

> I got an opinion there, now.
> Man,
> I tell you it's like
> a bitch without a satisfying hound,
> an occasional butterfly
> that lights here and there
> teases you but never lets you touch.
> It is a rattlesnake with dust in its mouth.
> That's what the rattler teaches.
> If you do not busy the mind
> the flesh will break down,
> the spirit will run free of the body
> like blood through an open wound.
> If you would keep the soul, the flesh must suffer. (XI, 4-39)

There is a double irony at work here in Nat's ironic answer to the poet-persona's original irony. In a more direct, matter-of-fact manner, Nat too enacts an historical pattern of search and growth through suffering. In a sense, he summarizes the concerns of the entire narrative sequence in answering the ironic challenges to the humanity of his legendary heroics.

Starting out with nothing, facing the wide expanse of the plains, creating dreams in the open air, disciplined by storms and ice, Nat experienced events that became a "frozen photograph," crystallized and at the same time liberated through a metaphor of inexhaustible Midwestern contraries. It remains then in poem XII to reaffirm the risk of the quest, the difficulties of growth, and the potential for failure: "Indians come in silence, the buffalo comes with noise./ It is with such swiftness the most destruction occurs" (XII, 6-7).

"The Deadwood Dick Poems" exhibit, therefore, the same indebtedness to the slave narrative that we find in the works of Richard Wright, Malcolm X, and Lorraine Hansberry. Further, Martin introduces the life of Nat Love as "metaphor to exhaust" in ways that complement—yet add another dimension to—the influences readily observable in representative major works. Focusing on one particular Deadwood Dick tale, Martin also writes with the cultural significance of the dime novel as escape and quest (its chief links with the slave narrative) in the background. Facing suffering and difficulties as well as the search for

personal identity and freedom, a Midwestern black "Deadwood Dick" brings together patterns typified by the slave narrative and the dime novel and elements most often recognized as being distinctively Midwestern.

NOTES

1. On patterns of migration, see Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *Anyplace But Here* (New York, 1966).
2. *Black Boy* (New York, 1945; Perennial Classic, 1966), p. 284.
3. "The Deadwood Dick Poems," in *Ten Michigan Poets*, ed. L. Eric Greinke (Pilot Press, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1972), pp. 111-17. Later published in Martin's *The Ship-Storm Poems* (Pilot Press, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1973), pp. 28-35.
4. See *The Negro Cowboys* (New York, 1965) for Martin's sources; and Wayne Gard, "The Myth of Deadwood Dick," *Frontier Times*, 43 (No. 6) (October-November, 1969), New Series No. 62, for a discussion of Deadwood Dick as legendary figure from Deadwood, South Dakota.
5. "The Slave Narrative: An American Genre," Introduction to *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston, 1969), vii.
6. Bontemps, x.
7. James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), pp. 153-55.
8. "Of Few Days and Full of Trouble: The Evolution of the Western Hero in the Dime Novel," in *New Dimensions in Popular Culture*, ed. Russel B. Nye (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1972), 107-34.
9. Daryl E. Jones, "The Evolution of the Western Hero," p. 116.
10. *The Great Frontier* (Boston, 1952), p. 29.
11. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1950), p. 112.
12. John G. Cawelti, "Cowboys, Indians, Outlaws," *The American West*, 1 (Spring, 1964).
13. "Dime Novels and the American Tradition," *Yale Review* 26 (1937), 767.
14. Harry Schein, "The Olympian Cowboy," (trans. Ida M. Alcock), *The American Scholar* 24 (1955), 309-20.
15. Schein, p. 311.
16. Walter Prescott Webb, p. 30.
17. See Arna Bontemps, "The Slave Narrative: An American Genre."
18. Curti, pp. 763-65.
19. Curti, p. 770.
20. "Blood 'N Thunder: Virgins, Villains, and Violence in the Dime Novel Western," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 4 (1970), 507-17. Edward L. Wheeler's "The Double Daggers; or, Deadwood Dick's Defiance," *Deadwood Dick Library*, No. 2 (reprinted from *Beadle's Half-Dime Library*, No. 20, December 21, 1877) provides an excellent example of such stereotyping. Referring to Ben Johnson, the heroine's stalwart companion and protector, Wheeler explains that he "was literally blacker than the 'ace of spades,' short and very powerful of build. His fat sable face and ludicrous rolling eyes were expressive of a jovial nature, and told a true story, for old Ben was one of the best-hearted souls imaginable. But when his ire was provoked, he was a very tiger to fight . . . (p. 4);" and again "Johnson had spent the latter days of his life upon the frontier, and was a thoroughly good trailer, his familiarity with mountain and prairie rendering him invaluable as a guide. His one failing was a liking to serve under somebody—to have someone take the responsibility of an undertaking; then he was all right and ready to perform his duties" (p. 5).
21. Hart, p. 155.
22. Edmund Pearson, *Dime Novels* (Boston, 1929), pp. 19-20.
23. Pearson, p. 56.
24. "The Dime Novel in American Life," *Atlantic Monthly*, 100 (1907), p. 43. Se also Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and Its Nickel and Dime Novels* (3 vols., Norman, Oklahoma, 1950 and 1962).
25. Harvey, p. 43.
26. See John F. Bayliss, Introduction to *Black Slave Narratives* (New York, 1970).
27. See especially Janheinz Jahn, *Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writing* (trans. Oliver Coburn and Ursala Lehrburger, New York, 1958), p. 162.
28. *Black Boy*, p. 284.
29. "How Bigger Was Born," Introduction to Perennial Classic edition of *Native Son* (New York, 1966). Originally published, *Saturday Review of Literature*, 22 (1940), 3-4, 17-20.
30. "How Bigger Was Born," xxvi.
31. Constance Webb, *Richard Wright: A Biography* (New York, 1968), p. 83.
32. Constance Webb, p. 94.
33. Constance Webb, pp. 114-15.
34. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965), p. 339.
35. "Islam as a Pastoral in the life of Malcolm X," in *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*, ed. John Henrik Clarke (New York, 1969), pp. 69-78.
36. *Raisin in the Sun* (New York, 1959).
37. "The Deadwood Dick Poems," XI (1-3), in *Ten Michigan Poets*, ed. L. Eric Greinke (Pilot Press, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972), p. 116. Subsequent references are to this edition. See note 3 for a later edition.
38. Durham and Jones, *The Negro Cowboys*, pp. 192-205. Daryl E. Jones has helpfully reminded me of the need to emphasize "the extent to which Nat Love recasts the facts of his own life history in accordance with the preestablished dime novel formula." In addition to the similarities I have noted throughout my discussion in the text, Jones has suggested to me some further illustrations of Love's dependence on the dime novel. Nat and Deadwood Dick, for example, ride their horses into a saloon in a fairly obvious parallel. And Nat was christened "Deadwood Dick" after a trial by combat in Deadwood, South Dakota. Such an initiation and the assumption of a new name (symbolic of a new identity) were an important part of the hero making process in the dime novel. For further discussion, see Daryl E. Jones' discussion of the Buck Taylor cowboy novels in "The Evolution of the Western Hero in the Dime Novel."
39. Durham and Jones, p. 195.
40. Durham and Jones, pp. 204-05.

CLARENCE S. DARROW, LITERARY REALIST: THEORY AND PRACTICE

ALMA J. PAYNE

The habitual reader of *The Arena* found nothing unusual in the varied subjects and authors presented in the December, 1893, number. Since 1889 Benjamin Orange Flower had juxtaposed such topics as evolution, bi-metallism, Hindu magic, higher criticism and the Single Tax, represented by Hamlin Garland's "The Land Question and Its Relation to Art and Literature." *The Arena* provided a platform for the radical voices, right and left, which found no outlet in the more conventional periodicals. Little noted in this *pot-pourri* was an article by an obscure Chicago lawyer, Clarence S. Darrow, entitled "Realism in Literature and Art."[1] Known already in Chicago as a disciple of Henry George, Darrow was soon to become recognized as the legal defender of Eugene Debs and a supporter of Governor Altgeld of Illinois, but literary philosophy seemed even then far removed from the courtroom with which the Loeb-Leopold and Scopes cases were to identify him permanently.

Darrow, himself, saw both law and the Howellsian "War for Realism" as parts of the great humanistic evolution toward a time when ". . . democracy shall no more be confined to constitutions and laws, but will be a part of human life."[2] With the same irony which served him in the courtroom he spoke of the romantic artist who "could no more afford to serve the poor than a modern lawyer to defend the weak."[3] Professionally he paralleled the difficult climb of William Dean Howells to the doctrine of "complicity" which pervaded much of his work but dominated his major novels and his Utopian volumes.

In "Realism in Literature and Art" Darrow revealed many other points of agreement with Howells' critical canon. Like Howells, Darrow saw a world in which the old gods were dead, the arts no longer the unique possession of the privileged great,

and "every life is a mystery and every death a tragedy."[4] The basis for realistic literature for both Howells and Darrow was of necessity experential. Darrow saw the test of "the beauty of realism" to be whether the image created was "like the one that is born of the consciousness which moves our souls, and the experiences that life has made us know."[5] As with Howells, Darrow's literary morality tended to be self-realized rather than based upon some institutional pattern. He decried the falsely inflated concept of romantic love, self-sacrifice and duty. He also saw the novelist as sharing with the scientist the method of collecting facts and then forming "theory." The true realist "sees the world exactly as it is, and he tells the story faithfully to life."[6]

For Clarence Darrow, the canvas of the realist in literature was, above all, the commonplace that "poor work-worn, care-worn face" upon which Howells also focused. "In the ordinary life almost all events are commonplace . . . we walk with steady pace along the short and narrow path of life, and rely upon the common things alone to occupy our minds . . . each event appeals to life and cannot fail to wake our memories and make us live the past again."[7] Like Howells and the young Garland, Darrow sensed the potential social value of literary realism:

> The artists of the realistic school have a sense so fine that they cannot help catching the inspiration that is filling all the world's best minds with the hope of greater justice and more equal social life . . . they feel the coming dawn when true equality shall reign upon the earth—the time when democracy shall no more be confined to constitutions and to laws, but will be a part of human life.
>
> The greatest artists of the world to-day are telling facts and painting scenes that cause humanity to stop and think, and ask why one shall be a master and another a serf—why a portion of the world should toil and spin, should wear away their strength and lives, that the rest may live in idleness and ease.[8]

Since the commonplace, despite its moral value, involves the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, the realist must "bring the world before our eyes and make us read and think. . . . He must not swerve to please the world by painting only pleasant sights and telling only lovely tales. He must paint and write and

work and think until the world shall learn so much and grow so good, that the true will be all beautiful, and all the real be ideal."[9]

In the ten years following the appearance of this statement of Darrow's literary philosophy, the "ideal" loomed large in the eyes of the young lawyer and found expression in a series of essays and short stories which Abe C. Ravitz has termed "Fictional Jurisprudence."[10] *Essay Lessons in Law,* appearing in the the Chicago *Evening American* in July, 1902, centered around two legal questions: the Doctrine of Fellow Servants and the Doctrine of Assumed Risk, both of which had been used by employers to escape financial responsibility. Darrow's position and that of Howells' "complicity" which saw the interests of all, employer and employee, as inseparable, each affecting the other, were similar. Of most importance to our consideration is Darrow's application of the tenets of Literary Realism. The settings and problems of these tales were sharply contemporary: the railroad, the shop, the mine, the immigrant's difficulties in adjustment, the chasm between the Law and humane concerns. Darrow's characters illustrated his call in the *Arena* essay for democracy as "a part of human life" for they were of the mass and Darrow's deepest contempt was reserved for those who sat apart, whether in the judicial chambers or in the Pullman car where a young lady, munching chocolate, read Richard Harding Davis and Winston Churchill, physically and mentally escaping from the smells, dirt and flies of the coaches.[11]

Of particular interest to those familiar with Howells and Stephen Crane is Darrow's attack upon the complacent acceptance of the validity of an American Dream, based upon Social Darwinism and the values of Horatio Algerism. ". . . the attorney, fired with the zeal of a reformer but tempered with the science of creative detachment, wrote a series of fictional commentaries on law courts and lower depths, tales notable for their commonsense humitarianism and faithful concern for realism and truth."[12] Darrow moved farther in the direction of the muckrakers and the presentation of social truth in his second novel, *An Eye for An Eye,* published in 1905. This novel is seen by Ravitz as "a potent slice of formulized Darwinism that is superimposed over a contemporary social battlefield of spectacular notoriety . . ."[13] yet a

work which was clearly unified and powerful in spite of its evident didacticism.

There is no doubt that the stories of 1902 and the novel of 1905 fulfilled Darrow's wish that the realist should make the reader think, but often the truth was driven home with the sledge hammer of the moralist rather than painted with the delicate shades and brush strokes of the impressionistic realist. The "true and the Ideal" combined with the "beautiful and Real" more successfully in Darrow's first novel, *Farmington,* published in 1904.[14] There are interesting parallels to the works of Howells which rose out of Ohio experiences and to such Twain works as *Life on the Mississippi,* as well as portions of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

The idealism of the Western Reserve permeated the artistry of Howells and Darrow, originating in the Jefferson, Ohio, newspaper office of the elder Howells and the furniture-making shop of Darrow's father in Kinsman, Ohio. Howells spoke of his father as "the soul" of his childhood family and Darrow his as "the gentle, kindly, loving, human man whose presence was with me for so many years. . . ."[15] The childhood homes of both Howells and Darrow were filled with books. In Darrow's case, books were "in bookcases, on tables, on chairs, and even on the floor"[16] though the family finances were meagre. Both fathers stood outside the orthodox religious patterns of their communities. The elder Howells was Swedenborgian, and Darrow's father, although graduated from a theological seminary, became known as "the village infidel." Both men led their sons to a questioning examination of the world around them and to the consideration of the variance between the real and the ideal.

The two authors also shared the ability to transform the experiences of childhood into realistic fiction which created a new "truth," one which mirrored and commented upon "poor real life." Contemporary critics saw superficial similarities between *Farmington* and *Huckleberry Finn,* Howells' *A Boy's Town* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Old Town Folks,* but the perspective of sixty-eight years suggests a greater similarity to Howells' *New Leaf Mills,* where fiction grows from experience, made more real than life by careful structure and selection of events from

the actualities of the Utopian experiment by the Howells family and the effects upon the young boy as remembered in maturity.

It is this same carefully maintained double perspective which marks *Farmington* as a fictional creation. John Smith (an Everyman character) is the narrator, now middle-aged but recalling Farmington as perceived by the boy. It is the boy's village, reinforced by the mature man's commentary, which grows before the reader's eyes and points the way toward the critical "revolt from the village" of the American 1920's. By this double vision Darrow was able to balance the "consciousness which moves our souls, and the experiences that life has made us know." The knowledge of the man reinforces the intuition of the boy. As the boy rebelled against the edict that pie must be eaten last and in small quantities, so does the man rebel against society's suspicion of pleasure—"I do not think the pie should be put off to the end of the meal. . . . I am sure that when my last hours come I shall be glad that I ate all of the pie I could get. . . ."[17]

Like the *persona* of Mark Twain, Darrow's middle-aged narrator returned to Farmington before beginning his tale and experienced a similar change in perception. Natural objects were reduced in size; the "big bend" in the river which challenged the "complete swimmers" of his boyhood was narrow and shallow enough to wade. The top of the "mountainous hill" overlooking the village was occupied by a hotel where the verandas were occupied by "women, young and old, who sit and swing in hammocks, and read Richard Harding Davis and Winston Churchill, and watch for the mail and wait for the dinner bell to ring."[18] Similar scenes are to be found in such Howells novels as *April Hopes* and *Traveler from Altruria,* with like commentary upon "escape literature." Perhaps most clearly does Darrow's narrator resemble those of Twain and Howells when he comments: "The difference between the child and the man lies chiefly in the unlimited confidence and buoyancy of youth. . . . Age and life make us doubtful about new schemes, until at last we no longer even try. . . . So, after all, perhaps childhood is the reality and in maturity we simply doze and dream. . . . Childhood is the happiest time of life, because the past is so wholly forgotten, the present so fleeting, and the future so endlessly long."[19]

The older John Smith looks back at the world of his childhood, seen by his youthful self as a green world of unbounded possibilities, open to his will, where "the kingdom of heaven would surely come in a little while." Now the mature believer in determinism sees a gray world which shapes man or destroys him despite his efforts. Yet like his creator Darrow, John Smith continues to hope. "And though almost every night through all these long and weary years I have looked with the same unflagging hope for the promised star that should be rising in the east, still it has not come; but no matter how great the trial and disappointment and delay, I am sure I shall always peer out into the darkness for this belated star, until I am so blind that I could not see it if it were really there."[20]

Perhaps the strongest similarity of Darrow's narrator to Twain's Huck or Howells' Silas Lapham lies first in the pragmatic morality at which he arrives, moving from a boy's certainty of "hard-and-fast laws of life" to the conclusion that "there are no clear lines between right and wrong." Like Howells' Reverend Sewell he found that "our mistakes and failures and trial and sins teach how really alike are all human souls, and how strong is the fate that overrides all earthly schemes."[21]

The centrality of characterization is obvious in all realistic fiction and perhaps Darrow's most effective character was that of his old-young John Smith, but there were other memorable portraits, of which the father was most noteworthy. Darrow started with the actuality of his own dreamer-father who supported a large family by making furniture and coffins yet lived for his books and his Utopian dream. From such actuality grew the reality of John Smith, Sr., the miller who dreamed great dreams yet remained chained to the decaying mill, finding escape only in his "everlasting books" and the Sundays when he could read. As the gentle man saw his own hopes grow dim, he transferred his dreams to his son who rebelled against the study of Latin and resented the oft-repeated reminder that "John Stuart Mill began studying Greek when he was only three years old." The miller was of that sturdy breed of abolitionists who made his home their forum. The narrator can only look back and envy "the heights on which my father lived."[22]

Just as the narrow geographical and spiritual confines of

Farmington crushed the visions of the miller, so the village impoverished others whom Ravitz sees as counterparts of citizens of Spoon River, Illinois; Gopher Prairie, Minnesota; and Winesburg, Ohio.[23] The fate which these characters suffer is not represented by some cataclysmic event but is brought about by the hopeless, dull commonplace in which Darrow saw the greatest power of Realism, Aunt Mary's tragedy, like that of a James character, lies in the fact that nothing happened. The elaborate parlor to which she dedicated a life ruled by "neatness" never saw the dreamed-of party. Instead its doors were finally opened to the mud and flies brought in by the "guests" at her funeral.

The mind of Aunt Louisa was given over to religious fanaticism, the spirit of an earlier Salem. Through the eyes of the boy the reader sees her triumphant violation of the Christianity which she proclaimed as she roused the town to expel the man "who lived alone in the village and who had done something terrible." Her reward was not shame and disgrace but "a beautiful funeral" and "a fine monument."

Perhaps Twain would have rejoiced in the escape of Ferman Henry, the carpenter who never completed or repaired his own house, but who found joy and light in the carnivals and circuses to which he took his ever-increasing brood by working only long enough to obtain the funds necessary to momentarily escape the limits of Farmington. When the narrator made his last visit to Farmington, he found the elite and the elect in the graveyard but Ferman Henry alive and happy in the yard before the unfinished house in which his grandchildren played. The reader can only echo John Smith's question—"who was the wiser,—he or I?"[24]

The commonplace event, the familiar feature were used by Darrow to portray other residents of Farmington. The boy knew that Squire Allen was "the greatest man in the place,—in fact, the greatest man in all the world"[25] because of his great white house with its brass knocker, his gold-headed cane, and his imposing carriage. His belief was reinforced by the Squire's funeral which in the words of his older self was "as like that of Julius Caesar as Farmington was like to Rome."[26] Deacon Cole's severe manner and formal clothing when he passed the collection plate in church created an illusion of grandeur which was shattered

when "farmer" Cole appeared at the mill in overalls, a patched coat and faded straw hat. Henry Pitkin seemed to have reality only as the superintendent of the Sunday-school. He attended prayer-meeting instead of playing baseball and the boys could never emulate his dress and manner despite their own efforts and the urging of their parents. Thus the commonplace events and descriptions, seen through the limited vision of the boy, provide impressions of the sterility of Farmington and of the frustrations of those who lived within its confines.

If Realism was based upon an empirical testing of the values and institutions of the known world, *Farmington* was truly a realistic novel. The narrator, through his boyhood experiences, examined the Church. The elder Smith, like Darrow's father, had gone beyond any institutionalized religion but the children were required to attend the great white church which dominated the village with the sight of its steeple and the sound of its bells. Little remained for the narrator except a memory of his boredom and of his resentment over having to wash "all over" in preparation for a day when he could not even play baseball. The Church had ceased to be a viable force in the life experience of the youth of Farmington.

Similarly, the school underwent a searching scrutiny. Special targets were the lessons which bore no relationship to the life needs and the books which presented a strictly moral world of clear-cut right and wrong, each rewarded in kind. Against the illusions of the school reader the narrator set the Darwinian realities of existence, with resultingly severe satire.

Nor was the family spared in the analysis of Farmington institutions. Memory produced a "stupid" world in which "our elders were in a universal conspiracy against us children; and we in turn combined to defeat their plans."[27] Rules filled the lives of the children; most resented were the moral precepts which, like school lessons, were never made relevant to the boy's experiences. John Smith concludes that if schools for the education of parents could be substituted for the education of children, then the child might learn by being placed in harmony with the life he lived, a part of a living entity, not a passive recipient of the past. Here the experience of Farmington taps that universal which Darrow felt was the goal of Realism.

Farmington has no recognizable plot except a picaresque tracing of boyhood experiences and impressions. Again, the experiences are not exotic or unique. The boy stands in the summer twilight and catches a glimpse of his father bent over his books. He drags a sled up the hill one more time for a final swoop down through the darkness while the warm light from the kitchen colors the snow. He envies the boy whose speech is praised at the last day of school. He tours the village common, avoiding the fierce dog chained outside the tavern, and gives the reader a blueprint of the life, industries and prejudices of Farmington. The fascination of fishing grips him but he prefers the active sports, swimming and baseball. He revels in holidays, especially July 4th, and suffers through the interminable summer vacation when his father makes him study Latin. Only once does he move outside Farmington—for a tremendously exciting train trip of twenty miles.

What saves *Farmington* from being branded as nostalgic local color alone? Primarily the Realist's principle of organicism makes the elements of the novel inseparable, each helping to shape the other. The very commonplace of events contributes to the sense of sterility which sets its mark upon the characters while the valley setting encloses all within the narrow confines of its hills and its prejudices. By means of the dual point of view, embodied in the child and adult John Smith, Darrow achieved the development of a personality which revolts against and yet is irrevocably shaped by the entity which is Farmington.

NOTES

1. *The Arena,* IX (December, 1893), pp. 98-113. This essay appeared in *A Persian Pearl and Other Essays,* published in 1899.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 111.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 100.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.,* p. 101.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 110.
7. *Ibid.,* pp. 106-107.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 111.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 113.
10. For an excellent discussion of these short works see Chapter 3 of Ravitz, *Clarence Darrow and the American Literary Tradition* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1962).
11. Ravitz, p. 54.

12. *Ibid.,* p. 69.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 95.
14. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co.
15. Clarence Darrow, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 17.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 8.
17. Clarence S. Darrow, *Farmington* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1904), pp. 180-181.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 140.
19. *Ibid.,* pp. 143, 145.
20. *Ibid.,* p. 269.
21. *Ibid.,* p. 274.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 271.
23. Ravitz, p. 102.
24. *Farmington,* p. 242.
25. *Ibid.,* p. 92.
26. *Ibid.,* p. 95.
27. *Ibid.,* p. 177.

VACHEL LINDSAY: THE MIDWEST AS UTOPIA

BLAIR WHITNEY

In 1931 Vachel Lindsay committed suicide by drinking a bottle of Lysol. One of several reasons for his suicide (depression, illness, unpopularity, bankruptcy) was that the world did not live up to his vision of it, for Lindsay dreamed of seeing his hometown of Springfield, Illinois, transformed into a Utopia, and he devoted his entire life to preaching what he called The Gospel of Beauty.

If one visits the Lindsay home in Springfield—now operated as a shrine by the Vachel Lindsay Association—one can understand the atmosphere of moral earnestness in which young Vachel grew up. His father was a doctor, who wanted his son to take over his practice, and his mother was an indefatigable do-gooder and dabbler in the arts, who once a week brought to her home poor Portuguese women from the other side of town, so that they could sit down to a simple but proper afternoon tea and be introduced to the social graces. She decorated her home with all the trappings of the genteel tradition, including a Rogers group of Romeo and Juliet. She herself often painted in the years before her marriage, and she passed on her own repressed artistic desires to her son. The Lindsay home was also a religious one (Cambellite), and Vachel's sister Olive became a missionary to China. The future poet was his mother's golden-haired favorite, but something of a disappointment to his father, who couldn't understand why his son preferred art to medicine, although he let Vachel go to art school after he had done miserably in the medical course at Hiram College.

The terrible pressures of his genteel upbringing are summed up in a letter that Vachel wrote to Elizabeth Wills, a young girl

he courted unsuccessfully for two years—Vachel did not marry until he was forty-six. He lectured his beloved in this letter and concluded with these words, "Let us be good if we can, Elizabeth. It is so hard to be truely good. But we can pray, and try."[1] This constant desire to lecture, to convert, runs throughout all of Lindsay's work, and it is especially evident in his prose, most of which is seriously marred as a result. Lindsay even served as a YMCA lecturer on the principles of John Ruskin.

Yet there is another side to Lindsay's nature which is always emphasized by those who knew him. One of his friends, for instance, blames his suicide on a bad marriage and calls his best-known biographers liars for suggesting any other explanations. The Lindsay his Springfield friends remember is the gay, charming, theatrical Vachel who drew light, fanciful pictures like those that decorate his *Collected Poems*, or the drawing of Cleopatra with a peacock's tail for her hair. They remember how he loved children and wrote them delightful poems, like "The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky" and "The Little Turtle," which are still read and recited. They also recall Vachel's tremendous enthusiasm for life. The man they remember is the skilled performer whose readings—"the higher vaudeville," as he called them—attracted as many as a million people and whose recordings rank with those of Dylan Thomas. This Vachel Lindsay was more loyal to music, art, and poetry than to any of his various causes—Temperance, the beautification of Springfield, the Democratic Party, the Campbellite Church.

The tension between these two sides of Lindsay's nature, the utopian crusader and the playful artist, is evident in his poetry. In fact, it is this tension that holds the poems together, that provides metaphors, and that makes the poems work. His best poems combine earnest Midwestern morality with a wild, exuberant, unrestrained love of words.

Lindsay is a particularly Midwestern utopian because he almost never left Springfield in spirit, no matter how far away he travelled on his lecture tours. Instead of rebelling against his Midwestern background, as many Twenties writers did, he was proud of it, and he never embraced the negative ideals of the Lost Generation. Lindsay's heroes were mostly Midwesterners, and from reading his poems, one can put together a set of Mid-

western ideals. These ideals do not constitute a specific, logical program of action, but rather an attitude towards life, to use a favorite pedantic word, a *Weltanschauung*. As John Flanagan points out in a recent evaluation of Lindsay, "He had a rich and colorful imagination, but virtually no sense of logic. Stephen Graham, the English writer who accompanied Lindsay on a hiking trip through Glacier National Park, observed that his companion 'loves oratory more than reason, and impulse more than thought'."[2]

What Lindsay believed was special about the Midwest, he sets forth in *The Litany of Washington Street* (1929), a series of prose orations separated and linked by quotations from Walt Whitman, for he regarded Whitman as an American statesman. Instead of referring to "Whistler, Whitman, and Poe," as Lindsay says the aesthetes do, one ought instead to refer to "Jefferson, Lincoln, and Whitman."[3] The Midwest is unique, Lindsay asserts, because it is "a mixture of streams of immigration: and there is a legend there so great that the present cannot down it, and the future is written in pages of flame."[4] The Midwestern ideal consists of "the peculiar pride of the South mixed with the mind of the Emersonian." The result of this mixture is "a standard of self-reliance and freedom and dignity."[5] Then Lindsay goes on to proclaim his faith in the goodness of all men, and especially in the goodness of all Midwestern men, even though the dominant philosophy in literary and intellectual circles is one of pessimism. To the country's leading pessimist, Lindsay said, "I challenge directly in debate my friend the enemy, H. L. Mencken, with whom I agree in nothing except the necessity of free spech, a free press, and personal courage at all times."[6] Although these Midwestern ideals may seem illusory, since Lindsay himself admitted he was no Edward Bellamy with a specific program, Lindsay's poems do provide fine, specific expressions of what is still a genuine set of values in politics, religion, and literature.

In politics, the greatest of all Midwesterners is Lincoln, and Lindsay, growing up only three blocks from the Lincoln home, perhaps understood Lincoln better than any other poet except Whitman. He created a wonderful, mythic Lincoln, "the prairie-lawyer, master of us all," in his well-known poem "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." Written during World War I, this

poem imagines Lincoln taking the world's suffering upon himself.

> The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.
> He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.
> He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now
> The bitterness, the folly and the pain.
>
> He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
> Shall come:—the shining hope of Europe free:
> The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,
> Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp, and Sea.[7]

Lindsay judged all politicians according to whether or not they were "Lincoln-hearted men." One such man was John Peter Altgeld, the Gray Eagle, an outstanding liberal governor of Illinois. In "The Eagle that is Forgotten," Lindsay says that Altgeld's message will live on, even though Altgeld himself may be forgotten, because "to live in mankind is far more than to live in a name." Another Lincoln-hearted man is William Jennings Bryan, who visited Springfield in 1896. As one of the few Democrats in a Republican town, the sixteen-year-old Vachel was transported by the coming of his hero. Later, he re-created the excitement of that summer in one of his best poems.

> I brag and chant of Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
> Candidate for president who sketched a silver Zion,
> The one American Poet who could sing outdoors,
> He brought in tides of wonder, of unprecedented splendor,
> Wild roses from the plains, that made hearts tender,
> All the funny circus silks
> Of politics unfurled,
> Bartlett pears of romance that were honey at the cores,
> And torchlights down the street, to the end of the world.

Even though this great (to Lindsay) Midwesterner was defeated by "plutocrats in miles/ With dollar signs upon their coats," his spirit survives, "Gone to joint the shadows with Altgeld the Eagle,/ Where the kings and the slaves and the troubadours rest." Lindsay later became disenchanted with the Democratic Party, however, because he was afraid that the party of Jefferson and Bryan had lost its soul and its idealism. He explains his defection in "Why I Voted the Socialist Ticket."

I am unjust, but I can strive for justice.
My life's unkind, but I can vote for kindness.
I, the unloving, say life should be lovely.
I, that am blind, cry out against my blindness.

Like his political heroes, Lindsay's favorite religious figures are forceful men who believe in acting on their convictions and who try to reassert the spiritual in a time of increasing materialism, just as William Jennings Bryan spoke out against the Eastern "plutocrats" defending the gold standard. Lindsay tries in all of his work to create an art that will have social significance, that will help convert people to his Gospel of Beauty and help make his beloved Midwest a truer, purer place. He is religious without being pious, and his best religious poems unite the spiritual and the temporal, just as his political heroes are usually religious men. Lindsay's first famous poem, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven," is a good example. Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, is a man who ministers to all and preaches a democratic faith. In his religious poems, Lindsay often uses the speech rhythms of the Midwestern stump preacher, and he sometimes sets these poems to hymn tunes. His particular brand of poetic Christianity is also expressed in his poems on Old Testament heroes like Samson and Daniel, both heroic resistors of political as well as religious tyranny. "How Samson Bore Away the Gates of Gaza" is subtitled "A Negro Sermon," and the hero is wondrously transformed into "the bold Jack Johnson Israelite." Though his sister was a missionary, Lindsay never denigrated the religious impulses of other cultures. Buddha, Prince Siddhartha, was certainly no Midwesterner, but Lindsay imagines his Fire Sermon as a Midwestern Fireman's Ball in a perfect blending of the Oriental with Main Street.

In literature as in religion and politics Lindsay most admires those who have best expressed the true spirit of the ideal Midwest. His particular hero is Mark Twain, the subject of three poems. Perhaps Lindsay feels particularly close to Twain because Twain, as Van Wyck Brooks and others have pointed out, showed in his works the same battle between the genteel and the organic, the polite and the genuine that appears throughout Lindsay's poetry. One can read "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan" as another version of *Huckleberry Finn,* in which "boy Bryan"

is defeated by plutocrats who believe that his "barbaric yawp" is uncivilized. Huck lights out for Bryan's West to avoid being "civilized" by female representatives of the genteel tradition. Lindsay explains their mutual distrust of respectability in these lines from "The Raft."

Come let us disgrace ourselves,
Knock the stuffed gods from their shelves,
And cinders at the schoolhouse fling.
Come let us disgrace ourselves,
And live on a raft with gray Mark Twain
And Huck and Jim
And the Duke and the King.

In these and many other poems, Vachel Lindsay succeeds in creating a vision of the good life that is moral but not dull, utopian but not impractical, literate but not genteel, and religious but not sanctimonious. He also proves that "Midwestern" need not be a synonym for what is narrow-minded and conservative, but an adjective that refers to America's best values.

NOTES

1. Vachel Lindsay, Letter to Elizabeth Wills (1924?).
2. *John T. Flanagan,* "Vachel Lindsay: An Appraisal," *Profile of Vachel Lindsay,* ed. John T. Flanagan (Columbus, Ohio, 1970), p. 115.
3. Vachel Lindsay, *The Litany of Washington Street* (New York, 1929), p. 2.
4. *Washington Street,* p. 41.
5. *Washington Street,* p. 42.
6. *Washington Street,* p. 42.
7. Vachel Lindsay, *Collected Poems* (New York. 1930), p. 54. All other citations are from this edition.

THE URBAN-RURAL VISION OF CARL SANDBURG

PAUL J. FERLAZZO

In 1946 the World Publishing Company brought out a book by Carl Sandburg entitled *Poems of the Midwest.* This was not a collection of new poems by Sandburg about the Midwest, but the joining together of two volumes previously published separately—*Chicago Poems,* brought out originally in 1916, and *Cornhuskers,* published in 1918. From the vantage point of a student of Midwestern literature, I think it is significant that a book with the title, *Poems of the Midwest* should contain poems about one of the great crowded cities of the world, Chicago, and poems about one of the great natural places, the Prairie. It seems to me that in the combining of these two separate physical entities and separate states of mind, something can be learned about the meaning of the Midwestern experience in shaping the imagination of this Midwestern writer.

The first poem of the *Chicago Poems* introduces with coarse rhythms and shocking images the brawny industrial complex where things are killed, made, and moved:

> Hog Butcher for the World
> Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
> Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
> Stormy, husky, brawling,
> City of the Big Shoulders.

The poet is fascinated by this city, drawn to it, proud of it, and also terrified by it because it is, as he says,

> Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action,
> cunning as a savage pitted against the wilderness.

On the other hand, there is the "Prairie," the opening poem of *Cornhuskers,* and with easy-flowing, lyrical rhythms the poet remembers his origin:

> I was born on the prairie and the milk of its wheat,
> the red of its clover, and eyes of its women, gave
> me a song and a slogan.

And to contrast the violent, muscular existence of the city, Sandburg places the mystery of life and the reverence one feels for it on the prairie:

> Look at six eggs
> In a mockingbird's nest.
>
> Listen to six mockingbirds
> Flinging follies of O-be-joyful
> Over the marshes and uplands.
>
> Look at songs
> Hidden in eggs.

To which one does this Midwestern writer cast his allegiance? To the city or to small towns on the prairie? Unlike many other Midwestern writers, Sandburg did not feel compelled to choose one and deny the other. He lived with and within both, seeming to enjoy the sometimes contradictory emotional and psychic responses each created in him, and writing out of this conflicting vision, some very good poems. He took from each whatever it offered him—from the city intellectual stimulation, culture, fame, and from the prairie refreshment, identity, the good life.

The characters who people the *Chicago Poems* reveal the Midwest to be an international region—the Midwest as a microcosom, a melting pot, a representative sampling of the whole American experiment. People of every nationality, race, and religion are represented here—an Italian ditch-digger for example, a Jewish fish-crier, a German dynamiter, a Black singer, Poles, Hungarians, and Sandburg accepts each with equal affection and appreciation. These immigrants are for Sandburg America's new frontiersmen—desperately poor, but full of life and energy and willing to work hard in order to establish their dreams. In the city, Sandburg shares their suffering and their instinctive joy at being alive.

In *Cornhuskers* we meet different people—more comfortable Americans whose lives are tame and safe by comparison—a young girl, Nancy Hanks who dreams about romance while sitting by the fire; Jimmy Wimbledon listening to early summer bullfrogs; and Johnny Jones wanting to see the Wild West Show in town. These are the characters other Midwestern writers rejected or left behind because their lives were considered dull and immune to growth, pleasure, or art. But Sandburg cares about them, cherishes them for their peace and simplicity.

In the urban poems, Sandburg is frequently enraged at social injustice, at maltreatment of the working classes, and artifice and corruption in our institutions. He rages with the fervor of a socialist, calling for an end to the abuse of mankind who have been victimized by the power of the wealthy. He sums up his philosophy of the common man in this poem:

> I am the people—the mob—the crowd—the mass.
> Do you know that all the great work of the world is
> done through me?
> . . . .
> When I, the People, learn to remember, when I the People,
> use the lessons of yesterday and no longer forget
> who robbed me last year, who played me for a fool—
> then there will be no speaker in all the world say
> the name: "The People," with any fleck of a sneer
> in his voice or any far-off smile of derision.
> The mob—the crowd—the mass—will arrive then.

In a number of poems he attacks the industrial-managerial complex which saps the life out of working people to create vast profits the people themselves do not enjoy. In the poem "They Will Say," his target is child labor; in "Mill-Doors" he has a vision of workers being bled dry for the sake of pennies a day; in another poem Sandburg buries the poor working girl, Anna Imroth, who dies in a factory fire; and in "Onion Days" Sandburg contrasts a poor Italian immigrant who slaves away twelve hours a day picking onions for six cents a box, while the owner of the farm sits in his church on Sunday dreaming of ways to cut her wage by even more.

Of the institutions which support the corrupt social systems, Sandburg is particularly incensed with the evangelical Chris-

tianity of Billy Sunday. With angry, stridant lines in "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter," he assaults the insincere and unnecessary staging and gesturing which made Billy Sunday's preaching famous across the country. Sandburg accuses Sunday of being in league with the economic forces which suppress the people, and condemns the kind of Christianity he teaches designed to keep the unhappy masses quiet and at their jobs—no matter how poorly paid they are.

By contrast, the poems in the *Cornhuskers* section are suffused with the pleasantness of society in small towns and rural communities. The poet remembers with great fondness a baseball game between Chillicothe and Rock Island; he attends a band concert in a public square in Nebraska city; and in a poem called "Village in Late Summer" he portrays a number of sleepy, quiet episodes in the lives of the villagers. These same kinds of activities of rural societies affected other Midwestern writers quite differently. Others felt oppressed and bored by life in their small towns and left in search of life in large cities. But Sandburg sees in these small towns a gentle and humane environment. It leads him at one point to optimistically exclaim in a poem entitled "Caboose Thoughts":

> It's going to come out all right—do you know?
> The sun, the birds, the grass—they know.
> They get along—and we'll get along.

This faith in the beneficial outcome of things stands in sharp contrast to the impatient, revolutionary tone of the urban poems.

The subject of war, I think, is a good one for seeing the difference between Sandburg's urban vision and his rural vision. Within *Chciago Poems* is a section entitled "War Poems (1914-1915)" and each of the eleven poems portrays some horror of war and the regrettable loss of life for issues that fade in importance when measured against the amount of blood spilled over them.

In the poem "Killers," Sandburg is haunted by the vision of men chosen for battle because they are young and strong:

> Under the sun
> Are sixteen million men,
> Chosen for shining teeth,

Sharp eyes, hard legs
And a running of young warm blood in their wrists.

And a red juice runs on the green grass;
And a red juice soaks the dark soil.
And the sixteen million are killing . . . and killing
and killing.

In another poem Sandburg watches colored buttons being moved back and forth on a war map, and is struck by the horror that a button, which is so easily moved an inch, is in sharp contrast to the fact represented—namely, that

(Ten thousand men and boys twist on their bodies in
a red soak along a river edge,
Gasping of wounds, calling for water, some rattling
death in their throats.)
Who would guess what it cost to move two buttons
one inch on the war map here in front of the
newspaper office . . .

In another poem entitled "Salvage," Sandburg converses with the Victorian poet and craftsman, William Morris, and is glad that Morris is dead so he cannot be horrified by the war-time destruction of the French cathedrals Morris so admried.

In all of these poems, Sandburg, like pre-war America, is committed to life and peace, and the poet sees war as a senseless waste of all that is really precious and important. He is pessimistic, however, about men's efforts at solving their differences peacefully, and predicts with an eerie accuracy the kind of push-button annihilation that threatens us. He writes:

In the wars to come silent wheels and whirr of rods
not yet dreamed out in the head of men.
. . .
In the wars to come new silent deaths, new silent
hurlers not yet dreamed out in the heads of men.
. . .
In the wars to come kings kicked under the dust and
millions of men following great causes not yet dreamed
out in the heads of men.

This vision of real war as a bloody horror I have called his "urban" vision—a vision which is reformist in attitude, apocalyptic in tone, and severely impatient with the stupidity and cruelty of men.

His rural vision of war, on the other hand, is not soaked in blood, nor is it filled with the same urgency of emotion. Sandburg's rural vision is characterized by a mild complacency with the way things are, a strong sense of optimism, and a faith in the salutary powers of nature. Most of the war poems in *Cornhuskers* are set in the past, and the poet is recalling war after time and nature have healed war's wounds, buried the dead, and removed the fear and shock of battle. The poem entitled "New Feet" is typical of this attitude:

Empty battlefields keep their phantoms.
Grass crawls over old gun wheels
And a nodding Canada thistle flings a purple
Into the summer's southwest wind,
Wrapping a root in the rust of a bayonet,
Reaching a blossom in rust of shrapnel.
Lovely nature, here, silences Sandburg's former wrath.

In the long poem entitled "The Four Brothers," Sandburg, reflecting the change in mood of his country, reverses his attitude toward war as expressed in the *Chicago Poems*, and replaces the themes of horror and waste with the theme of *dulce et decorum est*. He emphasizes the necessity and determination of France, Russia, Britain, and America in their righteous struggle against, what he calls, "a half-cracked one-armed child of the German kings." And in a fit of patriotism he shouts that God, who is the God of the four brothers only, is going to help us win this war. He concludes this poem with lyric optimism, looking forward to the day when all wars will end and the people of the world shall be safe.

Finally, I would like to suggest that some of the work of other Midwestern writers may be seen in terms of an urban-rural vision. For Hemingway the contrast is between disillusionment lived out in European capitals and the memory of pure experiences in the Michigan forests; for Mark Twain it is the materialism of an urbanizing America versus the simplicity of an ante-bellum Missouri farm; for Garland it is the heartless urban banker against the Middle Border farmer. For these writers as for Sandburg, the city and countryside are not only settings, but they are truly sources of particular states of mind and sets of values.

A NOTE ON HEMINGWAY AS POET

LINDA W. WAGNER

What is perhaps most interesting about Hemingway's poems is not so much their quality but their chronology. Hemingway wrote poems, apparently, throughout his life, most frequently in his Paris days and earlier, and then again after World War II; but also during the later twenties and thirties. As Philip Young mentioned in his inventory of the Hemingway manuscripts, "more than once the author announced that he intended to bring out a book of poems."[1]

Hemingway's earliest poems prove conclusively that he knew of and admired Imagist poetry. His 1921 "On Wedding Gifts" represents perfectly the dictum of making every word count—indeed, here, for surprise effect, even the punctuation mark becomes a word:

> Three traveling clocks
> Tick
> On the mantelpiece
> Comma
> But the young man is starving.[2]

Just as Williams was doing in his poems of the twenties, Hemingway here drew in his reader through his stark, identifiable details, only to change direction abruptly in the last line. The shift in direction works also to amplify the earlier lines of the poem.

His "Riparto D'Assalto," a somewhat longer poem first published in *Poetry* and then in *3 Stories & 10 Poems*, follows the same pattern. Beginning with the detailed description of soldiers riding in a cold truck, Hemingway gives us their physical discomfor, their sex-oriented reveries, and then the ride itself,

> Damned cold, bitter, rotten ride,
> Winding road up the Grappa side.[3]

It is only after another passage of these kinds of details that, in the last line, he tells of the men's deaths ("where the truck-load died").

"Riparto" is an Imagist poem not only in its use of seemingly factual detail, but also in the poet's apparently objective attitudes toward the soldiers (a "truck-load" is hardly a sentimental description). Such a tone characterizes many of Hemingway's "tough" poems—"Ultimately," "The Age Demanded," "Captives," "Champs D'Honneur"—but it is successful only when he lets the poem stand on its own imagery instead of adding the "tags" that name the emotion he is trying to create. "Mitraigliatrice," which depends entirely on the comparison between typewriter and battlefield, is a stronger poem, consequently, than "The Ernest Liberal's Lament."

There seem to be two major difficulties about Hemingway's poems, whenever they were written. His tendency to fall into easy end-rhyme patterns spoils much of his phrasing elsewhere in the line (see "Chapter Heading," "Soul of Spain," and especially "Second Poem to Mary" where the tone is nearly destroyed with the jingling rhymes). Even more destructive, however, is Hemingway's tendency to use his poems—as he seldom did his fiction—as vehicles for personal vituperation. Whether it is his satire on the Lausanne Conference, his "blood is thicker than water" verse to his brother Bill, or his "The Lady Poet with Footnotes," Hemingway uses word play (sometimes rhyme, sometimes repetition) and purposely unpoetic diction and imagery—and at times flat statement instead of imagery. These elements are evident in the satiric poem, "Valentine," dedicated to hostile critics:

> Sing a song of critics
> pockets full of lye
> four and twenty critics
> hope that you will die
> hope that you will peter out
> hope that you will fail . . . (*CP*, 28).

Profanity or sexual references (as here) often carry the weight of the satire, as in "They All Made Peace—What Is Peace?"

> . . . Lord Curzon likes young boys.
> So does Chicherin.

So does Mustapha Kemal. He is good looking too.
His eyes
Are too close together but he makes war. That is the
way he is.[4]

The best example of these early vindictive poems is "The Soul of Spain," filled with the anal humor and naughty word choice of an adolescent. Set against the insults to his brother Bill and Gertrude Stein is the definitely complimentary passage to Ezra Pound, although Pound might understandably have not cherished the "monument" Hemingway creates for him. Parts II through VI of the poem foreshadow Hemingway's parody of Anderson to come in *The Torrents of Spring*. The titles of each section are themselves jokes (Part IV is of a literal story; Part V puns on the idea of following itself). Language within each section also varies widely, from the forced rhyme at its worst ("The wind blows/ and it does not snows look at the bull with his bloody nose") to the simplistic pseudo-Anderson mockery ("We got on a train and went somewhere else") to the echoing word repetition of Stein ("Short knives are thick short knives are quickshort knives/make a needed nick"). The effect of "The Soul of Spain" in total is much funnier than that of many of Hemingway's other satiric poems, simply because there is such variety in each section, and because the juxtaposition works successfully. Hemingway's usual strategy regarding structure is very much in the mainstream of Imagist practice. His longer poems are nearly all montage or pastiche. His short ones build from or to a controlling image. Regardless of length, juxtaposition is used instead of formal transitions.)

Hemingway's most effective early poems are his straight social protest poems like "T. Roosevelt," in which the Hemingway identity does not become involved (the weight of the details about Roosevelt conveys the author's feeling about him) and his recollection poems, the best of which is "Along with Youth."

A porcupine skin
Stiff with bad tanning,
It must have ended somewhere.
Stuffed horned owl
Pompous

Yellow eyed;
Chuck-wills-widow on a biassed twig
Sooted with dust.
Piles of old magazines,
Drawers of boys letters
And the line of love
They must have ended somewhere.
Yesterdays tribute is gone
Along with youth
And the canoe that went to pieces on the beach
The year of the big storm
When the hotel burned down
At Seney, Michigan. (*CP*, 26)

This poem not only echoes the nostalgic tone of many of the stories in *In Our Time* and passages from later Nick Adams stories; it also works well as a set of separate images, piled one on the other, and relying for its final effect on the concluding image. One might wish the title line—not powerful in itself—had been omitted in the body of the poem.)

Part of the problem in dealing with Hemingway's poems as poems is their unevenness. A passage like "Smoke smarts my eyes,/ Cottonwood twigs and buffalo dung/ Smoke gray in the teepee—/ (or is it my myopic trachoma)" immediately precedes this quite effective description:

The prairies are long,
The moon rises
Ponies
Drag at their pickets.
The grass has gone brown in the summer . . . (*CP*, 19).

Hemingway often has good single lines, or even a passage that coheres; but sustaining a mood or an image in poetry seems difficult for him. Part of his difficulty seems to come from the kicky rhyme that he falls into. Another problem is his self-conscious pose—Hemingway the poet, an attitude that less often appears in his fiction. For whatever reason, the fact is that Hemingway frequently includes asides and irrelevancies in poems that would never be allowed in his fiction.

Interestingly, the same elements noticeable in the poems of the twenties appear again in the poems from the middle and late

forties. There are the good single lines, some of which are distillations of his fiction during this period:

"The days between flying are months."

"all of us need to be alone"

"Sitting now here in the room
Waiting to go to the battle.
A man without his children or his cats."

Some of Hemingway's best poetry appears, finally, in the two poems to Mary, but unfortunately each poem is comparatively long, and the good lines are obscured by other less effective passages. The opening of "To Mary in London" is quite lyric:

I, loving only the word
Trying to make with a phrase and a sentence
Something no bomber can reach
Something to stand when all of us are gone
And long after . . .

as is his simple describtion of her,

. . . she will come,
Opening softly with the in-left key,
Saying "May I come in?"
Coming small-voiced and lovely . . .[5]

The "Second Poem to Mary," in its longer and more strident lines and its reliance on word play, undercuts its interesting opening ("Now sleeps he/ With that old whore Death").[6] Even though this is the poem in which Hemingway says it plainly ("But now, for a moment, there is only love and compassion. Knowing how to endure. And only love and/ compassion"), he leads into that passage too indirectly. The reader is lost in the pseudo-sophisticated verbal detxerity:

You may go now, all of you. Go as quietly as possible, Go as far as possible. You may even take possible
with you, if you can find him . . .
Today no one uses slang because clarity is of the utmost importance.
Fucking, alone, is retained, but is only used as an adjective.
Sweating-out is retained.
It means that which one must suffer without the possibility of changing the result or the outcome.

Those of us who know walk very slowly, and we look at each other with infinite love and compassion.

The irony of Hemingway's less-than-successful poems is that he stops presenting and tells, or he stops presenting and glories in his own cleverness with words. It is both surprising and disappointing that the medium which is by nature the most suggestive mode of writing became for Hemingway only his alternative mode. For other writers, prose was the genre for "getting it all down," and from prose they would choose and polish the gems of their poems. Perhaps since Hemingway had already polished his prose to the point of brilliance, his poetry was all that remained to catch his "easier" writing. Hemingway appears to have used his poems as he did much of his non-fiction, as a more clearly personal outlet rather than an artistic one; and the quality of both the poems and the non-fiction suffered as a result.

NOTES

1. Philip Young and Charles W. Mann, *The Hemingway Manuscripts, An Inventory* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1969), x.
2. As quoted by Carlos Baker in *Ernest Hemingway, A Life Story* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 82.
3. *The Collected Poems of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1960), 22. Hereafter cited in text.
4. "They All Made Peace—What Is Peace," reprinted in Louis Zukofsky, "Comment, Program: 'Objectivists,' 1931," *Poetry*, XXXVII (February 1931), 270-271.
5. "To Mary in London," *Atlantic Monthly*, CCXVI, No. 2 (August 1965), 94, 95.
6. "Second Poem to Mary," *Ibid.*, 96-100.

EARTH-MOTHERS, SUCCUBI, AND OTHER ECTOPLASMIC SPIRITS: THE WOMEN IN SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S SHORT STORIES

WILLIAM V. MILLER

Herbert Gold was not the first to note the limitations of Sherwood Anderson's characterization of women, but his statement offers a starting point for more definitive observations about women in his short fiction: "Except for the poetic school teacher and a few others, women are not women in Anderson's stories. . . . For Anderson women have a strange holy power; they are earth-mothers, ectoplasmic spirits, sometimes succubi, rarely individual living creatures."[1] Lionel Trilling contended that *all* of Anderson's characters tend to "vanish into the vast limbo of meaningless life" because, unlike D. H. Lawrence whose themes fed Anderson's imagination in the early 1920s, Anderson failed to provide for his characters the kind of palpable milieu which is necessary for full character realization.[2] Indeed, there are no characters in Anderson's fiction who attain the kind of realization that transcends particular stories, but many of his characters impress us as being real because we accept their psychological reality. However, Anderson's women are peculiarly circumscribed in their development, and the patterns of their characterization reflect both the expressive basis of Anderson's art and his narrow vision of womanhood.

Because the novels (excluding the hybrid *Winesburg, Ohio*) are considered only indirectly in this study, there may be dimensions of Anderson's characterization that are neglected. However, the short stories are universally regarded as Anderson's most durable artistic achievements; the body of tales considered here includes seventy-one published stories in addition to the twenty-five in *Winesburg*; and while the broader canvas of the novel

encouraged Anderson to dramatize his cultural interests more concretely than those ideas appear in the tales, it would seem that his characterization of women is substantially the same in the two genres.

The biography of a writer is always important in fully understanding his work. One of the first tasks in approaching Poe is to sweep away the cobwebs and dust of spurious biography in order to confront specific stories and poems; one of the important *later* tasks is to consider that in Poe's life and thought which illuminates his art. Of course, the problem is to discern what biographical evidence is pertinent and how the writer's experience is transmuted into art—in works of fiction as apparently diverse in this respect as those of Flaubert and Thomas Wolfe. Sherwood Anderson's characterization of women reflects persistently and with a minimum or artistic distancing the doubts and frustrations of his own relationships with women, especially with his mother Emma Anderson and his four wives.

Before examining some of those relationships, we need to consider those aspects of Anderson's aesthetic views and practices which bear on his characterization. One useful approach to his aesthetic views is through a comparison of them with certain views of James Joyce, as they are expressed through Stephen Daedelus in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man.* The narratives of these two masters come in contact directly and indirectly in a number of instances: *Winesburg, Ohio,* like *Portrait,* is an important achievement in the *Kunstlerroman,* an important fictive genre in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, and like *The Dubliners* it is a group of short stories unified in setting and theme; Anderson acknowledged his indebtedness to Joyce, whom he met in Paris in the 1920s, for the stream-of-consciousness technique Anderson employed in *Dark Laughter* (with disastrous results); and many have noted that what Joyce called the "epiphany" technique is very similar to a structural principle which is central in Anderson's story creation.[3]

These parallels invite comparison, but here the concern is only for somewhat isolated aspects of Joyce's art which may help illuminate Anderson's fiction—especially that central crux of *Portrait* criticism—what Joyce's attitude is toward Stephen Daedelus—which bears on Anderson's characterization in a con-

trasting way. Obviously, Stephen is, in many particulars, James Joyce as a young man; but how does Stephen's creator regard him? The consensus view seems to be that Stephen is treated ironically with disagreement about the target of the irony ranging among critics from those who believe that the irony is aimed at youthful naivete to those like Hugh Kenner and other "Stephen Haters" who argue that Stephen is not an artist but an "egocentric rebel."[4] If, then, Stephen Daedelus tends to be removed by ironic distancing from virtual identity with his creator, whatever the target of the irony might be, it would appear that in the characterization of Stephen, Joyce achieved the kind of dramatic form he sought as an artist.

In *Portrait* Joyce expresses his classification of forms through Stephen's exposition in colloquy with Lynch (which is usually read unironically).

> The image, it is clear, must be set between the mind or senses of the artist himself and the mind or senses of others. If you bear this in memory you will see that art necessarily divides itself into three forms progressing from one to the next. These forms are: the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself; the epical form, the form wherein he presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others. . . .
>
> The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak. The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.[5]

There are obviously many more ramifications of these aesthetic statements than we can pursue here; but we can observe now, as James B. Baker has pointed out, that the classification of forms is presented as a series moving from the lyric to the epic to the dramatic and that the variable is the degree of detachment.[6]

Furthermore, Joyce considered the achievement of dramatic form to be the highest level of art. As the following account demonstrates, in theory and in technique Anderson's stories depend not upon detachment, but upon the artist's personality. His aesthetic images can be placed, perhaps, somewhere between the lyric and the epic in Joyce's scale of detachment.

Lacking Joyce's penetrating, trained intelligence, Anderson never thought systematically. Alfred Kazin observed accurately that Hemingway went beyond Anderson in creating a conscious sense of design.[7] In three major autobiographical books *(A Story-Teller's Story, Tar,* and *Memoirs),* in many essays and lectures, and in thousands of letters, Anderson talked about his craft; but, again, one finds no "conscious sense of design." However, Anderson's statements about his art are consistent and form a body of views which can be described as expressive, focusing on the poet and his creative act rather than on such matters as the nature of his "imitation" or the psychology of his audience. He had a sense of form, but his notion of it tended to be very subjective and intuitive, concerned less with meters than "the meter-making argument."

Anderson had much to say about the "poison plot" which he felt was corrupting American short stories. What was needed was the kind of story written by Chekhov or Turgenev in which human life was not sacrificed to the trickery and juggling of clever plotting. For Anderson the form of a story should depend neither on plot nor on any Poe-like, mathematical design. Instead, in his theory of form, the personality of the writer was central. To a friend he wrote, "You see, Pearson, I have the belief that, in this matter of form, it is largely a matter of depth of feeling. How deeply do you feel it? Feel it deeply enough and you will be torn inside and driven on until form comes."[8] In this same letter and elsewhere Anderson also stressed the morality of the struggle to achieve form: "I suppose I think that the author who doesn't struggle all his life to achieve this form, let it be form, betrays the morality."[9]

We can understand his moral concern better when we consider what he said about his imagination and the creative process. Many readers of Anderson have noted his remarkable commitment to his imaginative life, which often served him as a thera-

peutic retreat from too harsh reality. He once wrote, "The life of reality is confused, disorderly, almost without apparent purpose, whereas in the artist's imaginative life there is purpose."[10] Within his imagination lived characters for whom he had an extraordinary sense of obligation. A letter written to a young writer is a fair statement of his moral regard for these characters: "As though I, a writer, had a right to do as I pleased with people carried into an imagined life. The thing never understood was the sacredness of that life, too. The obligation to that life, to my mind is greater than to the characters in what we call real life. . . . [When one betrays a character], it is display of immorality."[11]

Two more aspects of Anderson's theory of the creative process should be stressed here. First, and here he emphasizes a point made with greater precision by T. S. Eliot and By Henry James as well as by Joyce in *Portrait,* Anderson insisted that art comes from the imagination, not life, though the imagination must feed on life; or, to use another of his metaphors, fleeting "seeds" of experience are planted in the imagination where they germinate.[12] A second consideration is that while Anderson highly valued character creation and was intensely loyal to these children of his imagination, fundamentally his characterization was subservient to his themes—not that Anderson sought to illustrate a philosophical idea but that a single idea like Hawthorne's "iron rod" seems to determine the nature of all aspects of a particular short story. He once wrote of the artist's "determination to give the tale, the song, the painting, form—to make it true and real to the theme, not to life."[13] Typically, "theme" meant for Anderson that essential quality of a character or of a relationship.

In light of his theoretical views it is not surprising that for Anderson a short story was "The result of a sudden passion. It is an idea grasped whole as one would pick an apple in a orchard."[14] In a narrow sense this concept and the other theoretical views are not precisely predictive of the techniques of his stories: we find less of Kazin's "sense of design" than we discern in the relationship between Stephen Daedelus' classification of forms and the pattern of Joyce's developing fiction as some Joycean students have seen it. Nevertheless, the techniques and recurring patterns in Anderson's stories are not incongruous with his theory.

Three closely related facets of Anderson's short stories deserve special attention here. The first is the characteristic tone of the stories. What Irving Howe in describing the prevailing tone of *Winesburg, Ohio* called "accents of love" accurately describes Anderson's attitude toward his characters.[15] Whether it is the frustrated father in "The Egg," one of the grotesques in *Winesburg,* or the old couple in "The Corn Planting," nearly all of his characters are regarded compassionately. Even the portraits of venal, life destroying businessmen are not without sympathetic touches—the fat, garrulous advertiser in "Two Lovers" who speaks wistfully of living on a farm is a good example.

The narrative voice in Anderson's stories is the chief means of conveying tone. Whether in first person or third person, Anderson's narrator frequently introduces a character by sketching in the contours of his personality. The following quotation is the narrator's description of David (actually William Faulkner thinly veiled) in "A Meeting South": "He told me the story of his ill fortune—a crack-up in an airplane—with a very gentle manly little smile on his very sensitive, rather thin lips. Such things happened. He might well have been speaking of another. I like his tone and I like him."[16] The narrator is providing necessary information, establishing an evaluation of the character supported by the full narrative and revealing the deeply sympathetic feelings of his own character. We may find the narrative voice—a somewhat groping storyteller in an oral tradition—obtrusive at times or even a convention which untenably shatters the epistemological basis of the narrative (how could he know that?); but in the best stories it is an essential instrument in achieving the vital tone.

Finally, the chief character in Anderson's stories tends to be Anderson himself. The most important character type in the stories is the artist. Not only are the stories filled with painters and writers; but also many of his characters are potential artists, storytellers like May Edgely in "Unused" and the doctor in "A Midnight Walk"; and what may be called the "artistic impulse" is shared by an even larger group of characters. In addition to this repetitive dramatization of his adult role, Anderson drew heavily on his specific adolescent experience in Clyde, Ohio, in some of his best stories. Furthermore, to the presence of Ander-

son through the narrative voice and chief character types as indicated above, should be added another pattern of autobiographical characterization which appears in the stories. Anderson simply could not achieve what Joyce called dramatic form. Lincoln and Twain were two of his heroes, but in characterizing them he could only recreate them in his own image, restyling the careers of both of these complex men to suggest his own struggles against Philistia. This is not to say that we can precisely equate Anderson even with his sympathetic narrators. But Anderson's informing vision, while often incisive, confines his characterization. Anderson is not the "God of creation . . . invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." His role and art are better described by Stephen Daedelus' comments about epical form: "The simplest epical form is seen emerging out of lyrical literature when the artist prolongs and broods upon himself as the centre of an epical event and this form progresses till the centre of emotional gravity is equidistant from the artist himself and from others. The narrative is no longer personal. The personality of the artist passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the actions like a vital sea."[17] Anderson's personality so enfolds his characters: they live momentarily but not out of *his* vital sea.

Such extraordinary women as Gertrude Stein, Margaret Anderson, Mary Emmett, and Laura Lou Copenhaver (Eleanor's mother) all contributed to Anderson's view of women. But closer to Anderson were his mother, Emma, and his four wives: Cornelia Lane, Tennessee Mitchell, Elizabeth Prall, and Eleanor Copenhaver. Of course, we can but name here some of those with whom he had conventional, recorded relationships. Many more, often oblique experiences with women are suggested as well as mentioned directly in his writings.

Anderson's image of his mother expressed both in his fiction and in apparently factual statements is best described as idealized and guilt-ridden. In *A Story Teller's Story* Anderson's description of his mother is a mixture of truth and romance. "Mother was tall and slender and once had been beautiful. She had been a bound girl in a farmer's family when she married father, the improvident young dandy. There was Italian blood in her veins and her origin was something of a mystery. Perhaps we never

cared to solve it—wanted it to remain a mystery. It is so wonderfully comforting to think of one's mother as a dark, beautiful and somewhat mysterious woman."[18] We have further his dedication of *Winesburg, Ohio:* "To the memory of my mother, Emma Smith Anderson, whose keen observations on the life about her first awoke in me the hunger to see beneath the surface of lives, the book is dedicated." The most thorough and dependable biographer of Anderson's early life, William Sutton, offers contrasting and qualifying evidence. Emma's mother was German, not Italian and there were apparently no Italian ancestors; the concept of a "bound girl" that Anderson described, for example, in "Death in the Woods," inaccurately describes the affectionate "working-ward" relationship Emma held with the family who kept her from the age of nine until she married; and the incisive wisdom attributed to her in the dedication appears to be incongruous with other glimpses of her personality and the severe limitations of her experiences in her brief life.[19] She was perhaps attractive and stoically patient in shouldering the heavy burdens of work, bearing children and worrying about the family's financial problems; but she was apparently very taciturn; and, other than Anderson's statement, no evidence has appeared to suggest that Emma had any remarkable insight or interest beyond her domestic duties. Irving Howe plausibly suggested why Anderson tended to idealize her: "He had not loved her enough as a boy, he had taken her long silences as tokens of distance, he had failed to see her suffering and endurance—and now he would recompense her even if she could no longer receive his gifts."[20] Her death in 1895, apparently from tuberculosis and overwork, when she was forty-three and Sherwood only eighteen, served to fix his youthful impressions of his mother.

In his analysis of Anderson's four marriages, Howe found the oedipal pattern as the basis for Anderson's marital problems. "Consider the evidence: repeated expressions of aggression toward his father, an intense and guilt-burdened love for his mother, numerous references in his books to unfulfilled sexuality, three marriages to mother-wives and then rebellions against them, strong spiritual attachments to male friends—are not these the traits of the psychic configuration classically described as oedipal?"[21] Howe's assessment of the marriages is subject to important

qualifications. In building his theory that Anderson was drawn toward "mother-managers" but left them because of his "adult wish for an exciting mate," Howe tended to stereotype the wives as "possessive" and "stark" in appearance and to consider inadequately Anderson's valid assertion that the artist's preoccupation with the world of the imagination and his inattention to material demands can make him a difficult mate. In Anderson's case these preoccupations are to be underscored, for his art demanded a high degree of self-absorption and his career was styled by the gesture of turning his back to material pursuits. More to our point here, Cornelia, his first wife, had a literary education; held according to a friend, radical views about literature; and claimed (in context, reliably) that "the spirit of adventure was strong in both of us."[22] Howe, himself, spoke of Tennessee Mitchell's being to Anderson "the epitome of independence and rebelliousness," hardly essential attributes of a mother figure, and acquaintances of Tennessee found her physically attractive.[23] Indeed, none of the four wives should be described as "stark."

Nevertheless, these qualifications do not negate Howe's theory. His analysis aids us both in understanding Anderson's stated views of women and his women characters and in helping to explain why Anderson's last marriage was apparently successful, for Eleanor appears to have been for Anderson both a capable but discreet manager and one who approached the demands of his ideal in a lover.

It would seem from some of his statements that Anderson thought women superior to men. "One does so hate to admit that the average woman is kinder, finer, more quick of sympathy and on the whole so much more first class than the average man."[24] "The women are a hundred times as good as we men. They are more moral, finer."[25] But closer to his true persuasion is the view that women are distinctly different and lower in his esteem than men. By the very act of idealizing women Anderson denies their essential humanity. In 1935 he wrote to Dreiser:

> You see definitely my idea has been, for a long time, that all this talk of men and women being the same, except for a slight physical difference is the purest nonsense. You are never in a room with a woman but that you feel the impulse TO BE. They want beauty of person and I do not think any man, at all male, ever thinks of that. Man does want the thing outside self. I want it in this book [probably *Kit Brandon*], in the building I am making, in a stone wall. I want always to do something to materials in nature. Any such impulse in a woman, who is really feminine, has been put into her by man or to try to compensate for lack of maleness in men.[26]

This view is consistent with that in *Perhaps Women.* He claimed that man's uniqueness was his imagination; women rule in a factual world. Most revealing is a statement made in an unpublished memoir titled "Brother Earl": "I would have gone all on some fool's track with her for I have seldom been a whole-hearted lover of women. I could never really believe in women artists and cannot to this day. Perhaps in some essential part of me—never in the flesh—I have, all of my life, loved men more than I have ever loved women."[27]

Whatever these data might mean to a psychoanalyst, they do reinforce a classification of the salient characteristics of the women in his short fiction. For the most part, his female characters are managers, defenders of the home who entrap men, wholehearted givers to men, frustrated gropers after a higher life, or characters in whom these qualities are combined.

There is awe before the wonders of how women manage men in "Another Wife." In this story a forty-seven-year-old widower doctor is confused about his relationship with a woman of thirty-seven he has met in the hill country. He thinks he may be in love with the woman, but he is unsure and overly impressed with her culture and her "modernity." Finally, they seemingly blunder into an understanding that they will marry. But the confusion is all male: she is understanding, patient, and sure of what she wants.

Other "managers" include Aunt Sally in "A Meeting South"; the doctor's wife in "Pastoral"; Gretchen, the nurse in "The Rabbit-Pen"; the mother in "The Egg"; and the girl in "Nice Girl." The latter three characters can serve here to illustrate the managing pattern. In "The Rabbit-Pen," Anderson's first published short story, Gretchen epitomizes all that Joe Harkness, his wife, Ruth and the writer Fordyce are not. Joe hides behind riches and romantic love, Ruth cannot handle her children, and

Fordyce can neither understand nor come close to women. But Gretchen manages the entire household with super efficiency and aplomb.

The mother in "The Egg" and the girl in "Nice Girl" are contrasting types of capable, ambitious women. The former suggests Anderson's image of his mother. "She was a tall silent woman with a long nose and troubled gray eyes. For herself she wanted nothing. For father and myself she was incurably ambitious" (21). First she induced the father to become an independent chicken farmer. Then she got the idea of having a restaurant business, rented a store building, "decided that our restaurant should remain open at night," and tended the restaurant during the day. The father is willing enough, but the mother determines the family moves. Her competence serves as a foil for his poignant frustration in the story's climax.

"Nice Girl," which appeared in 1936, is noteworthy for a potential new direction for Anderson's stories which was never fully exploited: the new note is the objectivity, the irony, and the narrator's lack of sympathy. Agnes Wilson, the unscrupulous protagonist of the story, is unobtrusive and apparently diffident, but behind the scenes she is cunning and manipulating. She secretly arranges for her brother's bootlegger to be arrested and in the course of the story schemes to get her sister's husband.

In one of his typically powerful images, Anderson described the feelings of a young man at the moment he confronts the necessity of getting married. "Some shadowy, lovely thing seemed fleeing out of him and out of her. He felt like a beast who is playing about at night in a forest (and) has suddenly put his foot into a trap. . . . He was held fast, bound down to the earth, not by desire now, but by a strange hesitating sympathy with the thing that bound her to earth."[28] In other stories, too, sex is the bait in the trap of marriage. In this story, "The Contract," and in "Not Sixteen," Anderson could be sympathetic with the necessity of marriage in our culture and with a woman's needs, for he recognized that behind the "trembling figure" of the girl in "The Contract" stands "the whole fact of organized life." The frustrated would-be lover of Lillian in "Not Sixteen" comes to admire the iron will of Lillian, who is a giving woman but insistent that she will give herself to no one until she is sixteen.

But Anderson could also be very forceful in depicting the trap of marriage. Bill in "His Chest of Drawers" is torn between his sexual needs and the needs of self-respect, beauty, and freedom. The small, slender copywriter is left only a chest of drawers in his own house by his wife and four daughters. When most of that space is taken, he gets drunk to regain the illusion of self-respect. "'After all,' he said, 'they do bestow their favors upon us'" (281). For Hugh Walker, the protagonist in "The Door of the Trap," marriage is a prison. We are led to believe that Walker frees Mary, a young girl in the story, from the jeopardy of being emotionally imprisoned when Walker kisses her and sends her off. At a time when Anderson's own marriage to Tennessee Mitchell was distintegrating, he published "Brothers" (1921), which includes a bitter description of the murderer's marriage: "His wife in particular was like some strange unlovely growth that had attached itself to his body" (35).

The best presentation of the marriage dilemma is also one of the best tales in *Winesburg*, "The Untold Lie." The focus is not on the wife who wants Ray Pearson to "hustle" more but on Ray and what he should tell young Hal Winters about marriage. When the devilish Hal asks him if he should marry Nell Gunther, who is pregnant, there is "only one thing that all his own training and all the beliefs of the people he knew would approve" of his saying.[29] But he cannot tell this "lie."

> As he ran he shouted a protest against his life, against all life, against everything that makes life ugly. "There was no promise made," he cried into the empty spaces that lay about him. "I don't promise my Minnie anything and Hal hasn't made any promise to Nell. I know he hasn't. She went into the woods with him because she wanted to go. What he wanted she wanted. Why should I pay? Why should Hal pay? Why should anyone pay? I don't want Hal to become old and worn out. I'll tell him. I won't let it go on. I'll catch Hall before he gets to town and I'll tell him." (207)

But he remembers also the moments of joy with his thin-legged children as well as the nagging wife and does not tell him; he realizes that "whatever I told him would have been a lie" (209).

The guilt Anderson felt about the exploitation of women by

himself and other men is expressed in the characterization of some of the women in the stories as "feeders." He loved the women who freely gave of themselves like, to name a few, Lillian in "Not Sixteen" (though she postpones giving physically), Kate in "Daughters," Alice in "Like a Queen," the woman in "White Spot," the wife in "Brother Earl," Kate Swift in "The Teacher," and the woman in "A Man's Story." He wrote in *A Story Teller's Story:* "I had always been drawn toward . . . women who gave themselves to physical experiences with grave and fine abandon. . . ."[30]

However, this love is mixed with guilt and the memory of his over-burdened mother. He stated the theme of "Death in the Woods" in observations dated 1937: "It seems to me that the theme of the story is the persistent animal hunger of men. There are these women who spend their whole lives, rather dumbly, feeding this hunger. For years I wanted to write this story."[31] The word *feed* and its different forms reverberate through the story. This paragraph illustrates the point: "Then she settled down to *feed* [all italics mine] stock. That was her job. At the German's place she had cooked the food for the German and his wife. . . . She *fed* them and *fed* the cows in the barn, *fed* the pigs, the horses and the chickens. Every moment of every day, as a young girl, was spent *feeding* something" (123). She also fed her husband sexually, but "that hadn't lasted long after their marriage and after the babies came" (124).

Anderson's artist-writers particularly need a woman to feed on, to give them the constant, selfless love that helps sustain their art. Kate Swift and Elizabeth Willard seek passionately to nurture the incipient artist in George. In "The Yellow Gown" Mildred is as absorbed in Harold the painter as he comes to be in his masterpiece. Most directly, the woman in "A Man's Story" gives her total life to Edgar Wilson, a poet. She leaves her husband; supports Wilson with love and money; and even though mortally wounded, her dying act is to light a fire in the small apartment she shares with him.

Rex Burbank has noted accurately that some of Anderson's best "adult" tales are "similar to the stories of Alice Hindman, Kate Swift, and Louise Bentley in *Winesburg,* tales which portray young women who are defeated by the coarseness, the insensitivity, or the moral cowardice of man and by the hypocrisy behind conventional Puritan moral codes."[32] What his statement omits is the positive qualities of these women. They are intensely alive, more aware and sensitive than those about them, seekers after a higher degree of self-fulfillment. Once again Anderson appears to dramatize in them his concepts of the buried life of his mother. In doing so, he creates his most successful women. Only Alice in "Like a Queen" and Aunt Sally in "A Meeting South," who are unique and seem to draw directly on specific biographical material, have the character dimensions of Elizabeth Willard, Kate Swift, Elsie Leander in "The New Englander," May Edgely in "Unused," Mary Cochran in "Unlighted Lamps," and Rosalind Westcott in the long story "Out of Nowhere into Nothing."

Kate Swift is characterized through contrasts. With her poor complexion, she was not regarded as a pretty woman in Winesburg. But "alone in the night in the winter streets she was lovely" (160), with a straight back and the "features of a tiny goddess" (160). Her usual attitude in the classroom was one of silent, cold sternness. But like many other Anderson characters, when she tells stories, she becomes animated and virtually hypnotizes her students. "Behind a cold exterior the most extraordinary events transpired in her mind" (162). Although people thought of her as an old maid lacking in human feeling, "in reality she was the most eagerly passionate soul among them" (162). When she thinks George may have a spark of genius in his writing, Kate Swift wants "to blow on the spark" (163). She tells him "to know what people are thinking about, not what they say" (173); and on another occasion "a passionate desire to have him understand the import of life, to learn to interpret it truly and honestly, swept over her" (163-4). But her passion becomes physical, both she and George feel the confusion of her intense hopes for him and sexual passion, and she breaks away from George, hitting him in her frustration. Kate Swift is brought to life in but a few pages, but she is one of Anderson's most memorable creations.

Kate Swift is lonely, too; but some of the other questing women we are considering here more keenly seek fulfillment in sex. Before her marriage Elizabeth Willard expressed her restless nature by dreaming of being on the stage, "of joining some company and wandering over the world, seeing always new

faces and giving something out of herself to all people" (46). The second expression of her restlessness was giving herself physically to some man. In these ways and others "there was something she sought blindly, passionately, some hidden wonder in life" (224). But this poor woman, who desperately needed to be loved, found release "but twice in her life, in the moments when her lovers Death and Doctor Reefy held her in their arms" (232).

May Edgely in "Unused" wants to be used, to be connected with the stream of life.[33] Her two sisters are promiscuous, and the males in the family are rough but self-reliant. But May alone competes with the establishment in Bidwell (another Clyde, Ohio). She is an excellent student and berry picker, and she dresses neatly and cares for her mother. However, the year she graduates second in her class, her mother dies; and soon afterwards, in a blatant gesture, she goes into the woods with Jerome Hadley. The town view is that May "who had been treated almost as an equal by the others had wanted to throw something ugly right in their faces:"[34] But they do not know her: she wants only to answer some strong impulse in her personality. The rest of the sad tale is the steady decline and final death of May, victimized by the community.

Rosalind Westcott is warned against men by her taciturn mother; but at the end of "Out of Nowhere into Nothing," she runs toward experience, back to life in a Chicago love affair with a married man which is anything but promising. Elsie Leander, the frustrated title character in "The New Englander," longs for release that is generally sexual in the cornfields of Iowa. And Mary Cochran is the victim of town gossip and her father's inability to communicate. She rejects the young man who misunderstood her actions and determines too late to express her love for her father. The pattern of light imagery in this fine story is epitomized by the image of the title, "Unlighted Lamps." Mary poignantly needed some glimpse of her widower father's buried life to illuminate her own identity, but in critical moments he is unable to light the needed lamp.

All of these women—some of his most successful creations (as Gold noted)—have Elizabeth Willard's need: "Like all the women in the world, she wanted a real lover" (224). That Anderson's women never find the sustained, patient love they need is only one dimension of the limitations of their characterization. Rare, indeed, is the character in all of Anderson's fiction who finds such love.

Love is a vital force which permits the men and women of his fiction to escape, if only for the moment, the barrier of conventions and neuroses and find a kind of fulfillment and wholeness lacking in his grotesques and other gropers; but for Anderson "love" differs importantly between the sexes. He could stress the biological role of women with genuine respect: he seemed awed by the capacity of women to create out of their own bodies. Despite the surfacing of deeply felt antagonistic feelings about women in, for example, the story "Respectibility," Anderson was not a misogynist. And it is extraordinary that all three of his divorced wives continued long after the divorces to regard him with affection. But as has been noted earlier, Anderson denied to feminine sensibility the realm of the creative imagination. In this realm the artist man, who is not different in kind from other craftsmen, can rise to impersonal love and thus combat what he called the "disease of self." He insisted that this kind of love gives power to art: "Few enough people realize that all art that has vitality must have its basis in love."[35] In a letter to his son dated 1927 he spoke of impersonal love and made a rare reference to religion. "In art there is the possibility of an impersonal love. For modern man it is, I think, the only road to God."[36]

At this point one must exercise great care in generalizing. On the one hand, we have these stated views about women; on the other, the created characters. The personal fulfillment of an individual character is not tantamount to successful characterization. Kate Swift, for example, may be successfully realized and still be terribly frustrated. Furthermore, the "extraordinary events" which "transpired in her mind" suggest an imaginative capacity which Anderson would not allow real women.

Personal fulfillment and "rounded" characterization come together in a few of Anderson's artist men—notably but still not definitely in George Willard, who contrasts with the grotesques in his capacity to get outside himself. However, Anderson's women are circumscribed in their development, fixed in repetitive roles, essentially as they have been described here—managers,

defenders of the home, feeders of men, and frustrated gropers after a higher life. These characters reflect both Anderson's bewildered understanding of women and the expressive basis of his art of characterization.

NOTES

1. Herbert Gold, *"Winesburg, Ohio:* the Purity and Cunning of Sherwood Anderson," *Hudson Review,* 10 (Winter 1957-8), 554-5.
2. Lionel Trilling, "Sherwood Anderson," *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking Press, 1950); reprinted, Anchor Books, 1953, pp. 28-9.
3. The structuring of stories around epiphanies appears to be a very significant parallel between their stories; however, Anderson's reading of Chekhov and Turgenev, his attacks on "poison plot," his lyrical rather than epical gifts, and his view of life as a series of luminous but infrequent moments would also have to be considered were a more definite line of influnce from Joyce established.
4. Chester G. Anderson, "The Question of Esthetic Distance," *James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes,* ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 446-454.
5. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), pp. 213-5.
6. James R. Baker, "James Joyce: Esthetic Freedom and Dramatic Art," *Western Humanities Review,* 5 (Winter 1950-1), 30-1. Baker actually is immediately concerned with *Stephen Hero,* but his generalizations noted here hold true in the later work.
7. Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds* (New York: Reynal and Hitchock, 1942), p. 215.
8. Letter to Norman Holmes Pearson, September 13, 1937, in *Letters of Sherwood Anderson,* ed. and with an introduction, Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), p. 387.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 388.
10. Anderson, "Man and His Imagination," in *The Intent of the Artist,* ed. Augusto Centeno (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1941), p. 70.
11. Letter to Carrow De Vries, August 9, 1939, *Letters,* p. 446.
12. Anderson, "A Note on Realism," *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 72.
13. Anderson, "Man and His Imagination," p. 70.
14. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), p. 341.
15. Irving Howe, *Sherwood Anderson* (New York, William Sloan, 1951); reissued, Stanford U. Press, 1966, p. 109.
16. Anderson, "A Meeting South," in *Sherwood Anderson's Short Stories,* ed. Maxwell Geismar (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 170. Unless indicated otherwise, subsequent page references to Anderson's stories are to this edition.
17. Joyce, *Portrait,* pp. 214-5.

18. Anderson, *A Story Teller's Story* (New York B. W. Huebsch, 1924), p. 7.
19. William A. Sutton, "Sherwood Anderson's Formative Years," Diss. Ohio State University, 1943, p. 23. Sutton treats Emma's life before her marriage (1852-1873) on pp. 22-24. An account of the remainder of her life is found on pp. 56-63.
20. Howe, p. 20.
21. *Ibid.,* p. 212.
22. Sutton, *Exit to Elsinore,* Ball State Monograph Number Eleven (Muncie: Ball State U. Press, 1967), pp. 39 and 19.
23. Sutton, "Sherwood Anderson's Second Wife," *Ball State University Forum,* 7 (Spring 1966), 39.
24. Anderson, *A Story Teller's Story,* p. 216.
25. Letter to K. K. (apparently Dwight MacDonald), ?April, 1929, *Letters,* p. 193.
26. Letter to Theodore Dreiser, December 22, 1935, *Letters,* pp. 339-40.
27. Unpublished memoir (not the short story with the same title), Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.
28. Anderson, "The Contract," *Broom,* 1 (December 1921), 148-153, in *The Portable Sherwood Anderson,* ed. and with an introduction, Horace Gregory (New York: Viking, 1949), p. 447.
29. Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio,* ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1960), pp. 205-6. Subsequent references to *Winesburg* are to this edition.
30. Anderson, *A Story Teller's Story,* p. 269.
31. Anderson, statement included with the "Death in the Woods" MSS, the Newberry Library.
32. Rex Burbank, *Sherwood Anderson* (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 88.
33. Anderson, "Unused," *Horses and Men* (New York: Huebsch, 1924), p. 65.
34. *Ibid.,* p. 47.
35. Anderson, "After Seeing George Bellows' Mr. and Mrs. Wase," *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 83.
36. Letter to John Anderson, ?April, 1927, *Letters,* p. 168.

ANDERSON'S TWISTED APPLES AND HEMINGWAY'S CRIPS

PAUL P. SOMERS, JR.

The works of Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway are deeply concerned with innocence, youth and newness, and it follows that they should also be preoccupied with the tragic impact which experience can have upon this innocence. Both men wrote about a wide range of such experiences, some centering around a boy's relationship with his father, others initiating a character into sexual awareness, and still others portraying initiations which have gone badly and crippled the initiate to the point where he is a "twisted apple" or a "crip."

Although this study is chiefly concerned with the third category of the crippling or distorting initiation, it is well to summarize briefly the first two groups as they apply to Anderson and Hemingway. In his first novel, *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916) Anderson dealt with the father-son theme that was to be central to much of his writing. In the most memorable scene of the book, young Sam McPherson's braggart father, Windy, has so boasted of his prowess with the bugle that the citizens of Caxton, Iowa, have agreed to let him blow it in the Independence Day celebration. He continues to brag until everyone, including himself, believes he can do it. At the key moment he is able to produce only a dismal squawk, and Windy and the rest of the family are humiliated. Young Sam McPherson thinks in his shame: "I've got my lesson. . . . You may laugh at that fool Windy, but you shall never laugh at Sam McPherson."[1] He has obviously judged his father harshly and has decided not to emulate him.

Hemingway's stories, "My Old Man," "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," and, Carlos Baker to the contrary, "Indian Camp," present similar situations in which a son has a chance to evaluate

the behavior of a less-than-model father. These stories share with Anderson's novel the perspective of a boy whose faith in his father is shaken or destroyed. Charles Fenton quoted Toronto *Star Weekly* editor Gregory Clark as remembering that Hemingway read Anderson's work "constantly" in Toronto in 1920.[2] Since *Windy McPherson's Son* was Anderson's first published novel, we shall assume that it was part of Anderson's "work" to which Clark refers.

And an impressionable young student of Anderson's writing who was reading the older author's "work" in 1920 would certainly be familiar with *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), in which he set forth a clearly naturalistic interpretation of the importance of sex (and lack of sex) in everyday lives. In "Nobody Knows," George Willard receives from Louise Trunnion, the town "bad girl," a note saying: "I'm yours if you want me." He is nervous at the beginning of their meeting, but natural forces soon take over: "Doubt left him. The whispered tales concerning her that had gone about town gave him confidence. He became wholly the male, bold and aggressive. In his heart there was no sympathy for her."[3] The affair is consummated with little apparent sentiment on either side.

The harshness of initiation, the naturalistic choice of details and analysis of biological drives evident in *Winesburg* stories "The Teacher," "An Awakening," and, especially "Nobody Knows," are evident in Hemingway's "Up in Michigan," which was written in 1921, after he had read *Winesburg, Ohio*.[4] Oscar Cargill wrote: "More violent than Anderson, it is not otherwise different from his work."[5]

The story relates in great detail the rape-seduction of young Liz Coates by a drunken blacksmith, Jim Gilmore. Thematic similarities are evident. Liz's growing desire for Jim is conveyed by rhythmic repetition of the phrase "she liked it." Jim Gilmore is the ultimate embodiment of Anderson's analysis of George Willard's state of mind: "In his heart there was no sympathy for her"—Jim dispatches Liz callously, then falls asleep on top of her. The brutality of the initiation is intensified here, for it is the more vulnerable female who is initiated. (Louise in "Nobody Knows" is more seducer than victim.) Like Anderson in "Nobody Knows," Hemingway emphasizes the harshness of the event by his natural-

istic selection of details: Liz's pain, the coldness and roughness of the wharf upon which she is initiated, and the cold mist coming up from the bay, a detail which is mentioned twice at the story's end. Her vague, girlish expectations have been disappointed, then, and she has been cruelly admitted into a world in which women suffer painful indignities at the big hands of indifferent men.

Going a step beyond this naturalistic treatment of sexual initiation, we enter the exaggerated realm of the grotesque, in which initiation requires higher dues of the initiate. Although Anderson and Hemingway approach this theme of blighted lives similarly, critics have shown surprisingly little inclination to consider the closely related artists together. Nevertheless, their observations are helpful in coping with a parallel approach to initiation. R. W. B. Lewis, for instance mentioned:

> the proposition, implicit in much American writing from Poe to Cooper to Anderson and Hemingway, that the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation *into* society, but, given the character of society, an initiation *away from it:* something I wish it were legitimate to call "denitiation."[6]

In his introductory "Book of the Grotesque," Anderson labels the characters of *Winesburg* "grotesques," because of the way life has twisted them. He makes it plain here that grotesqueness is central to the book. Irving Howe explored this theme, seeing *Winesburg* as "a fable of human estrangement, its theme the loss of love."[7] He wrote further:

> Misogyny, inarticulateness, frigidity, God-infatuation, homosexuality, drunkenness—these are symptoms of their recoil from the regularities of human intercourse. . . . That is why, in a sense, "nothing happens" in *Winesburg*. For most of its figures it is too late for anything to happen, they can only muse over the traumas which have so harshly limited their spontaneity. Stripped of their animate wholeness and twisted into frozen postures of defense, they are indeed what Anderson has called them: grotesques.[8]

And close to Howe's idea of "human estrangement" is David Anderson's analysis of the problem of the Grotesques as being isolation through the inability to communicate.[9]

Although Irving Malin's conception of narcissistic love as being at the center of the New American Gothic will not be used here, it is noteworthy that Malin begins with that seminal statement from "The Book of the Grotesque," quoting the passage about the people who tried to live life by a single truth and in the process became warped into grotesque. Malin does, however, refer indirectly to the initiation process, writing that: "New American Gothic uses grotesques who love themselves so much that they cannot enter the social world except to dominate their neighbors."[10]

Our concern here will be primarily with characters who have been crushed or badly bruised in their attempts to enter the community. Keeping in mind these guidelines as well as Anderson's often demonstrated influence on Hemingway, we will consider certain of Hemingway's characters who have been twisted by a particularly harsh initiation. It is the character's reaction to a dramatic experience, or "trauma," to use Howe's term, which isolates him from society. This thesis is helpful in considering such diverse figures as Hemingway's Krebs and Colonel Cantwell, and Anderson's Wing Biddlebaum.

The grotesqueness of at least three *Winesburg* characters may be regarded as the result of some sort of shocking initiation: Wing Biddlebaum from "Hands," Wash Williams from "Respectability" and Tom Foster from "Drink." All three traumas involve sex in one form or another. In "Hands," Anderson establishes the pattern he is to follow in the other two stories, presenting first the ruined figure of the grotesque, then working backward to the event which dropped him from innocence and shattered him. Solitary Wing Biddlebaum had been driven from a Pennsylvania town where he was a teacher twenty years earlier because the parents objected to his habit of touching his male students. Filthy, misanthropic Wash Williams hates women because his mother-in-law had connived to use the naked body of her daughter, who had several times been unfaithful, to entice Wash to take her back. Less grotesque is happy-ne'er-do-well Tom Foster, who falls in love with Helen White but elects to get drunk (just once) rather than try to satisfy his desire carnally. It seems he was once disgusted by the advances of a prostitute in the wicked city of Cincinnati.

For Hemingway, war is often the traumatic initiation which turns men (generally Nick Adams) into grotesques. Although the three Nick Adams stories, "Now I Lay Me," "A Way You'll Never Be" and "Big Two-Hearted River" deal with one man's solitary effort to retain his sanity in the face of overwhelming pain and shock, one story, "Soldier's Home," throws the character's grotesqueness into sharp relief against the background of the community. Harold Krebs has returned home from World War I, apparently intact physically, and is unable to readjust to the trivial routine of his Oklahoma home town. He is suffering from a classic case of existential alienation and makes no effort to relate to anyone except his sister (a la Holden Caulfield). We know nothing about his war experiences, except that he had destroyed their personal value by telling small lies about them. There is an implication, however, that he is trying to regroup his faculties and does not want to complicate his life. He thinks that he might like to have one of the pretty town girls, but feels that the courtship, the intrigue and the talking would be more trouble than the gratification is worth.

It is only when his parents attempt to interfere in his life that he even contemplates action. When one morning at breakfast his mother suggests he get a job and meet some nice girls, he is stung into answering negatively her rhetorical question: "Don't you love your mother, dear boy?" He is sorry at once, and to mollify her hurt feelings ends up kneeling by the dining-room table and praying with her. When she reminds him that she held him next to her heart when he was a tiny baby, he feels "sick and vaguely nauseated." He resolves then to leave, stopping only to see his sister play indoor baseball before he goes. He is not going to have his life complicated.

Krebs is isolated, then, a grotesque, but by choice. His comment about the town girls applies to his family, as well: "the world they were in was not the world he was in." And his mother further dramatizes the gap, speaking to him in proverbs and cliches:

> "God has some work for every one to do," his mother said. "There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom."
>
> "I'm not in His Kingdom," Krebs said.
>
> "We are all of us in His Kingdom."[11]

Hemingway's merciless use of Rotarian rhetoric to characterize the mother is a good indication that his sympathies are with Krebs.

War is not the only thing that makes grotesques of people in Hemingway's world; in "Sea Change," a brief tale of peace in our time, we watch a man transformed almost instantly into a grotesque. In the story a young man and woman sit in a cafe arguing because she is about to leave him to run off with a lesbian. Bitter at first, he attempts to quote Pope:

> "'Vice is a monster of such fearful mien,'" the young man said bitterly, "that to be something or other needs but to be seen. Then we something, something, then embrace." He could not remember the words.[12]

She objects when he hurls the word "perversion" at her: "No," she said. "We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough." But he weakens as he contemplates her beauty, and at length agrees to take her back after her adventure. As he watches her leave, we learn: "He was not the same-looking man as he had been before he had told her to go."

> "I'm a different man, James," he said to the barman. "You see in me quite a different man."
>
> "Yes, sir?" said James.
>
> "Vice," said the brown young man, "is a very strange thing, James."[13]

As he sits down at the bar, two vaguely sketched but somehow effeminate (The Hemingway hero simply does not say, "Insert some brandy, James.") men move over to make room for him. Thus we have witnessed a sea change wrought on a young man by the nearness of vice in the person of one he loves.[14] And, from the by-play at the bar, we might wonder if he will be content to experience homosexuality vicariously through the young woman. The placing of this young man in Hemingway's gallery of grotesques is suggested by the author's alleged intolerance of homosexuals.

The most conspicuous of Hemingway's grotesques are those whose shattering initiatory experience has come in combat. This particular trauma, shared by Hemingway with his protagonists

Nick Adams, Fred Henry, Colonel Cantwell and others, is the multiple shrapnel wound suffered on the Italian front. This wound, interpreted by Philip Young to be central to Hemingway's life as well as his work, is the most severe shock in a life full of shocks,[15] and the way in which Hemingway and his heroes adjust to it will determine the degree to which they become grotesque. "Now I Lay Me" and "A Way You'll Never Be" show the protagonist shortly after the shock, twisted into a grotesque by his wound.

In "Now I Lay Me," a young man identified only as "Tenente" is lying sleepless in a field hospital, devising mental exercises to occupy his mind and fend off nightmares:

> I myself did not want to sleep because I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way for a long time, ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and go off and then come back.[16]

His initiation into the facts of modern war has been a brutal one, leaving him twisted and grotesque, afraid even to sleep. He tries various strategems for holding his attention to safe subjects, such as imagining he is fishing a particular stream, or making love to some girl (the former proves more satisfying in the long run), or praying for each person he has ever known. Praying is not always effective, but having a light on in the sleeping room is: "If I could have a light I was not afraid to sleep, because I knew my sould would go out of me only if it were dark." He has apparently reached the nihilistic state of the old man in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." He is not as detached as Krebs, however, for he is rather concerned for his roommate, a wounded soldier named John.

In "A Way You'll Never Be," another young officer, Nick Adams, has recovered physically from a similar wound, but we soon realize that he is subject to fits of insanity. His sleeping problem is identical to that of the Tenente in "Now I Lay Me": "I can't sleep without a light of some sort. That's all I have now."[17]

In his madness he is truly grotesque; although he has returned to the front, in an American uniform, claiming to be on a propaganda mission to convince the Italian troops that there will soon be American reinforcements, his irrationality is so conspicuous that his Italian friend, Captain Paravinici, tactfully orders him to the rear. In Nick's babbling he mentions a scene which horrified him: a low yellow house with a long stable by the place where a river widens. For him this has replaced the memory of his wounding as the symbol of psychic horror at his initiation into the knowledge of his own mortality:

> He shut his eyes, and in place of the man with the beard who looked at him over the sights of the rifle, quite calmly before squeezing off, the white flash and clublike impact, on his knees, hot-sweet choking, coughing it onto the rock while they went past him, he saw a long, yellow house with a low stable and the river much wider than it was and stiller.[18]

Here, then, is the ghastly initiation central to Hemingway and his characters, the trauma which turns them in upon themselves for protection and makes them grotesque. Here is the *wound* which Philip Young saw as key to understanding Hemingway and all of the other Nick Adamses: "The man will die a thousand times before his death, but from his wounds he would never recover as long as Hemingway lived and recorded his adventures."[19]

We see the post-initiation Nick again, in the story "Big Two-Hearted River." It would seem that the grotesque created by the initiation wound is well on his way to regaining control of himself, and, as Young pointed out, keeps a tight grip on his emotions and thoughts as he fishes.[20] Part I of the story opens at the burned-over ruins of Seney, a former lumbering town which seems to have some deeper significance to Nick: "Seney was burned, the country was burned over and changed, but it did not matter. It could not all be burned. He knew that."[21] Similarly, the war cannot have made a ruin of all there was to Nick Adams.

He is happy when he has made camp and draws much comfort from the womb-like tent: "Nothing could touch him." But he is not safe, and the sight of mist rising from a swamp makes him look apprehensively to the tent for reassurance. And when he fishes the next morning, he feels the ominous presence of the

swamp, in spite of his meticulous attention to the details of fishing:

> In the swamp the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through, except in patches; in the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any further today.[22]

But this story ends optimistically, on a note that augurs well for the future of Nick Adams. He manages to shake off the nameless dread (brought on, Young wrote, by the swamp's similarity to the spot where he received his wound),[23] and the story ends affirmatively: "There would be plenty of days when he could fish the swamp."

Although some of Hemingway's grotesques, like the post-war Nick Adams, have survived their initiations and are gradually recuperating, two others will not recover and will, apparently, remain as misanthropic as Anderson's Wash Williams. These grotesques are the narrator of "A Natural History of the Dead" and Colonel Cantwell of *Across the River and into the Trees.* It is also in these examples of the lingering shock of initiation that Hemingway's worst handling of faux-naivete occurs.

"The Natural History of the Dead" appeared first in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and then again as a separate story in the collection *Winner Take Nothing* (1933). Even against the background of *Death in the Afternoon,* a book in which Malice is wedded to Viciousness with Grace conspicuously absent, the persona's raw hostility is noteworthy. The story begins as a satire directed at Mungo Park, eighteenth-century naturalist and African explorer, who apparently represents humanists. Nearing death in an African desert, Mungo Park once had a Transcendental insight worthy of Ralph Waldo Emerson or Grace Hemingway; upon beholding a small moss-flower he wrote:

> "Though the whole plant," says he, "was no larger than one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate confirmation of its roots, leaves and capsules without admiration. Can that Being who planted, watered and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears, of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and suffering of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not. Reflections like these would not allow me to despair; I strated up and, disregarding both hunger and fatigue, traveled forward assured that relief was at hand; and I was not disappointed."[24]

It is upon this monument to blind optimism that Hemingway's narrator vents his fury. As the naturalist Mungo Park chose the moss-flower as a natural phenomenon from which to moralize, so the narrator selects battle dead—men, women, horses and mules—as his subject for study . . . and, ostensibly, draws no moral conclusions.

The final third of the story relates a combat incident from World War I in which an army doctor and a lieutenant of artillery have an argument over whether a wounded man should be shot to end his misery. The dispute becomes personal:

> The lieutenant of artillery stood up and walked toward him.
>
> "F—— yourself," he said. "F—— yourself. F—— your mother. F—— your sister. . . ."
>
> The doctor tossed the saucer full of iodine in his face. As he came toward him, blinded, the lieutenant fumbled for his pistol. The doctor skipped quickly behind him, tripped him and, as he fell to the floor, kicked him several times and picked up the pistol in his rubber gloves.[25]

The doctor then directs orderlies to hold the lieutenant while he washes his eyes out with alcohol and water. As the lieutenant screams that he is blinded, the doctor says: "Hold him tight, . . . He is in much pain. Hold him very tight."

And that is the end of the story. The episode is related in the bald, detached manner of the *In Our Time* sketches, but its juxtaposition to the fatuity of the almost Transcendental Christian optimism of Mungo Park represents a highly emotional attempt to elevate the dark vision over the light one.

There is another, more direct attack on Humanists, whom Hemingway describes in a footnote:

> The reader's indulgence is requested for this mention of an extinct phenomenon. The reference, like all references to fashions, dates the story but it is retained because of its mild historical interest and because its omission would spoil the rhythm.[26]

Having pictured war dead, the narrator depicts a natural death, from Spanish influenza, in which the victim empties his bowels at the moment of death, "with one vast, final yellow cataract." He then reflects bitterly:

> So now I want to see the death of any self-called Humanist because a persevering traveller like Mungo Park or me lives on and maybe yet will live to see the actual death of members of this literary sect and watch the noble exits that they make.

This is a most uncharitable thought, remarkable even in the midst of the gore of *Death in the Afternoon.* The narrator's hostility, which is also the author's seems to be directed in part at the reader, and the result is the nasty faux-simplicity of the scene, first appearing as a vignette in *In Our Time,* in which the baggage mules are pushed into the water to drown and the gratuitous bloodthirstiness of the passage about putting your fist into the bullethole. Perhaps Hemingway is really pleading for the sort of reassuring sign granted Mungo Park. But all he got was bloated corpses.

If a quick look at *Death in the Afternoon* reveals the narrator of "A Natural History of the Dead" to be an angry, baffled Ernest Hemingway, beleagured by leftist critics and worried about events in Spain, then at least the character of Colonel Cantwell in *Across the River and into the Trees* provides a fictional disguise, no matter how flimsy, for the raw ego of the author.

The main character is Colonel Richard Cantwell, at fifty aged perhaps beyond maturity. Souped up with nitro-glycerine and seconal, he spends the last two days of his life in Venice, seeing old friends, eating and drinking at the Gratti, making love to his beautiful young mistress Renata, revisting the site of his World War I wounding, and shooting ducks. His age and maturity are emphasized by two young foils, T/5 Jackson, his army driver, and Renata herself. Jackson plays the innocent-abroad role which Hemingway formerly reserved for his heroes. For example, to explain the abundant madonnas among Italian paintings, he formulates a theory that Italian painters painted so many madonnas because they were "big bambini lovers like all Italians." And he also says: "St. Mark's square is where the pigeons are and where they have that big cathedral that looks sort of like a moving picture palace, isn't it?"[27] Renata, while experienced in cultural matters, is innocent of military affairs and thus provides Cantwell with interminable opportunities to expound on that subject.

Colonel Cantwell demonstrates his willful recklessness of his own health in the second chapter, by dosing himself with nitroglycerine to pass a cardiograph test. In a bit of by-play, his friend the army doctor discusses with Cantwell the Colonel's ten-odd concussions. Cantwell displays further idiosyncratic behavior in Chapter Three, as he recalls a previous visit to Fossalta, which he had helped defend in World War I. At that time, a few weeks prior to the events in the novel, he had performed a bizarre ritual:

> The river was slow and a muddy blue here, with reeds along the edges, and the Colonel, no one being in sight, squatted low, and looking across the river from the bank where you could never show your head in daylight, relieved himself in the exact place where he had determined, by triangulation, that he had been badly wounded thirty years before.[28]

A few pages later, Hemingway explains the devil which has been exorcised in this rite involving "merde, money, blood," and iron:

> He was hit three times that winter, but they were all gift wounds; small wounds in the flesh of the body without breaking bone, and he had become quite confident of his personal immorality since he knew he should have been killed in the heavy artillery bombardment that always preceded the attacks. Finally he did get hit *properly and for good.* (Italics mine) No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of the immorality he thought. Well, in a way, that is quite a lot to lose.[29]

Here, then, where Cantwell "grew up," is the ultimate initiation: initiation into the knowledge of one's own mortality. It is the violence of this initiation which has shaped Colonel Cantwell into the grotesque whose final days take up the remainder of the novel. Hemingway presents the traumatic cause first, and briefly, because his concern is with the mature, scarred veteran, not for whatever apple-cheeked youth Richard Cantwell was before that fateful shellburst. He had already told *that* story several times. Little attention is paid to the actual wounding, because we have before us the noble ruins of Colonel Richard Cantwell, which

tell us much more about life and experience. He was hit "properly and for good," we are told, and we soon see how true this is.

His physical appearance, for example, speaks eloquently of his painfully accumulated experience, and he studies the legend of his own face with some distaste (distaste which is obviously *not* shared by Hemingway):

> It looks as though it had been cut out of wood by an indifferent craftsman, he thought.
>
> He looked at the different welts and ridges that had come before they had plastic surgery, and at the thin, only to be observed by the initiate, lines of the excellent plastic operations after head wounds.
>
> . . . But, Christ what an ugly man.
>
> He did not notice the old used steel of his eyes nor the small, long extending laugh wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, nor that his broken nose was like a gladiator's in the oldest statues. Nor did he notice his basically kind mouth which could be truly ruthless.[30]

He expects others to recognize the fact of his initiation, too, as evinced by the scene in which the two Fascist youths insult him. When he turns on them and they flee without a fight, he wonders at their folly:

> But couldn't those badly educated youths realize what sort of animal they were dealing with? Don't they know how you get to walk that way? Nor any of the other signs that combat people show as surely as a fisherman's hands tell you if he is a fisherman from the creases from the cord cuts.
>
> It is true they saw only my back and ass and legs and boots. But you'd think they might have told from the way they must move.[31]

Certain of the uninitiated are apparently unable to recognize the signs by which the coiled-steel dangerousness of the initiated may be known.

But for Renata, an honorary member of the Order, a mock-serious fellowship comprised of the Colonel and some of his Italian war veteran cronies, there is no difficulty in identifying the initiated. For her, Cantwell's emblem of suffering is his hand, "which had been shot through twice, and was slightly misshapen."[32] She tells him of a dream in which she confused his hand with the hand of Our Lord. Cantwell asks her if it was a hand like his own, "looking at the misshapen hand with distaste, and remembering the two times that had made it that way.[33] " 'I love your hand,' she says, 'and all your other wounded places.' "[34] And later, when they make love in the gondola, her obsession with the hand and her desire to be touched by it are reminiscent of Marie Morgan's fascination with Harry's "loggerhead" stump of an arm. In both instances, as in "The Sea Change" and "Light of the World," Hemingway has illustrated the strange, sometimes perverse attraction which the experienced hold for the innocent.

The Colonel, predictably, feels a fellowship with the grotesque, with the wounded. Noticing the glass eye of Arnaldo, the waiter at the Gritti, he reflects:

> I wish he did not have to have that glass eye, the Colonel thought. He only loved people, he thought, who had fought or been mutilated.
>
> Other people were fine and you liked them and were good friends; but you only felt true tenderness and love for those who had been there and had received the castigation that everyone receives who goes there long enough.
>
> So I'm a sucker for crips, he thought, drinking the unwanted drink. And any son of a bitch who has been hit solidly, as every man will be if he stays, then I love him.[35]

"I'm a sucker for crips," Cantwell thinks pithily, echoing the sentiment from Anderson's "Paper Pills" in *Winesburg:* "Only the few know the sweetness of the twisted apples."[36] But Hemingway has reversed the direction of the dramatic interaction in *Winesburg:* Rather than featuring the normal George Willard, with the grotesques fluttering about him, Hemingway focuses on the grotesque Cantwell and places secondary emphasis on the "normal" characters. And one of these "normal" characters, T/5 Jackson, receives much of both Cantwell's and Hemingway's score.

Late in the novel, we gain further insight into Cantwell's evaluation of the type of battlefield initiation which so profoundly marked him. Recalling a crack regiment he once commanded, and how it had been decimated in battle, he thinks how half of the men had been killed and nearly all the rest wounded. He enumerates several types of wounds and remarks: "All the

wounded were wounded for life."[37] And so it has been with the Colonel; he has been initiated brutally, and the initiation has left him a scarred grotesque who warily refuses to sit with his back to a door, and who is very fond of others who share his grotesqueness. His grotesqueness may be measured by comparing him with Robert Jordan, who at an earlier stage in the evolution of a fighting man said: "But I won't keep account of people I have killed as though it were a trophy record or a disgusting business like notches in a gun."[38] Colonel Cantwell, however, has notched his gun with "One hundred and twenty-two sures. Not counting possibles," and admits to no remorse.[39] This is a rather chilling hint as to just how much Hemingway and his hero have been changed before they are changed, to paraphrase Donne.

To take the overview in conclusion, it is not surprising, granted the philosophical and attitudinal similarities, that Hemingway should approach initiation in a manner reminiscent of Anderson. Even subtracting the *givens*—the universal appeal of the initiation theme; their romantic emphasis on the child; their calculated choice of the naive point of view; their mutual revolt against midwestern Victorianism and the details of Hemingway's relationship with his father, particularly the elder Hemingway's suicide—it is evident that in Sam McPherson and George Willard, Anderson provided a good model for Nick Adams. As far as the naturalistic treatment of sex is concerned, it is significant that "Up in Michigan" was written in 1921, when impressions of *Winesburg, Ohio* were still fresh in Hemingway's mind. For the rest, their similar fascination with the grotesque—Dr. Reefy's "twisted apples" and Colonel Cantwell's "crips"—is at once a manifiestation of the naturalistic obsession with the abnormal and the romantic predilection for the bizarre.

Finally, Hemingway's "Today is Friday," published in 1926,[40] reduces the Crucifixion to everyday terms by contemporizing the centurions present at the event to the point of having one say that Christ "looked good in there today," as one might remark of a boxer or a pitcher or some other athlete. Surely this is more than a coincidental echo of Anderson's Dr. Parcival, who says in "The Philosopher," published seven years earlier in *Winesburg, Ohio:* "everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified."[41]

NOTES

1. Sherwood Anderson, *Windy McPherson's Son* (Chicago and London, 1965), p. 25.
2. Charles A. Fenton, *The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway: The Early Years* (New York, 1954), p. 105.
3. Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio,* ed., John H. Ferres (New York, 1966), p. 60.
4. Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York, 1969), p. 573. See also Ernest Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York, 1938), p. v.
5. Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America: Ideas on the March* (New York, 1959), p. 353.
6. R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1955), p. 115.
7. Irving Howe, *Sherwood Anderson* (London, 1951), p. 101.
8. Howe, p. 99.
9. David D. Anderson, "The Grotesques and George Willard," in *Winesburg, Ohio,* ed. John H. Ferres (New York, 1966), pp. 423-424.
10. Irving Malin, *New American Gothic* (Carbondale, Illinois, 1962), p. 6.
11. Hemingway, *Short Stories,* p. 151.
12. Hemingway, p. 399.
13. Hemingway, p. 401.
14. Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (New York, 1966), p. 178n.
15. Young, pp. 29-54.
16. Hemingway, *Short Stories,* p. 363.
17. Hemingway, p. 407.
18. Hemingway, p. 417.
19. Young, p. 54.
20. Young, p. 43-48.
21. Hemingway, *Short Stories,* pp. 210-211.
22. Hemingway, p. 20.
23. Young, p. 54.
24. Hemingway, *Short Stories,* p. 440.
25. Hemingway, *Short Stories,* p. 448.
26. Hemingway, p. 445n.
27. Ernest Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees* (New York, 1950), p. 29.
28. Hemingway, p. 18.
29. Hemingway, p. 33.
30. Hemingway, p. 112.
31. Hemingway, pp. 187-188.
32. Hemingway, p. 55.
33. Hemingway, p. 84.
34. Hemingway, p. 141.
35. Hemingway, p. 71.
36. Sherwood Anderson, p. 36.
37. Hemingway, p. 242.
38. Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York, 1940), p. 304.
39. Hemingway, *Across the River,* p. 123.
40. Baker, p. 593.
41. Sherwood Anderson, p. 57.

EDGAR A. GUEST: TWENTIETH CENTURY PARADOX

FRANCES EWERT

A newspaperman who wrote over 30,000 poems, the apothesis of traditional American values who spent his boyhood in England, a homespun philosopher who hymned the humble pleasures of life while living affluently even during the Great Depression, a nineteenth century thinker who achieved a Horatio Alger success in the twentieth century—this is the paradox of Edgar A. Guest. Familiarly known to millions of readers as the Poet of the Plain People, he remained on the payroll of the *Detroit Free Press* as a reporter from 1895 until his death in 1959. He drawled like a Hoosier although he was born in England and did not migrate to this country until he was nine years old. The perfect dinner table with its cloth soiled by "greasy little hands,"[1] a lemon pie baked by his loving wife, a house littered with toys exemplify the simple joys of living he describes although he lived in a well-staffed manor on the edge of the Detroit Golf Club and summered at his home in the exclusive Pointe Aux Barques area. Home, God, Work, and Patriotism, symbols of old-fashioned Americanism, were dominant themes in his poetry when these symbols were anathema to many. Comparable to the paradox of his career and life style was the public reception of his work; attracting an audience of over 3,000,000 people, Edgar A. Guest was either scorned or ignored by the critics.

Yet from this antithetical background emerges a traditional American figure, the poet of the common people. Colonial America had its Michael Wigglesworth who in his best seller, *The Day of Doom,* versified Calvinistic theology in plain language for the masses. The Revolutionary period had Phillip Freneau writing local color verse and Joel Barlow with his unfinished American

epic. Popular poetry flourished during the nineteenth century, with Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Will Carleton, and James Whitcomb Riley, a favorite of Edgar A. Guest. And the twentieth century has produced "Eddie" Guest, now succeeded by the poet-singer, Rod McKuoen. All of these poets express popular sentiments appealing to the hearts, not the minds of people, in homely language. All have been damned by literary critics. Eddie Guest particularly has been the butt of their scorn, with his works being cited as bad examples of poetry. Jack Bakeless called him "the inventor of mass-production lyric"[2] and Benjamin DeCasthe asserted his verses are "a wooden succession of monotonous iambics."[3]

However, the jibes of the critics never bothered Edgar Guest. Not only was he aware of his devoted following, but his source of pride and satisfaction was being an active journalist. Royce Howe in his biography says of him:

> "To those who know him intimately, it is an article of faith that if somehow Eddie Guest were required to surrender all of his professional designations save one, he would chose to be a newspaperman."[4]

His son, Bud, reaffirmed this when he told an interviewer from the *Detroit Free Press* in 1966 that his father:

> ". . . never claimed to be a 'poet' anyway, and he knew, even better than most of the critics, that what he wrote was not poetry. He wrote for the heart, rather than the mind. He was only a newspaperman who had been working at his craft since he was 14 years old."[5]

Guest's newspaper career began in 1895 through a chance encounter with a *Free Press* accountant. While running errands for the Robbins pharmacy, where he worked after school to supplement the family income, Guest met Charlie Hoyt, who offered him a job as a boy-of-all-work in his office. In 1897, Guest was promoted to the editorial department, where he sorted mail and the exchange papers. On the death of his father the following year, Eddie dropped out of high school and became a full time cub reporter. Although that was the end of his formal schooling, Guest became a well-educated man through his extensive reading focusing on Shakespeare, poetry, and philosophy and through

his ability to interpret experience. As a reporter, he first covered the labor beat, then the waterfront, and finally the police beat. He was an outstanding reporter; his perceptiveness and facility for instilling confidence in people scored him several scoops. He uncovered a jewel theft aboard a Detroit and Cleveland steamer and an epidemic of food poisoning in a hotel which the police had tried to hush. In 1898, Guest became the assistant exchange editor, a position which bored him but did inspire him to try writing some fillers himself. Thus, his phenomenal career as a journalist-poet was launched when the Sunday editor, Arthur Mosely, printed his first poem with by-line in the December 11th, 1898, edition of the *Detroit Free Press:*

NIGGAH GIT TO WORK

"Git to work, yo' lazy niggah
'Stead of sittin' 'round,
'Fears yo' a mighty fond of whittlin'
When de snow's upon the ground.

Clar out ob dat cozy corner,
Take yo' shobbel and yo' broom;
Got to get dem sidewalds shobeled—
Can't git at none too soon.

Yo' ain't libin' now in Dixie,
War de snow am mighty small;
Here yo' has to turn out early
Ey yo' wants to work at all.

Git to work, yo' shiftless niggah,
Show us ob what stuff yo's made,
Throw aside yo' knife and shingle
Purty soon yo' chance'll fade.

Den yo'll wich yo' heeded mammy,
Wich yo'd taken her advice;
When older folks are eatin' possum,
Yo'll hab nothin' else but rice."[6]

Soon he had a weekly column, called 'Chaff'. Then on January 12, 1905, Guest began his daily column entitled 'Breakfast Table Chat' and started the practice of leading it off with a poem. It was written under a variety of names: A. M. Benedict, Charlie

the Barber, and Mr. Nutt, a name coined for him by the famous *Free Press* cartoonist, Fred Nash. With the exception of three years, he continued to write this column until his death in 1959, and at the apex of his career, his verses were syndicated in over 300 newspapers throughout the country. It was only in 1931 when Eddie Guest mysteriously took to his bed with an ailment still unexplained but miraculously cured by the newsmen's expletives of his co-worker, Malcolm Bingay, and again in 1953 and 1954, when he underwent major heart surgery, that he failed to meet his deadlines. Excluding the 30 poems selected by his staff colleagues published posthumously, his last verse was printed in the August 8th edition of the *Detroit Free Press:*

NO TIME FOR REGRETTING[7]
(in its entirety)

I will spend my time in talking
And I'll spend my time in joking
I will spend a few hours walking
And a few hours idly smoking
I will spend my time in playing
When I might be money getting
But I'm very frank in saying
That I'll spend no time regretting.

I will spend my time debating
And I'll spend some time in fishing;
For a bite, I don't mind waiting.
And I'll spend some time in wishing,
I will spend some time in gazing
When the summer sun is setting—
At the western skies a blazing,
But I'll spend no time regretting.

When a thing is done, that ends it;
I am through with it for good,
Since regretting never mends it,
I'll go right on sawing wood.
I will waste my time in doing
Things that give me pleasure keen
Not regretting and reviewing
Anything that might have been.

Although Guest did not rely so heavily on dialogue in his later works, neither subject matter nor the simple meter changed much during the years.

Using the same material and approach which characterizes his poetry, Edgar Guest began his lecture and radio career. He followed the speaking circuit throughout the nation, many engagements in the Midwest. But appearing before so many women's clubs and the pressure of broadcasting prompted him to quit the lecture tours. By 1932, he had become a national network radio star. And for a brief time, he hosted a television show originating in New York City. However, in his later years, he limited himself to his newspaper column and lectures in and about the Detroit area.

While pursuing these many activities, Edgar Guest still found time to supervise the publication of his poems. His brother, Harry, printed the first book, *Home Rhymes,* on an attic press in 1909. In 1916 he formed a lifelong association with The Reilly & Britton Publishing Company of Chicago with the first edition of *A Heap o' Livin'*. This printing of 3,500 copies sold out immediately, followed by a second run of 25,000 copies, and 100,000 copies in each successive edition. The same publishing company printed 25 more volumes of his poetry including *The Collected Verse (1934)* now in its twentieth edition. His prodigious publications also included four books of prose,[8] four gift books entitled *Mother, Home, Friends,* and *You,* many articles for popular magazines, and greeting card verses.

Rarely has a newspaperman achieved such an extraordinary success using the media of poetry. And rarely has a 20th century Englishman become so thoroughly Americanized as Edgar Guest. Few people meeting the small, pale, wiry man realized that his birthplace was Birmingham, England, where he attended school until he was ten years old. Edgar was born in 1881, the fourth child of Julia and Edwin Guest of 3 Beacon Terrace. When his copper brokerage business failed in the panic of 1890, Edwin set out for Detroit with the other children, Sidney, Florence Julia, Edgar, and Harry, all of them living with her parents. Edgar Guest later recalled that his Grandmother Wayne used to scold him for putting his feet on the tables in the stuffy Victorian home.

His reaction to these admonitions is revealed in one of his early poems, 'Always Saying Don't':

. . . .

When I'm older in my ways
An' have little boys to raise,
Bet I'll let 'em race an' run
An' not always spoil their fun;
I'll not tell 'em all along
Everything they like is wrong,
An' you bet your life I won't
All the time be sayin' "don't".[9]

. . . .

He recalled more fondly his Grandfather Wayne who had invented a completely automatic machine for making pen nibs and who used to make a gyroscope perform for him in the parlor. Later he was equally fascinated with the tinkerings of a close friend he made in Detroit, Henry Ford.

In the sports world, Edgar Guest quickly acquired the American enthusiasm for baseball, golf, and football. His love for baseball obscured his boyhood liking for cricket. At one time he considered becoming a professional baseball player but finally settled on sandlot games with his son, Bud, and watching the Tigers. His favorite sport was golf, which he played when he was well over seventy until his dimming eyesight forced him to put his clubs away. He was a zealous supporter of the football team at the University of Michigan which both his son and daughter attended. Fishing and gardening were other pastimes he enjoyed.

A partial list of his clubs and affiliations also shows how immersed Edgar Guest became in the American life-style: the Detroit Athletic Club, the Detroit Golf Club, the Boys' Club of Detroit, the Players, YMCA, the Society of Arts and Crafts, the Detroit Historical Society, a 33rd Degree Mason, a Kentucky Colonel, an honorary member of Oklahoma's Otoe Indian tribe, and the American Press Humorists organization. Likewise, some of the honors awarded him reveal Guest's complete absorbtion with his adopted country—it was not until 1902 on his becoming twenty-one that Edgar Guest became a United States citizen, his first legal act in this country. He received not only a honorary

high school diploma but a Doctor of Humanities from Wayne State University in 1936 and a Doctor of Laws from Michigan State University in 1952. By gubernatorial proclamation, February 14th, 1936 was designated "Eddie Guest Day" in Michigan. In 1951, Mayor Cobo of Detroit declared his birthday, August 20th, an official Eddie Guest Day and commissioned John Coppin to paint his portrait which now hangs in the Community Arts Building of Wayne State University. In 1952, the Michigan legislature voted him Poet Laureate of the state of Michigan for the enjoyment he had offered people of the state "in times of stress, his subtle humor and sound homespun philosophy" and for depicting "the daily lives of the people of the state of Michigan, and reflecting the American principles on which the United States of America is founded."[10] Two other recognitions Edgar Guest prized highly were being named the outstanding newspaperman of 1955 by the Elks Lodge and having a Detroit grammar school named after him. It is ironic that an English born poet-journalist belittled by the critics should be singled out for so many American distinctions.

Examining his awards and activities more closely indicates how totally Midwestern was Guest's orientation to the United States, and especially to Detroit. Except for the summer months at his cottage, he was always homesick for his hometown and family when travelling. While commuting to Chicago for his early radio show and New York for his brief TV show, Guest arranged his schedule to allow minimal time away from home. On a yacht trip to Yucatan with Charles F. Kettering of General Motors, he wirelessed home so often, his wife, Nellie, cabled him to come home to save expenses. In 1935, the Universal Studio induced him to Hollywood to become a film star at $3,500 per week. This sojourn lasted only from October to January, and he never made a film. The aimlessness and extravagance of the California life was alien to his Midwestern values and he was homesick for Detroit.

Edgar Guest returned to the familiar surroundings he loved, never again to take an extended trip. And his surroundings were pleasant. From the garden back of his mansion with its luxurious appointments, Americana collection, library of rare books, and staff of devoted English servants, he could walk to the elite

Detroit Golf Club and meet his cronies for a game. His poetry indicated he was a great friend of the common people and he was, in that his sanctimonious verse struck a responsive chord in their hearts. However, for close companionship, Guest hobnobbed with wealthy Detroit society—newspaper publishers, automobile magnates, and also many clergyman One of his closest friends was Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale University, who had a summer home at Pointe Aux Barques with its own private golf course.

Superficially the incongruity between his life style and poems suggest Edgar Guest was a fraud. Actually he was a sincere, engaging, and amiable person driven by a dread of poverty. An old friend, J. P. McEvoy described his as being "simple as a child, common as an old shoe, friendly as a puppy, foolish like a fox."[11] It was also said about him:

> ". . . no cynic writing with his tongue in his cheek could appeal for so long to so enormous a public—a public which has bought over some 3,000,000 copies of his books. . . . He simply likes simple people and simple things and knows how to say so in uninspired but competent verse. . . ."[12]

Edgar Guest himself stated his own uncomplicated view of life:

> "For a good many years I worked away on the *Detroit Free Press* conducting a daily column headed 'Breakfast Table Chat'. I think I did good work. At least I did the best I know how. But outside of a comparatively limited circle, I was unknown.
>
> But I was happy. I had three things necessary to happiness—Home, God, and Work.
>
> The word home carries alot with it, but mainly it carries the idea of love. If love isn't there, it isn't home—just a place of shelter, but that isn't the real harbor. . . .
>
> That's one third of the needed thing, and it seems a mighty big third. Another third is God. Everybody needs God.
>
> . . . The three things that make for happiness are, of course, that same things that sustain a man in his dark hours—Home, God, and Work. You can do alot with those three things, most anything, in fact."[13]

He assessed his writings as:

> "Rhymes, doggerel, anything you like to call it. I just take the simple, everyday things that happen to me and figure out that they probably happen to a lot of other people, and then I make simple rhymes out of 'em and people seem to like them."[14]

And Edgar Guest did alot with "Home, God, Work," and "everyday things." He lectured, he broadcast, he wrote essays, articles and over 30,000 poems about them. His poetry is uniformly consistent in both form and content. He used the iambic pentatmeter line in rhymed stanzas of four, six, or eight lines, occasionally writing quatrains. He always used plain everyday language, frequently dialect. He moralized directly from concrete subjects and everyday happenings appealing to the emotions, not the intellects of his readers. He avoided disagreeable subjects and social problems—the horrors of two major World Wars, the sufferings of people caused by technology—he left those subjects to elitist poets, W. H. Auden, T. S. Elliot, and others. Rather, he simply reiterated his idealistic concepts about Home, God, and Work, finding his material in the activities of his friends' and his own family life. His exposing his private life to the public pleased millions but shocked his reserved English mother. She was ashamed of his describing his reactions to Janet's cutting a tooth, Nellie's getting a new gown, or the death of one of his children. But home was the center of his life. In his most frequently quoted poem (erroneously known as 'A Heap o' Livin'), inspired by a casual conversation with some men building a house next to his, Edgar Guest sentimentalizes his feelings about 'HOME':

HOME[15]

It takes a heap o'livin' in a house t' make it home,
A heap o' sun an' shadder, an' ye sometimes have t' roam
Afore ye really 'preciate the things ye lef' behind,
An' hunger for 'em somehow, with 'em allus on yer mind.
It don't make any difference how rich ye get t' be,
How much yer chairs an' tables cost, how great yer luxury;
It ain't home t' ye, though it be the palace of a king,
Until somehow yer soul is sort o' wrapped round everything.

Home ain't a place that gold can buy or get up in a minute;
Afore it's home there's got t' be a heap o' livin' in it;
Within the walls there's got t' be some babies born, and then
Right there ye've got t' bring 'em up t' women good, an' men;
And gradjerly, as time goes on, ye find ye wouldn't part
With anything they ever used—they've grown into yer heart:
The old high chairs, the plaything, too, the little shoes they wore
Ye hoard; an' if ye could ye'd keep the thumbmarks on the door.

Ye've got t' weep t' make it home, ye've got t' sit an' sigh
An' watch beside a loved one's bed, an' know that death is nigh;
An' in the stillness o' the night t' see Death's angel come,
An' close the eyes o' her that smiled, an' leave her sweet voice dumb.
Fer these are scenes that grip the heart, an' when yer tears are dried,
Ye find the home is dearer than it was, an' sanctified;
An' tuggin' at ye always are the pleasant memories
O' her that was an' is no more—ye can't escape from these.

Ye've got t' sing an' dance for years, ye've got t' romp an' play,
An' learn t' love the things ye have by usin' 'em each day;
Even the roses 'round the porch must blossom year by year
Afore they 'come a part o' ye, suggestin' someone dear
Who used t' love 'em long ago, an' trained 'em jes' t' run
The way they do, so's they would get the early mornin' sun;
Ye've got t' love each brick an' stone from cellar up t' dome:
It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home.

The "someone dear" and the "babies" he refers to are, of course, his beloved wife, Nellie, and his four children, only two of whom survived, Bud and Janet. Nellie, whom he met at a wedding reception, became his wife in 1902. Their marriage was extremely compatible, and he never completely recovered from the void in his life when she died after a lingering illness in 1945. Edgar Guest's friends, children, and grandchildren tried to keep his home a bustling "heap o' living," but never completely erased the memory of his loss. She had been a delightful companion and

an inexhaustible source of inspiration for him. He dedicated numerous books to her and she was the subject of countless poems—her inability to balance her checking account, the men she could have married, her spoiling the children, her silver-tinged hair, the bills she accumulated buying gowns for herself and Janet. It was this trivia of everyday living in which Edgar Guest found pleasure and the inspiration for his verses.

Nellie also stimulated his abiding faith in God. His first sectarian affiliation was with the Swedenborgians; his Mother had impressed upon him the need to participate in the church and he pumped the bellows of the pine organ and attended Sunday School faithfully in England. On his marriage to Nellie Crossman, he joined the Episcopal church. Although he did not attend services regularly, he practiced his faith in his daily living and had many close friends among the Detroit clergy: Rev. C. B. Allen, Rabbi Leo M. Franklin, and Cardinal Mooney. His religious feelings were far more akin to the traditional beliefs of early nineteenth century than to the despairing outlook of post-Darwin theology, as the following poems illustrate:

MY RELIGION[16]

My religion's lovin' God, who made us, one and all,
Who marks, no matter where it be, the humble sparrow's fall;
An' my religion's servin' Him the very best I can
By not despisin' anything He made, especially man!
It's lovin' sky an' earth an' sun an' birds an' flowers an' trees,
But lovin' human beings more than any one of these.

I ain't no hand at preachin' an' I can't expound the creeds;
I fancy every fellow's faith must satisfy his needs
Or he would hunt for something else. An' I can't tell the why
An' wherefore of the doctrines deep—and what's more I don't try.
I reckon when this life is done and we can know His plan,
God won't be hard on anyone who's tried to be a man.

My religion doesn't hinge on some one rite or word;
I hold that any honest prayer a mortal makes is heard;
To love a church is well enough, but some get cold with pride
An' quite forget their fellowmen for whom the Saviour died;
I fancy he best worships God, when all is said an' done,
Who tries to be, from day to day, a friend to everyone.

If God can mark the sparrow's fall, I don't believe He'll fail
To notice us an' how we act when doubts an' fears assail;
I think He'll hold what's in our hearts above what's in our creeds,
An' judge all our religion here by our recorded deeds;
An' since man is God's greatest work since life on earth began,
He'll get to Heaven, I believe, who helps his fellowman.

He restates his unquestioning acceptance of Heaven and a Divine plan in:

IF THIS WERE ALL[17]

If this were all of life we'll know,
If this brief space of breath
Were all there is to human toil,
If death were really death,
And never should the soul arise
A finer world to see,
How foolish would our struggles seem,
How grim the earth would be!

If living were the whole of life,
To end in seventy years,
How pitiful its joys would seem!
How idle all its tears!
There'd be no faith to keep us true,
No hope to keep us strong,
And only fools would cherish dreams—
No smile would last for long.

How purposeless the strife would be
If there were nothing more,
If there were not a plan to serve,
An end to struggle for!
No reason for a mortal's birth
Except to have him die—
How silly all the goals would seem
For which men bravely try.

There must be something after death;
Behind the toil of man
There must exist a God divine
Who's working out a plan;

And this brief journey that we know
As life, must really be
The gateway to a finer world
That some day we shall see.

Minor themes, childhood, nature, death, and patriotism of which he frequently writes also testify to his unqualified faith in the divinity of God and his being an active force in the affairs of man. His feeling that childhood is the blessed age of innocence reminiscent of William Cullen Bryant is exemplified in:

THE HAPPIEST DAYS[18]

You do not know it, little man,
In your summer coat of tan
And your legs bereft of hose
And your peeling, sunburned nose,
With a stone bruise on your toe,
Almost limping as you go
Running on your way to play
Through another summer day,
Friend of birds and streams and trees,
That your happiest days are these.

Little do you think to-day,
As you hurry to your play,
That a lot of us, grown old
In the chase for fame and gold,
Watch you as you pass along
Gayly whistling bits of song,
And in envy sit and dream
Of a long-neglected stream,
Where long buried are the joys
We possessed when we were boys.

Little chap, you cannot guess
All your sum of happiness;
Little value do you place
On your sunburned freckled face;
And if some shrewd fairy came
Offering sums of gold and fame
For your summer days of play,
You would barter them away
And believe that you had made
There and then a clever trade.

Time was we were boys like you,
Bare of foot and sunburned, too,
And, like you, we never guessed
All the riches we possessed;
We'd have traded them back then
For the hollow joys of men;
We'd have given them all to be
Rich and wise and forty-three.
For life never teaches boys
Just how precious are their joys.

Youth has fled and we are old.
Some of us have fame and gold;
Some of us are sorely scarred,
For the way of age is hard;
And we envy, little man,
You your splendid coat of tan,
Envy you your treasures rare,
Hours of joy beyond compare;
For we know, by teaching stern,
All that some day you must learn.

Edgar Guest idealized nature as the handiwork of a God in a transcendental attitude. However, "For Fish and Birds" might well serve as a prayer for the contemporary ecology crusade:[19]

FOR FISH AND BIRDS

For fish and birds I make this plea,
May they be here long after me,
May those who follow hear the call
Of old Bob White in spring and fall;
And may they share the joy that's mine
When there's a bass upon the line.

I found the world a wondrous place.
A cold wind blowing in my face
Has brought the wild ducks in from sea;
God grant the day shall never be
When youth upon November's shore
Shall see the mallards come no more!

I found the world a garden spot.
God grant the desolating shot
And barbed hook shall not destroy

Some future generation's joy!
Too barren were the earth for words
If gone were all the fish and birds.

Fancy an age that sees no more
The mallards winging into shore;
Fancy a youth with all his dreams
That finds no fish within the streams.
Our world with life is wondrous fair,
God grant we do not strip it bare!

Writing about the death of an intimate member of his family or a friend seemed to serve a dual purpose for Edgar Guest—a reenforcement of his faith and a catharsis for his emotions. Their first child, Florence Dorothy, died at the age of thirteen months in 1909. Soon after her death he and his wife adopted a three year old girl, Marjorie Ellen, who died of tuberculosis in the spring of 1921. Of her death, he wrote:

MARJORIE[20]

The house is as it was when she was here;
There's nothing changed at all about the place;
The books she loved to read are waiting near
As if to-morrow they would see her face;
Her room remains the way it used to be,
Here are the puzzles that she pondered on:
Yet since the angels called for Marjorie
The joyous spirit of the home has gone.

All things grew lovely underneath her touch,
The room was bright because it knew her smile;
From her the tiniest trinket gathered much,
The cheapest toy became a thing worth while;
Yet here are her possessions as they were,
No longer joys to set the eyes aglow;
To-day, as we, they seem to mourn for her,
And share the sadness that is ours to know.

Half sobbing now, we put her games away,
Because, dumb things, they cannot understand
Why never more shall Majorie come to play,
And we have faith in God at our command.
These toys we smiled at once, now start our tears,
They seem to wonder why they lie so still,

They call her name, and will throughout the years—
God, *strengthen* us to bow unto Thy will.

Years later still bereaving the loss of his daughters, Edgar Guest composed 'To All Parents' which appeared on March 18, 1937, when an explosion in a public school at New London, Texas, killed 295 children. The public response to his verse was overwhelming, with people thanking him for the consolation he offered:

TO ALL PARENTS[21]

"I'll lend you for a little time a child of Mine," He said,
"For you to love the while she lives and mourn for when she's dead.
It may be six or seven years, or twenty-two or three,
But will you, till I call her back, take care of her for Me?
She'll bring her charms to gladden you, and shall her stay be brief,
You'll have her lovely memories as solace for your grief."

"I cannot promise she will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there I want this child to learn.
I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true,
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes I have selected you.
Now will you give her all your love, nor think the labor vain,
Nor hate Me when I come to call to take her back again?"

I fancied that I heard them say: "Dear Lord, Thy will be done!
For all the joy Thy child shall bring, the risk of grief we'll run.
We'll shelter her with tenderness, we'll love her while we may,
And for the happiness we've known forever grateful stay;
But shall the angels call for her much sooner than we've planned,
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes and try to understand."

Edgar Guest's love for his adopted country was an extension

of his religious faith and a reflection of the patriotic idealism instilled by his father. Edwin Guest once told his son:

> "The United States is the greatest country on earth. In no other country are people so happy, so prosperous, and so contented. Whatever any man may tell you in the future, be loyal to this Government. Respect its flag and honor its institutions. This is the land of opportunity. . . . Remember England as the land of your birth, but stick to and stand by the United States, the land of your opportunity."[22]

He demonstrated his loyalty to this country during World War I, when he fired the patriotic instincts of his audience with his doggerel. Again during World War II, he began many of his daily columns with zealous praise of the United States. In fact, he contributed a hand-written copy of 'America' to a war bond auction; it was purchased for $50,000 by V. D. Cliff, a close friend and president of an insurance Company. The poem originally had been published in 1918:

AMERICA[23]

God has been good to men. He gave
His Only Son their souls to save,
And then He made a second gift,
Which from their dreary lives should lift
The tyrant's yoke and set them free
From all who'd throttle liberty.
He gave America to men—
Fashioned this land we love, and then
Deep in her forests sowed the seed
Which was to serve man's earthly need.

When wisps of smoke first upwards curled
From pilgrim fires, upon the world
Unnoticed and unseen, began
God's second work of grace for man.
Here where the savage roamed and fought,
God sowed the seed of nobler thought;
Here to the land we love to claim,
The pioneers of freedom came;
Here has been cradled all that's best
In every human mind and breast.

For full four hundred years and more
Our land has stretched her welcoming shore
To weary feet from soils afar;
Soul-shackled serfs of king and czar
Have journeyed here and toiled and sung
And talked of freedom to their young,
And God above has smiled to see
This precious work of liberty,
And watched this second gift He gave
The dreary lives of men to save.

And now, when liberty's at bay,
And blood-stained tyrants force the fray,
Worn warriors, battling for the right,
Crushed by oppression's cruel might,
Hear in the dark through which they grope
America's glad cry of hope:
Man's liberty is not to die!
America is standing by!
World-wide shall human lives be free:
America has crossed the sea!

Or add any weight to your name.
America! the land we love!
God's second gift from Heaven above,
Builded and fashioned out of truth,
Sinewed by Him with splendid youth
For that glad day when shall be furled
All tyrant flags through the world.
For this our banner holds the sky:
That liberty shall never die.
For this, America began:
To make a brotherhood of man.

Guest preached not only profusely about Home, God, and Patriotism in his rhymes but also about the rewards of work. Innumerable poems assure the young man starting out that if he works hard and puts forth that extra effort, success is automatically his. "The Job" characterizes his philosophy of work:

THE JOB[24]

The job will not make you, my boy;
The job will not bring you to fame
Or riches or honor or joy

You may fail or succeed where you are,
May honestly serve or may rob;
From the start to the end
Your success will depend
On just what you make of your job.

Don't look on the job as the thing
That shall prove what you're able to do;
The job does no more than to bring
A chance for promotion to you.
Men have shirked in high places and won
Very justly the jeers of the mob;
And you'll find it is true
That it's all up to you
To say what shall come from the job.

The job is in incident small;
The thing that's important is man.
The job will not help you at all
If you won't do the best that you can.
It is you that determines your fate,
You stand with your hand on the knob
Of fame's doorway to-day,
And life asks you to say
Just what you will make of your job.

Another jingle which typifies his Puritan-like reverence for work is "It Couldn't Be Done," which has become a part of American folklore:

IT COULDN'T BE DONE[25]

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried,
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one ever has done it";
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.

With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

His industry and optimism paid off well for Edgar Guest. Having once established himself as a columnist for the *Detroit Free Press*, he worked in a study in his own home. He pecked away at his typewriter turning out from one to three verses a day using his Free Press Office only to fraternize with his colleagues and friends. The Horatio Alger myth of the nineteenth century became a living reality for Edgar Guest; he revived the fading American Dream not only for himself and his family but vicariously for his mass audience.

To cite more examples of his poetry serves no point—they are all variations of his basic philosophy that happiness can be realized through Home, God, and Work easily understood and pleasant to the ear. In 1939, E. B. White in his "One Man's Meat" column for *The New Yorker* accurately evaluated Edgar Guest's contributions:

> "The first poet in the land—if I may use the word loosely—is Edgar Guest. He is the singer who, more than any other, gives to Americans the enjoyment of rhyme and meter. Whether he gives also that blinding, aching emotion which I get from reading certain verses by other writers is a question which interests me very much. Being democratic, I am content to the majority rule in everything, it would seem, but literature."[26]

Thirteen years later a staff reporter for the same magazine in a profile about Nick Kenney, poet-journalist for the *New York Mirror*, stated that "Kenny had fallen heir to the mantle of the late Edgar A. Guest."[27] Actually, Edgar A. Guest was very much

alive and still writing his daily verses. But the traditions of which he wrote had become moribund. Will his writings be revived in the current wave of national nostalgia? It is doubtful, for the old-fashioned ideals he hymned are now scorned and the strained efforts for rhyme and meter have little appeal to contemporary readers more attuned to free verse. Yet, Edgar A. Guest is the outstanding spokesman for the common people during the first half of this century; he is the Poet of the Masses who best represents the popular sentiments and strong anti-intellectual strain of American culture. He is not a great literary figure; he is a simple newspaperman who made many people happy, if not wiser, with his homespun philosophy and doggerel. His humanity and amiability lightened the burdens of the day for millions of people and reaffirmed their faith in a moral code rapidly disintegrating in a changing world. Critically intellectual cogscenti are justified in classifying the poems of Edgar A. Guest as doggerel or low level poetry. But too often critics equate popularity and simplicity with worthlessness. Should not low level poetry have its legitimate place from the standpoint of entertainment and as a potential springboard for improving the "democratic" tastes? If so, then the versatile and paradoxical Edgar A. Guest should be accorded his proper place in chronicles of American literature and culture.

NOTES

1. "The Perfect Dinner Table," *Heap o' Livin'* (Chicago: Reilly & Britton Co., 1916), pp. 118-119.
2. *Current Biography,* Edited by Maxine Block (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1941), p. 354.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Edgar A. Guest,* a Biography by Royce Howes (New York: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1953), p. 5.
5. Interview with Bud Guest, *Detroit Free Press,* August 21, 1966.
6. Microfilm, *Detroit Free Press,* December 11, 1898.
7. Microfilm, *Detroit Free Press,* August 8th, 1959.
8. Titles of prose books, *What My Religion Means to Me, Making the House a Home, My Job as a Father, You Can't Live Your Own Life.*
9. "Always Sayin' Don't," *When Day Is Done* (Chicago: Reilly and Lee, 1921), p. 68.
10. Regular Session Report of State of Michigan Legislature, March, 1952.
11. McEvoy, J. P., "Edgar A. Guest," *The Saturday Evening Post,* May 8.

12. *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia: Curtis Publishing Co., 1938).
13. *Current Biography,* Edited by Maxine Block (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1941).
14. *Edgar A. Guest* by Royce Howes, p. 216.
15. *Ibid.,* p. 88.
16. *"Heap o' Livin',"* (Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1916), pp. 28-30.
17. *When Day Is Done* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1921), pp. 34-35.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 37.
19. *"Heap o' Livin',"* p. 88.
20. *Harbor Lights of Home* by Edgar A. Guest (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1928), p. 74.
21. *All That Matters* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1922), p. 33.
22. *All in a Lifetime* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1949), p. 18.
23. *My Job a as Father* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1923), p. 59.
24. *Poems of Patriotism* (New York: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1918), pp. 14-15.
25. *A Heap o' Livin'* (Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1916), p. 62.
26. *Just Folks* (New York: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1917), p. 149.
27. *One Man's Meat* by E. B. White (New York: Harper and Row, 1938), p. 117.
28. *The New Yorker,* Profile Section, March 7th, 1953.

A RIPENING EYE: WRIGHT MORRIS AND THE FIELD OF VISION

GERALD NEMANIC

But lo, the world hath many centres, one
for each created being, and about each one
it lieth in its own circle.
(Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*)

"The part of me that has lived in this world has had many advantages" said Wright Morris, accepting the National Book Award for *The Field of Vision* in 1957. "The 'most unique' of these favors from Fate," he went on, "has to do with the fact that I was born near the navel of the world. . . . It is not merely the navel of the world, you see, of the continental land mass of the United States, but also my own . . . beneath the buckle of my belt."

Thus the author paid tribute to the gently rolling plain of Nebraska, the locus of his blood and artistic life. It shaped him, that bleak and windy space, pumped the life's blood into him—navel to navel. No matter where the restless American spirit took him, "*It* rode . . . with me, immortally anchored in my soul" and remained "a center of refuge . . . within . . . the mind's anchorage, and the soul's Great Good Place." Morris acquiesced ungrudgingly, even reverently, to the primal shaping and staying powers of the "place" and of his past.

How ironic it seemed that this particular writer stood before the assembled savants of American letters to talk of "anchorage" and "refuge"! Morris had struggled for a good part of his literary life to free his work from nostalgia and parochialism. Here was a man as truly in love with, yet at war against, the delimiting boundaries of his past as any American writer had ever been. He swam in that great crosscurrent of literary tradition with Twain, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Wolfe, and Faulkner.

The Field of Vision stood not only as the unquestionable master work of Morris' still gathering talent; it was, as importantly, his artist's badge of independence. For the first time, he had truly succeeded in *shaping* that "raw" mass of memory and physical detail, his private Nebraska. Earlier efforts to mine the rich vein of "place" had been, at best, a partial success. "Too much crude ore," Morris judged of that work. "Raw material . . . calls for processing" summed up an artistic creed arrived at the hard way, the result of seasons of failure.[1]

But *The Field of Vision* was no raw ore, no one-dimensional view. Now processor as much as miner, shaper more than recorder, Morris assembled various "fields of vision,' multi-dimensional angles of perception, which transformed the broad, unhurried lines of remembered Nebraska, quaint and olden, into a rich, varied creation of imaginative complexity. It was as if he had, in a sense, come back full circle. Once conquered, Nebraska no longer symbolized a crude, unsmeltable ore which mocked the artist's potential power to transform. In *The Field of Vision* the true metal had been fired. The narrow vision of raw perception, the photographic plate, had taken on the breadth and depth of artistic sight. Morris had brought his Nebraska back to life. The Award speech confirmed this in love and praise, celebrated Nebraska's life with his. Nothing could have been more natural.

II.

It is significant that Wright Morris had concerned himself, in the early years of his career, with painting and photography as much as with words. In his twenties, he had wanted to be a painter, although none of the canvasses and drawings completed in those years were ever exhibited. In the partly autobiographical early novel, *The Man Who Was There* (1945), Agee Ward, the artist-hero, is fascinated with the artifacts and scenes of his childhood in the rural Midwest. While living in Paris he paints reflective montages of cream separators, harrow seats and other farming paraphernalia.[2]

In this novel, Morris' fictional conception of the artist is much less complicated than it is later, in *The Field of Vision* and *Ceremony in Lone Tree*. In *The Man Who Was There*, Morris handles Agee Ward with little sense of irony. Ward is essentially the mis-

understood artist adrift among philistines. In the early Forties, Morris was not yet ready to admit that his hero's vision might reflect not only pregnant social commentary and positive aesthetic values, but also an unhealthy obsession with the irrecoverable past.

But it is the camera's eye, and its particular angle of vision, which links Morris most closely with the visual arts. The struggle for dominance within him between painter and writer was indirectly manifested in *The Man Who Was There.* A temporary resolution was reached in the conception of works which combined photography and prose. *The Inhabitants* (1946) and *The Home Place* (1948) provided both visual record and prose interpretation, on facing pages, of the desolate Nebraska world whose meaning he sought to penetrate.

Like his father and so many other rural Americans, Morris had abandoned the pioneer settlements of his forebears in restive search for the American horn of plenty. His wanderings through Omaha, Chicago and, inevitably, California brought confusion and disillusionment. This apparently aimless movement, endemic on the American continent, suggested only one obvious and quick resolution: some sort of literal return to or, that being impossible, emotional reunion with the memory-frozen objects of the past. For Morris, the urge to retrace his steps at no time represented a mere mindless clutch at receding innocence. Ambiguous though it was, his step back, in the photo albums, was a large step toward *The Field of Vision* and artistic fulfillment.

The importance of these albums in the Morris canon derives not so much from their artistic merit, which is real, as from his decision to become immersed in the raw material which would eventually form the substantial base of *The Field of Vision.* The epigraph chosen for *The Inhabitants* is borrowed from Thoreau:

> What of architectural beauty I now see,
> I know has grown from within outward. . . .

Therein is revealed Morris' attitude toward his materials. First, these peeling farm houses and beleagured barns of a fading pioneer civilization *are* beautiful, *are in themselves* an aesthetically satisfying manifestation. They are somehow a living symbol of Man's spirit in this place. As photographer, Morris worked

primarily in the role of recorder, not transmuting artist. Rather than process his visual raw materials, Morris was content, at this stage, simply to know and catalog them.[3]

The text of *The Inhabitants* tastes a bit of the cracker barrel in its pithy, self-conscious wisdom. But the book is remarkably suggestive of Morris' later themes, more so than the more popular *Home Place.* Embryonic hints of Boyd, the McKees and old Scanlon pop out in aphorisms which refer to no *one* in particular:

> there was a time all I thought a man did was unravel—now I see that all he does is wind himself up. [78] p.
>
> Everywhere you look there is a man leaving something—or something that a man left. And everywhere you look you see that nobody left anything. [100] p.
>
> hard times makes a man, make things you can love. If it ain't hard times, if it ain't honest trouble, that makes a man, I'd like to know just what in the hell it is? [22] p.

A number of these fresh thematic hints are scattered throughout, yet no purposive design really emerges from the book. Unlike *The Inhabitants, The Home Place* does incorporate a narrative line, but Morris lets us view only half seriously the pathetic, and often humorous, attempts of Clyde Muncy and his family to return to the land.

Whether planned or not, the prose text quickly assumes a subordinate role in these books. Morris emerges most strongly as photographic essayist. And as photographer he concerns himself with a quite definite and limited angle of vision. Ten years later, in *The Territory Ahead,* Morris was to criticize his earlier work for "an excess of . . . raw experience." The antidote to this crudeness became "the realization that I had to *create* [italics mine] coherence, conjure up my synthesis, rather than find it. . . ." (15) This self criticism finds no truer mark than *The Inhabitants* and *The Home Place.* The very nature of photography makes it an especially congenial vehicle for the transmission of visual raw materials. Perhaps it is not so much the potential for artful composition of scene which attracted Morris to photography, as the desire to record *what was there* in its natural state, not yet touched by commercialism or even the artist's imaginative flights.

That intention determined the essentially nostalgic and aimless

character of these volumes. We respond to the pictured artifacts of a disappearing America simply because they have managed to maintain some tenuous hold on existence in the face of bewildering change. Of course they cry out for remembrance of those bygone days of youth, when, we fancy, our lives were filled with wonder and purity. Morris' later annihilation of Norman Rockwell surely illustrates, as on motive, his need to bury what he considered a pernicious tendency in himself.[4]

As a photographer, Morris had primarily occupied himself with a limited field of vision—that of the recording eye. That the camera, an objective and impassive instrument of communication, could evoke emotional response was clear. Yet the author was plainly dissatisfied with the sentimental, uncontrolled quality of that communication and response. He returned to straight fiction and began weaving a metaphor of vision anew in *The Works of Love* (1952).[5]

III.

One of the stronger literary influences on Morris' development as a novelist was Sherwood Anderson, and *The Works of Love,* dedicated to the Ohio master, is the most Andersonian of his works. Will Brady, the novel's frustrated, vulnerable protagonist might easily have been orchestrated into *Winesburg, Ohio.* Partly modeled from Morris' own father, he wanders his life away in the western world, from Nebraska to Chicago to Los Angeles. He casts about tentatively for something like love, but blind to his nature and confused by the warped emotional lives of others, he fails to "connect." Like many another love-starved old man, he winds up feeding his spit to the pigeons in lonely public parks, gaining through that pathetic gesture at least some semblance of affectionate contact with living things.

Will Brady's limited perspectives culminate in a literal blindness which leads directly to his destruction. After years of roaming, he winds up in Chicago, isolated and bewildered, still searching for "connection." One Christmas season he decides to take a temporary job as a department store Santa Claus. Talking with the children provides some measure of satisfaction, but it is mournfully clear that this tiny opening serves only to intensify his longings. In a pathetic attempt to render that sallow old face more attractive to the youngsters, he buys a sun lamp with the idea of reddening his cheeks to the proper Clausean hue. Brady disregards the warning of the manufacturer and sits for hours amid the warm, enveloping rays of his private sun. Understandably, he develops an eye inflammation which severely impairs his vision. This results in a fantastic denouement, with Brady blindly walking off a fire escape to a watery death in the Chicago River.

Both *The Works of Love* and the earlier photo albums anticipate the theme of entrapment which Morris developes extensively in the later Nebraska novels, *The Field of Vision* (1956) and *Ceremony in Lone Tree* (1960). The brooding photographs reflect Morris' fascination with the casual incidents and objects of his private past. Later he would analyze similar emotions in characters like Gordon Boyd, Lois McKee, and Tom Scanlon.

Will Brady is haunted too, not by an obsessive nostalgia but by the recurrent memory of failure. The attempt to know love had always brought frustration and crushing defeat. Brady becomes what Sherwood Anderson had called a "grotesque," one of those who "took one of the truths [laws or generalizations about life] to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live by it." Thus beset, one "became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood."[6]

These "grotesques" of Anderson and Morris are gnarled spirits, able to perceive reality only through distorted lenses. For them, the past is an inundation of the self—in the present, they can merely float along, buffeted by the waves of this persistent flood. Their fields of vision remain single and cramped. The airless compartment of the mind eventually suffocates a potentially expansive human spirit.

IV.

By the early 1950's, Morris' battle with the past had reached deeply self-conscious existential and aesthetic proportions. *The Field of Vision* is so vitally important because there he was first able to fashion an artistically satisfying dramatization of that struggle.

The photo albums had tentatively introduced the problem. In *The Works of Love,* he had fumbled toward its full actualization in a single character. But confused, pathetic Will Brady

could never represent the final disposition of Morris' dilemma, for he is a severely limited and unsatisfactory protagonist for so complex a drama. He could hardly serve as a sufficient vehicle for the author's complicated vision of the maimed Midwestern psyche—no one character could.

In *The Field of Vision* Morris finally hit upon the technique of developing several centers of consciousness within a novel, each representing a particular "field of vision." His characters flounder, separately hopeless victims of their own obsessions. Brought together, their viewpoints present an overlaid complex of angles which form patterns of meaning artistically controlled and gradually apprehended by the reader.

The Field of Vision and its sequel, *Ceremony in Lone Tree,* represent the maturation of both Morris' visual metaphor and his career as interpreter of the Nebraska scene. *The Field of Vision* is set, ostensibly, in Mexico City, where several Nebraskans have incongruously assembled. They include Walter and Lois McKee, a respectable suburban couple; their young grandson, Gordon, the physical and emotional heir to the McKee and Scanlon line; laconic old Tom Scanlon, Lois' father, a dim-eyed eccentric who long ago refused to enter the twentieth century; and Gordon Boyd, childhood friend of Walter, once a promising young writer now gone on evil days. A bullfight serves as background, the *present* from which the characters deflect their thoughts to a haunted past, wherein each feels the vital drama of life has already been played. The novel unfolds in obsessive recreations of, and commentary upon, the past by each character. The immediate action in the ring serves as an ironic contrast to the "real" proceedings.

Ceremony in Lone Tree, like most sequels, is much less satisfying than the original. It brings together the same characters a few months later, at a family reunion in the ghost town of Lone Tree, Nebraska. There is witnessed the death of the decrepit patriarch, Tom Scanlon, and the equally anticlimatic elopement of Calvin and Etoile, who represent the younger generation of Nebraskans bent on the same destructive path as their elders.

Although nothing very exciting "happens" in these novels, this is precisely Morris' intent. He focuses, rather, on two internal human qualities: fear and imagination. These sons and daughters

of pioneer stock have spent a lifetime nurturing the future dreams of middle American adolescence. Middle aged Gordon Boyd still sports his sucking thumb, a flannel hip pocket he once audaciously ripped from the pants of Ty Cobb. As a playwright, Boyd is proof positive of the erstwhile notion that American literature is notable for its shooting stars. His very first play, a poignant drama of youth's fleeting illusions, was received with enthusiasm in New York. From that instant pinnacle it was all a down grade for Gordon. It wasn't that he tried again and failed, so much as that he simply stopped growing; after Cobb's pocket and a boy-wonder stage success, what was left? Boyd is left, and he wanders about the world with a piece of flannel, "the portable raft on which he floated" (like a perennial Huck Finn) "anchored to his childhood."[7] "The thing about Hell," Morris concludes, "was that you had to go in, if what you wanted was out." (p. 189) Boyd feared the necessary tribulations of manhood more than anything else, "He had failed to fail . . . to touch the floating bottom within himself." (p. 69) The wide vistas of light necessary to the artist's visions were denied him, they could not penetrate the blinders which allowed him to look in only one direction —backwards.

The estimable McKees have, on the contrary, "made it": a secure income, family vacations in Mexico, a home in the suburbs. Yet they, too, have steadfastly refused life on its own terms, obsessed as they are with the haphazard traumas of long past adolescent romance. Lois' first kiss of passion had been delivered by Walter's best friend, Gordon Boyd, during that interminable spring of budding life. Walter had also been present at the "event," and now all three remained haunted by that ambiguous gesture. Lois wonders if any of them have really changed since that day twenty-five years ago:

> Did anything really? Take McKee. Did he ever make her think of anything but *old* times. And Boyd, standing up in that seat to squirt Pepsi-Cola into the bull's face, the same look on his face, if she could believe her eyes, that he had had on the porch. Not the same face, no, that did change, but not the look behind it, the eyes shining from the porch light where the big June bugs were trapped. *That* made her think of old times, it made her wonder, that is, if any-

> thing in the world had really happened since McKee's best friend had kissed the girl he hadn't kissed himself. McKee looking on with that silly absent-minded smile on his face. Being reminded, as it turned out later, of something else at the very moment an absolute stranger had pressed his lips to *her* lips. And the girl who was kissed? She hadn't changed much either now that she knew what had hit her. Knowing what had hit her, and where, she had swooned. (pp. 89, 90)

A young, barely pubescent Lois remains a tantalizingly tangible image in Walter's memory. Yet his eyes can't seem to focus on the middle-aged life's companion beside him. Indeed, "he never saw more, when he looked at her, than whether she had migraine or goose pimples on her arms or not." (p. 31)

Blind Tom Scanlon, "crazy as a coot," had holed himself up in the old hotel at Lone Tree for sixty years. He "lived—if that was the word—only in the past. When the century turned and faced the east, he stood his ground." (pp. 43, 44) Yet his daughter Lois knew that "it wasn't only her father who was trapped in the past, who didn't turn with the century as her mother described it, but also all of the people who had once been young, with dishes to wipe. And after wiping the dishes had stepped, for just a moment, out on the porch. Trapped." (p. 92)

In fact, for all Scanlon's recidivism, he is not the least alive of Morris' characters. Boyd saw in him "a man who found more to live for, in looking backward, than those who died all around him, looking ahead." (p. 44) Son of a true frontiersman, Scanlon at least carries on his fearful life in concert with the barren plain which had nurtured him. This solitary existence remains somehow less terrible than the timidly desperate lives led by the McKees. Scanlon generates an imaginative vision, however grotesque, which gives some substance to his character. Morris pays him grudging tribute in the first pages of *Ceremony in Lone Tree*:

> Scanlon's eyes, a cloudy phlegm color, let in more light than they give out. What he sees are the scenic props of his own mind. His eye to the window, the flaw in the pane, such light as there is illuminates Scanlon, his face like that of a gobbler in the drayman's hat. What he sees is his own business, but the stranger might find the view familiar. A man accustomed to the ruins of war might even feel at home. In the blowouts on the rise are flint arrowheads, and pieces of farm machinery, half buried in sand, resemble nothing so much as artillery equipment, abandoned when the dust began to blow. The tidal shift of the sand reveals one ruin in order to conceal another. It is all there to be seen, but little evidence that Tom Scanlon sees it. Not through the clouded eye he puts to the glass. The emptiness of the plain generates illusions that require little moisture, and grow better, like tall stories, where the mind is dry. The tall corn may flower or burn in the wind, but the plain is a metaphysical landscape and the bumper crop is the one Scanlon sees through the flaw in the glass. (pp. 4, 5).

V.

Morris sees the crucial and distinctive struggle of the American artist as that between "raw material" and "technique." In the past material has dominated, and this inhibited the growth of a mature fiction. "The territory ahead," the future of the American novel, must be in the direction of technique and creativity. In *The Field of Vision*, it is Gordon Boyd, the American writer, whose course has been charted most disastrously. Although sensitive and ambitious, still he has failed as an artist and a man. The causes of Boyd's failure are linked with those of the American artist in general. Success requires a commitment to growth: "The human thing to do was to transform something, especially yourself." (p. 76) Morris' lost Nebraskans, clinging to the chimeras of the past, reject the vitality of evolving life. In like manner, the American, as artist, depends too much on his abundance of raw memory at the expense of creative technique. The "pattern," the key to life's meaning, Gordon "would not *find*. No, not anywhere, since it did not exist. The pattern—what pattern it had—he would have to create. Make it out of something that looked for all the world like something else." (p. 154) The same problem exists for Scanlon, the McKees, and for the mind of Middle America as Morris knows it:

> The problem? In an age of How-to-do-it, the problem was how not. How *not* to be embalmed in a flannel pocket, how *not* to be frozen in a coonskin hat. How to live in spite of, not because of, something called character. To keep it open,

to keep the puzzle puzzling, the pattern changing and alive. (p. 155)

VI.

The growth of Morris' life philosophy, and of his fictional world, can be seen most clearly in his concept of vision. As a photographer he had been concerned primarily with a particular kind of sight, the raw material vision he discussed later in *The Territory Ahead.* Visual imagery is vital to an understanding of Morris' major theme—that our sight is drawn too acutely inward. We see too little the substance of things outside ourselves; our inwardness results in a suffocating entrapment within the past, where by our narrow lights, the only significant actions of our lives have taken place. For Morris this conclusion is objectively absurd—one kiss, one grandiose gesture, one baseball adventure should hardly cast the die of life. Morris tries, in *The Field of Vision,* to break free from the death-hold the past has on both his characters and himself.

To limit our vision in time and space, to pigeonhole past, present and future, near and far, is to ruin ourselves, to make us "grotesque," in Anderson's terminology. On the other hand Morris' entire canon serves to emphasize his belief that the past is vitally important, that it literally generates what we are. Our history—personal, regional, national—is of inestimable value, but not merely as a safe past in which we might grasp a false security. The regional, the local and the personal have crucial import—it is mainly a matter of finding their true and rejecting their false drift, rejecting that in our vision of the past which destroys life.

For our primary purpose, says Morris, is to *live* in the here and now. For his "Nebraska Re-visited," *God's Country and My People* (1968) he chose his epigraph from Samuel Beckett:

> Let me try and explain. From things about to disappear I turn away in time. To watch them out of sight, no, I can't do it.

NOTES

1. Wright Morris, *The Territory Ahead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958). Morris finds fault with his early writing, and with American literature generally, in *The Territory Ahead.* He discusses his own shortcomings in the first chapter, "Technique and Raw Material."

2. Wright, Morris, *The Man Who Was There* (New York: Scribner's, 1945). One of Agee's paintings, "The Journey Back," is described as "what appears to be a sliced kidney, or a cross section of sweetbreads, but on examination certain objects can be identified. There are parts of a croquet game, a strip of hedge, a cream separator, a harrow seat, a white egg, a piece of saggy yard, and a pump. In the back, holding up the sky, is a row of topless trees." (pp. 82, 83)
3. William Carlos Williams, who was writing *Paterson* in the 1940's, would probably have approved of this kind of progress by stages. "No ideas but in things," became an important part of an American artist's creed that Williams tried to develop in the poem. The New World writer must begin by confronting the tangible objects of his environment. His "ideas" will develop naturally from the mind's interaction with these things."
4. The attack on Rockwell comes in "Abuse of the Past" in *The Territory Ahead.*
5. Another novel with a Nebraska setting, *The World in the Attic* (1949), is a sequel to the *Home Place,* maintaining the same characters and tone.
6. Anderson's full discussion of the "grotesque" appears in "The Book of the Grotesque," in *Winesburg, Ohio.*
7. Wright Morris, *The Field of Vision* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956. p .68). All subsequent references, unless otherwise noted, are from this text.