MIDAMERICA XVI

The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Edited by
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In memory of
James C. Austin
(1923-1990)

PREFACE

MidAmerica XVI marks the sixteenth edition of the yearbook, and it marks, too, the end of the Society's second decade of existence as well as its continued progress. Featured in this issue are the winning poem in the Midwest Poetry Award contest, "Dependable Imperfections," by Maril Nowak of the Community College of the Finger Lakes and the winning paper in the Midwestern Heritage Award contest, "Mary Hartwell Catherwood's Two Beaver Island Stories," by Kenneth A. Robb of Bowling Green State University. Both winning entries were presented at the Society's Nineteenth Annual Conference, held at Michigan State University on May 18-20, 1989, at which more than 100 members took active part.

At the Awards dinner on Friday evening, May 19, the Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to Midwestern Literature was presented to Dudley Randall, poet, of Detroit, and the MidAmerica Award for distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern Literature was presented to James C. Austin of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. It is with great sorrow that we record Jim's death on March 7, 1990. This volume is dedicated to his memory.

October, 1990 DAVID D. ANDERSON

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DEPENDABLE IMPERFECTIONS

MARIL NOWAK

persistence in love, daily exorcism
of self-deception, i.e., write poems.
there is no choice between perfection of
the life and perfection of the work, no
need to choose . . . "the imperfections are
what i depend on."
sam abrams
& quoting joel oppenheimer

What is left between us now is the dependable
earth, separating, the earth making
way for thick tubers, earth rising with
the rich crumble of our daily labors.

Not the photo opportunity of the Kansan
with thick glasses, the man who holds up
for the camera his three-pound carrots,
unsocketed from the soil and pungent
with earthsmell, golden with carotene.
He is no longer young, and one tuber is split,
burst open with age to the raw core of greed.

These are prizeworthy. Unpalatable, but
one for the books, as if, if we were to carry
the dung and haul the water, our harvest would
likewise reach some whistling proportion
and be snapped up by a major publication.
Until, next issue, we are upstaged--

A woman from Alabama who smiles from the snap-
shot of her rutabaga, a fleshy taproot swollen
to the color of bruised ivory. A chainsaw
wouldn't rip its ironwood heart, drought-gorged
on scarce tapwater moccasinned to the garden
after midnight, a defiant self-delusion bred from
the whispering of water to the soil. Her eyes want
us to believe that we too might do as well.
The choice being ours.

Winter readers buy it all: seed and story,
MiracleGro and tiller, the *you-too* book with
photographs and easy-step instructions.
We put our backs into it, willingly,
producing small imperfect fruits that snap
sweetly between the white teeth of our children.

And what we leave unharvested is browse
for deer, imperfect images that shift in twilit
sideyards. We darken the house to see it
more clearly: snow broadcasting white seed
over purple furrows. No photograph can capture
by available light the deer returning
like children, stealthily, for sweets.

We easily grow to depend upon each other;
there are no more bad years. And that breath-
held moment of imperfect thievery,
light-fingered from a winter dusk, is our seed--
swelling, sprouting thick stems, twining strong
roots into the garden tilth--sown a leaftouch
apart; leaving no distance between, no faint regret,
only the persistence to keep reaching.
Find water. Drink deep.

Community College of
The Finger Lakes

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD'S TWO BEAVER ISLAND STORIES

KENNETH A. ROBB

The publication in 1988 of another biography of James Jesse Strang—this one by Roger Van Noord and titled *King of Beaver Island: The Life and Assassination of James Jesse Strang*[1]—attests to the fascination that the mid-nineteenth century Mormon leader holds for Midwesterners. But once past the fascinating question of Strang's motives and qualifications for challenging Brigham Young for leadership of the Mormons, following Joseph Smith's murder in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1844, Van Noord's narrative palls to good dull historical fact, for the most part—an inventory of the fairly minor skirmishes and disagreements between the Strangites, who settled on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan, about fifty miles west of Mackinac Island in 1847, and the Gentiles, who finally assassinated Strang and drove his followers from the island in 1856. Fortunately, we have two excellent short stories about the Beaver Island settlement, written by the Ohio-born author Mary Hartwell Catherwood (1847-1902) in the 1890s, when she was almost at the end of a long, successful career. Although departing from historical fact in some details, these stories portray in a dramatic and insightful way the public and private conflicts caused by the King of Beaver Island and his followers.

Both stories are found in Catherwood's *Mackinac and other Stories*.[2] The first, "The King of Beaver," is told from the point of view of Emeline, an orphan and a Gentile who has recently come to Beaver Island to live with her Uncle Cheeseman, who is a Mormon and has recently take a polygamous wife. Just before coming to Beaver Island from Detroit, Emeline quarreled and broke with her boyfriend, James Arnold.

The conflict that King Strang has caused in Emeline is described in the second paragraph of the story and continues throughout:

> Emeline thought she had never before seen such a man. He had an attraction which she felt loathsome, and the more so because it drew some part of her irresistibly to him. Her spirit was kin to his, and she resented that kinship . . . (89).

The narrator describes the King as physically attractive in the first paragraph, "a tall, golden-tinted man with a head like a dome, hair curling over his ears, and soft beard and mustache which did not conceal a mouth cut thin and straight," but most striking is "the keen light of his blue eyes, wherein shone the master" (89). It is his "executive power," to attempt to "master" her, as he has mastered his followers, that Emeline rebels against even though she finds King Strang physically attractive and spiritually akin to her.

Emeline's rebellion against being mastered by him, however, centers overtly on her doctrinal disagreement with the concept of polygamy, which she is described as having been "bred to abhor." As they walk home from church services, Emeline questions her cousin Roxy, who is described as "bred to respect polygamy," but who describes herself as "reprobate" because she aims to become Billy Wentworth's only wife. Roxy explains that although many in the settlement are against polygamy, "when the Prophet [that is, King Strang] makes them understand it is part of the faith, they have to keep the faith"— an aspect of the King's ability to "[make] people do just what he wants them to" (93), an ominous statement in view of his having singled out Emeline to be his next wife.

When King Strang visits the family and talks with Emeline in the garden, she taunts him for his having "[undertaken] the salvation of eight or nine wives," but he maddeningly retains his "moderation and gentleness," prophesying that she will be the ninth (99). That evening he serenades Emeline under her window with his violin, and deeply disturbed, Emeline refuses to go to church again. A few days later, Mary French, King Strang's youngest wife, meets with Emeline in the woods, having been sent to assure her that Emeline "will be welcomed into our family." Mary contrasts physically with Emeline, being "larger

and of a warmer and browner tint . . . a ripe and supple woman" (106), while Emeline is "delicately and sensitively made, with a beauty which came and went like a flame" (97), but it seems clear that King Strang has completely dominated the more robust Mary. Mary describes him as "a great strong archangel" and predicts that Emeline "will withhold from him nothing, no one, that may be *of use* to him" (107—my italics).

Nevertheless, it is Mary French who enables Emeline to escape in the end, for although she seems subservient to King Strang's will, she is jealous. Perceiving that Emeline is unwilling to yield to King Strang, she discovers that Emeline had been engaged to a man in Detroit and sends a message to him. At the end of the story, Emeline escapes Beaver Island and King Strang with this man, James Arnold.

In the meantime, however, the conflict within Emeline has intensified. She meets King Strang in the woods and experiences a strong physical attraction to him: "Through numbness she felt the pricking of a sharp rapture . . . She watched his rapid military walk furtively, her eyebrows crouching, her lips rippling with passionate tremors" (110, 111), while he verbally appeals to her by telling her, " 'I have grown to be a better man since you said you hated me' " (111).

Emeline's conflict is resolved after a fashion at the climax of the story when Mary French comes to her in the woods, telling her that James Arnold is on the steamboat and is about to leave because King Strang has told him Emeline has left. She overcomes Emeline's last reserves about returning to a man who broke his engagement to her and urges her toward the boat, but at the moment that Emeline begins to move toward the dock of her own free will, Mary French realizes what she has done:

> "For the first time in my life I have deceived my husband! . . . Stop! . . . You sha'n't go! What am I doing? Maybe robbing him of what is necessary to his highest success! I am a fool—to think he might turn back to me for consolation when you are gone— . . . Wait!—stop!—the boat is gone! It's too late!" (115)

Too late, then, Mary resolves her conflict by reaffirming her loyalty to her husband and spiritual leader. In her first interview with Emeline, Mary had cast her in the role of rival:

> "You are a good girl, dear. I can myself feel your charm. I was not so self-denying. In my fierce young girlhood I would have removed a rival. But since you ask me, I will do all I can for you in the way you desire . . ." (109).

Mary has in fact "removed a rival" by enabling Emeline to escape. Emeline's escape and reconciliation with James Arnold is a triumph of romantic monogamy. She has been consistently repulsed by the practice of polygamy, which King Strang has made part of the faith and therefore, Emeline has rebelled against King Strang as a spiritual leader and master. However, she has so strongly been attracted to him physically that as the boat sails out the harbor, her doubts return, and:

> Her Gentile gorge rose against him, and the traditions of a thousand years warred in her with nature; yet she stretched her hands toward him in the darkness (116).

A few years later, when she is happily married to James Arnold and reads of King Strang's assassination, she cries, explaining to her husband that "'I see what he was to Mary French and the others . . . The ones who believed in his best'" (117). Mary French's rebellion against King Strang is more ominous than Emeline's, however, since she is a Strangite. Mary's assent to a doctrine—polygamy—and a discipline—submission to King Strang's will—conflicts agonizingly with her feelings.

In his book, Van Noord says little about the relationship of the Strangites' Voree, Wisconsin, settlement or the later Beaver Island colony in relationship to other Midwestern utopian communities, but Catherwood suggests a kind of utopian vision when she has King Strang say to Emeline that although there are "camp-followers" on Beaver Island who commit crimes for which the Strangites are charged, "'. . . we shall make it a garden—we shall make it a garden'" (99). Perhaps a comparison with the Bishop Hill, Illinois, settlement would be more apposite than comparison with New Harmony. For one thing, the assassinations of the strong leaders—Erik Jansson of Bishop Hill and James Jesse Strang of Beaver Island—were instrumental in bringing about the dissolution of both communities.

Early in the story Roxy has said, "'Everybody knows that Brother Strang is the only person who can keep the Gentiles from driving us off the island. They have persecuted us ever

since the settlement was made. But they are afraid of him' " (95). The action of Catherwood's second story about Beaver Island occurs as the tabernacle is burning and the expulsion of the Mormons by the Gentile mob has been completed. Catherwood departs from historical fact here since the tabernacle was burned three or four days before the expulsion, but the "fountain of flame" the tabernacle makes, "visible far out on the starlit lake" (118), is an irresistible symbol for the dissolution of the community, which is a main theme of the story "Beaver Lights." Thus, the conflict between the Gentiles and the Strangite Mormons is reaching a resolution. The narrator describes the Mormons as "unresisting as sheep," and the Gentiles as "standing over them like Egyptian masters" (118, 119). Catherwood does not provide much more motivation for the enmity between the two than one of her Gentile characters provides—the Strangites drove the Gentiles off Beaver Island and seized their property when they first came and now it's simply turnabout—"Mormons and Gentiles can't live together" (120).

This explanation comes from Ludlow, a Gentile and the lighthouse keeper, as he sits with his wife Cecilia, formerly a Strangite, watching the flames and sparks of the burning tabernacle. They discuss the dissolution of the colony, surprised that there was no resistance from their friend, Jim Baker, who had been a witness to their secret wedding along with his second wife, Elizabeth Aiken. Cecilia expresses a preference for Elizabeth over Jim Baker's first wife, Rosanne, whom she describes as "A roly-poly young one, that never will be a woman! Elizabeth is noble" (121), but it is Rosanne who appears out of the darkness, having hidden from the Gentiles all day, begs for refuge and receives it.

Rosanne expresses hatred for Elizabeth, but Cecilia helps her nevertheless, and soon after she has been hidden upstairs, Jim Baker and Elizabeth show up, having escaped off the steamer and rowed back in a boat to seek for Rosanne. Jim explains to his friend Ludlow why he married Elizabeth:

> " . . . I was the first of the young men to set an example. Brother Strang could bring pressure to bear that it was impossible to resist . . . I married [Elizabeth] according to Saints' law, and I consider myself bound by my pledge to provide for her . . . (129),

but he now finds that he must have Rosanne as his sole wife as he is about to enter into a normal, monogamous society. Elizabeth agrees with Jim's plans to "build me a little house in your yard," as she tells Rosanne, and Rosanne accepts the arrangement. After Ludlow protects the three from a mob of Irish fishermen who come seeking them, then, the three leave in Ludlow's boat to cross Lake Michigan to Green Bay, to settle where other Beaver Island exiles have preceded them.

Toward the end of the story, we are given interesting insights into the thoughts of Cecelia and Elizabeth Aiken which suggest personal conflicts which have been forcibly resolved by outer events, just as the tensions between Mormons and Gentiles have been resolved by the flames of the tabernacle. Cecilia much prefers Elizabeth to "roly-poly" Rosanne, and Elizabeth is described as,

> . . . standing, a tall Greek figure in bloomers, so sure of pose that drapery or its lack was accident of which the eye took no account . . . Her forehead and chin were of noble and courageous shape. If there was fault, it was in the breadth and height of brows masterful rather than feminine. She had not one delicious sensuous charm to lure man. (128)

It was Elizabeth and Jim that Cecilia and Ludlow asked to witness their secret marriage, "because Rosanne would be sure to blab . . ." (121).

Thus, after the reconciliation between Rosanne and Elizabeth, Cecilia wonders, as they walk toward the boat:

> . . . if [Elizabeth's] spirit rose against the indignities of her position as an undesired wife, whose legal rights were not even recognized by the society into which she would be forced. The world was not open to her as to a man . . . (134).

The point of view then shifts with the question, "Why in all the swarming centuries of human experience had the lot of a creature with such genius for loving been cast where she was utterly thrown away?," and the question is ambiguously either the narrator's or Elizabeth's, for in the next sentence Elizabeth is described: "Solitary and carrying her passion a hidden coal she walked in the footsteps of martyrs behind the pair of reunited lovers," and at the end of the story she "had the sense of a great

company around her," "a worldful of souls waiting and loving in hopeless silence and marching resistlessly as the stars to their reward" (135, 136).

Elizabeth is, then, in the eyes of Cecilia and, I think, the narrator, a woman who might have found fulfillment as a wife in a King Strang-sanctioned polygamous marriage on Beaver Island, but who is now doomed to a kind of martydom. Rosanne sees her "no longer as a rival . . . [but one] who would cherish her [that is, Rosanne's] children" (134). The attitudes expressed in the narrative toward Elizabeth—and perhaps even toward polygamy in her case—are powerfully empathetic, though there is little doubt what the narrator's values are in the end. When, early in the story, Rosanne tells Cecilia that Jim has left with Elizabeth, the narrator tells us, "The only wife of one husband did not know how to take hold of this subject" (125) and at several points the "bloomers" that both Rosanne and Elizabeth wear at the behest of King Strang are contrasted with Cecilia's conventional petticoats. But of course the empathy expressed toward Elizabeth is "safe"—the Gentiles drove the Strangites from Beaver Island fifty years ago and effectively resolved the issue of polygamy, the narrator implies. In fact, the narrator's consciousness that this is historical fiction is foregrounded at several points—for example when, discussing Elizabeth's need for protection, she uses the phrase "in that day" (134).

At another point, early in the story, the narrator of "Beaver Lights" pauses to give some background regarding King Strang:

> This singular man's French ancestry—for he was descended from Henri de L'Estrange, who came to the New World with the Duke of York—doubtless gave him the passion for picturesqueness and the spiritual grasp on his isolated kingdom which keeps him still a notable and unforgotten figure (123).

There speaks a true Francophile—and also a romantic, for Van Noord authoritatively describes Strange simply as "A descendant of a Huguenot wine merchant who fled religious persecution in France. A sixth-generation New Yorker."[3] Nevertheless Van Noord's book gives us reason to assent to the last part of the quotation—Strang certainly had a "passion for picturesqueness" and a "spiritual grasp on his isolated kingdom" and he is still obviously a "notable and unforgotten figure" after a century and a quarter.

I have said that Catherwood's narrative differs from historical fact at several points. There was no Mary French in King Strang's life, although his first polygamous wife, Elvira Field, did travel with him, dressed as a young man and acting as his secretary, as Rosanne says Mary French did in the "The King of Beaver."[4] In talking with King Strang in that story, Emeline refers to his "eight or nine wives," and the King corrects her by saying, "Not yet nine" (99), but Catherwood has exaggerated—Strang had only five.[5] For these and other transgressions, Beverly Seaton has censured Catherwood, saying "she . . . committed one of the cardinal sins of the careless historical novelist: she wove fact with fiction in recounting the lives of actual persons"[6]; I don't, of course, agree with Seaton's rigorous standard.

Catherwood came to know the Mackinac region very well by the 1890's through spending her summers there, reading about its history and probably talking with the older native residents, as she implies in some of her other stories. These two historical short stories follow romantic outlines and tend to support conventional morés in the end, but they also have many strong, realistic elements. In the course of the stories, Catherwood represents some themes of national regional interest—the extent to which nonconformity is tolerable to the majority in a community, the outcome of certain utopian ideals when they were implemented in America, the status of women, and the nature of marital relationships. But most important, some would say (and I am among them), Catherwood has created characters and problems the reader finds engaging.

Bowling Green State University

NOTES

1. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
2. New York Harper and Brothers, 1899; reprinted in The American Short Stories Series by Garret Press, 1969. All references to the stories in my text are to this edition.
3. Van Noord, p. 12.
4. Van Noord, pp. 81-83.
5. Van Noord, p. 272.
6. "Mary Hartwell Catherwood," in Lina Mainiero, ed., *American Women Writers*, vol. 1. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1979.

GREAT LAKES MARITIME FICTION

VICTORIA BREHM

The maritime literature of the Great Lakes, like the culture that produced it, did not begin from Protestant roots in the Atlantic colonies. Even as Governor Bradford chronicled the attempt to found a commonwealth according to Puritan doctrine, Father Marquette knelt before his crucifix on a wild and desolate Lake Michigan shore. He prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary for protection and he prayed in French. For many years after the only language those shores knew was the Quebecois of the voyageurs and the Algonkian of the Indians, interwoven occasionally with clipped Scots of the *hivernauts* of the English fur trade companies.

The first stories of storms on the lakes, of the canoes that met the waves and the wind, were told in Indian lodges in winter when the spirits could not hear. The next were French, told over meals of pemmican or beans and pork fat, with fire playing on the faces of the voyageurs who told their stories in song more often than not. Theirs was not the governed town with orderly streets and cultivated fields and solemnly-dressed families bound for church on the Sabbath; they had no belief in divine predestination in the founding of a settlement. Instead there was a string of isolated missions and trading posts, linked through the wilderness of rivers and portages and open lakes like beads on a rosary. The days were measured not by prayers, but by "pipes," a rest after three miles of paddling. Theirs was the natural, not the heavenly world, despite the efforts of the black-robed priests. The colonists who settled America's first sea coast and bore her first mariners would not have recognized the Indians and voyageurs as seamen, not believed their stories of the danger of the waters on which they travelled. Yet when their command of the

lakes was lost to the English and the Americans, the first mariners of the Great Lakes left behind more than the names they gave to points and passages. From Death's Door to Cape Gargantua, the tales and legends they told have endured, appropriated and transformed by the cultures that followed. With these narratives, this literature of place begins.

The Indians had navigated the lakes for millenniums before Europeans appeared in the sixteenth century, and they treated them with a fearful respect born of experience. They believed the lakes were guarded by *manidog* who punished those who did not pay proper homage with fast and ceremony before embarking. Death's Door Strait in Wisconsin takes its name from such a disaster, and there are stories of avenging waves and storms in the literatures of the Fox, Pottawatamie, and Chippewa. the Menomini tell of a party crossing Lake Michigan to receive bounty payments who, despite prayers and rituals before setting out, encountered a storm. Faced with imminent sinking, they make miniature canoes, filled them with lice, and set them upon the angry water with much weeping and mourning. Once the symbolic canoes had been swamped, the waves and wind grew quiet. In Schoolcraft's transcription of "Peta Quay, or The Foam Woman," the lake spirits plot to punish a mother's overweening pride in her daughter's beauty by raising a storm that casts the daughter adrift from the Lake Michigan shore and carries her through the Straits to Detroit. When the loss of her daughter has destroyed the mother's pride, the lake spirits raise another storm and bring her back, although now the daughter's beauty has been faded by age. These Native American themes of pride and over-confidence punished by storm and penitence are reworked by writers as various as Mary Hartwell Catherwood (*Mackinac and Lake Stories,* 1899), Charles Bert Reed (*Four Way Lodge* 1925), MacHarg and Balmer (*The Indian Drum,* 1917), and Joan Skelton (*The Survivor of the Edmund Fitzgerald,* 1985), to become part of the fabric of lakes fiction.

The voyageurs took up the old Indian trade routes, but not necessarily their respect for the water. The leading cause of death among them was drowning, usually because their canoes were swamped by storm waves before they could land. These men, perhaps the most hardy and bravest mariners ever to ply the lakes, were also the least self-conscious of their accomplishments.

Nor, unlike the Indians, did they consider storms and the concomitant drownings a sign of moral or spiritual failure. They simply were, like the rain on their faces, the hard beach on which they slept, and the packs they portaged. Although the songs often associated with them were old French folksongs like "A la claire fontaine," they also composed what they termed *chansons de voyageur,* which were about their experiences on the lakes. "Espouser le voyage" is characteristic in its elegiac complaint: "Dans le cours du voyage,/ Expose aux naufrages;/ Le corps trempe dans l'eau,/ Eveille par les oiseaux,/ Nous n'avons de repos/ Ni le jour ni la nuit." Historical novels written about them such as *Les engages du Grand Portage* (1938) often contain passages about storms on Lake Superior, but most fiction concerns their portages, the meetings at Mackinac Island, and their arrival at the head of Lake Superior. Their descendants still sail the lakes in novels like *His Little World; The Story of Hunch Badeau* (1903) and *Where The Loon Calls* (1928).

French domination of the lakes was ended by the French and Indian War, and their antagonists, the British, continued to control the major fur trading posts until the War of 1812. Perry's victory on Lake Erie in 1813 is arguably the most important naval engagement of the War, and there are a number of historical novels about the battle. *Trumpet in the Wilderness* (1940), *The Fleet In The Forest* (1943), *The Double Hero* (1861), and *The Champions of Freedom* (1816) focus on a hero who helps build Perry's fleet, fights at his side, and accompanies him when he crosses from the *Lawrence* to the *Niagara. The Story of The 'Nancy' and Other Eighteen-Twelvers* (1926) and *The Rowboat War on the Great Lakes* (1965) describe the conflict from a British/Canadian perspective. The fiction set in the War is not typical of the lakes, however, for its themes are particular to that conflict. After the Treaty of Ghent and after the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, came the rise of the first large-scale commerce on the lakes, built to carry freight to the East and immigrants to the West. It is during these years before the Civil War that modern Great Lakes fiction properly begins.

Scenes On Lake Huron (1836), the first maritime novel set on the lakes, shows its salt water origins. Unlike Cooper's *Pathfinder,* which was to follow it four years later, *Scenes* takes place almost

exclusively on the water. It was written, the anonymous author tells us, to

> . . . place the Lake Seamen upon an equal footing; or redeem if possible, a race of the most hardy and skillful men from the imputation, which has been often cast upon them by their Atlantic brethern [sic], old in the profession; that they were, in fact, "no seamen at all;" when in truth, after they themselves had tried the Lakes for some one or two seasons, and taken lectures from our fresh water gentlemen; the more candid have universally acknowledged them to be as efficient as any other, and that they ought to be ranked among the most able on the globe.

In a gruelling twenty-two day passage from Mackinac Island to Detroit in 1822, the skill and mettle of the crew are well-displayed. But the writer was not the artist Cooper was; the characters remain types and the action culminates in a numbing death after disaster after falling rigging after overwhelmed pumps. Save for the geographic references, *Scenes* could have been set on salt water equally well, but that is understandable since there were no models for what lakes fiction could or should be except the salt water novels appearing at this time. Besides, what better way to show the skills of lakes mariners than to put them in a storm any salt water man would recognize instantly?

With Cooper's historical novel *The Pathfinder,* the themes and classic antagonists of lakes fiction take the shape they will bear for the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Few writers after him who describe wind-ship sailing on the lakes can do so without setting up a conflict between a quiet, competent lakes captain and a contemptuous, condescending, incompetent salt water man who, like Cooper's Uncle Cap, gets his comeuppance during a gale. This frontier theme of the local triumphing over the uppity Easterner, a staple of westerns, endures with the same tenacity on the lakes. Norman Reilly Raine used it for "The Deep Water Mate" (1928); Robert Carse alludes to it in *The Beckoning Waters* (1953); several lesser-known writers use it for stories; and it is a staple of Dime Novels. Those who do not appropriate Cooper's theme outright take the tack of *Scenes* and include at least one, and usually several, digressions about the undeserved scorn lake mariners endure.

Melville, too, uses this theme in *Moby-Dick*. With perhaps the most frequently quoted description of the lakes, ". . . they are

swept by Borean and dismasting blasts as direful as any that lash the salted wave; they know what shipwrecks are, for out of sight of land, however inland they have drowned full many a midnight ship with all its shrieking crew," he introduces Steelkilt who, unlike anyone on the crew of the *Pequod,* defies his unreasonable captain and triumphs. "The Town-Ho's Story" appears to suggest that the Great Lakes men are a hardier and more courageous breed than those of the Atlantic. But of all the writers who use this theme, Melville is the most equable in his characterizations of the lakes sailor and the Nantucketers, suggesting that neither is above reproach. What one must remember is that Steelkilt survives, while his Nantucket antagonist does not.

At the turn of the century, Morgan Robertson takes up the idea of Steelkilt and his ability to terrorize salt water captains by force and cunning and develops the tragic-comic character of Sinful Peck who, with his cohorts from Buffalo and Cleveland, creates mayhem on salt water in "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (1899) and *Sinful Peck* (1903). One need not seek far for the historical reasons underlying the persistence of this theme. Whenever times were bad on the lakes or on the coast, sailors left their usual berths looking for work. Salt water men came west to Buffalo where they competed for jobs with lakemen, and they could hardly have been welcome. For every Steelkilt or Sinful Peck who make life miserable for a deep water man, there were salt water men who were, in the words of one nineteenth-century lakes captain, "The toughest lot of pirates who ever walked the decks of a ship. An officer never got them on watch without having to go down and drag them out . . . and he would find every man had a knife at his side" (Murray, *Inland Seas,* 1946). Animosity and sailors flowed both ways in history and fiction, but few were the characters or captains who were as mild-mannered and patient as Cooper's Jasper Eau douce.

The Pathfinder sets in place a number of other motifs that persist in lakes fiction. Because he had sailed the lakes as a professional seaman and knew his subject well, Cooper makes much of the coastal piloting and shiphandling skills of lakes sailors. Eau douce sails without chart or compass or sextant, and according to Cap, makes decisions that fly in the face of reason. Sailing by dead reckoning and superb ship-handling are still characteristic of lakes pilots, and these skills appear in almost

every work of fiction written about the lakes, most notably in *The Marked Man* (1927), "Out of the Trough" (Emberg, 1948), and *Spindrift* (1925). Cooper also structures his novel so that the action takes place as much on land as on water. Certainly this is partly because the Pathfinder's natural home is the wilderness, but it also reflects the geography of the lakes, where land, as lee shore or settlement, is never far away. Most Great Lakes fiction, even in the late twentieth century when lakes merchantmen may not get home for six months at a stretch, is set on land and water equally. The lines that hold ship and men to shore are not easily severed here; there are no Conradian voyages with a small group of men cut adrift from the constraints of civilization to work out their destiny. The shore, with all its concomitant problems, intrudes continually. With the change from the small schooner owned by the men who sailed her, to company steamships with funnels darkening the sky, to the thousand-foot diesels of the transportation conglomerates, the conflict between salt water and fresh becomes less pronounced and the theme of a sailor's place in the societies of ship and shore assumes prominence.

One can run away to sea on the lakes, and many do, but soon must come the confrontation with all that was left behind. Richard Matthews Hallet's *Trial By Fire* (1916) predates O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* by five years, but Hallet's novel, although employing much the same imagery as O'Neill's play, reaches a different conclusion. Hallet limns a clear contrast between poor and rich on the Great Lakes, between the shacks of the "sailors flats" section of Cleveland and the wealthy neighborhoods of Chicago. But most interestingly, Hallet's protagonist does not die an ape; he returns to his stokehold defiant and convinced of his worth to the end. He has confronted the life of the shore that made him and has triumphed over it. For that shore is a frontier, like the lakes he sails upon, and all the sailors who have sailed that frontier before him—Eau douce, Steelkilt, Sinful Peck—have absorbed those lessons the frontier teaches: freedom, self-respect, and individuality. Myth-based though those lessons may have been, particularly by the turn of the century, they convinced men that they were not caged, but free and responsible to no master. This is Melville's theme in "The Town-Ho's Story," which is, significantly, the chapter he chose to publish separately in

Harper's before *Moby-Dick* was printed; it is Cooper's theme as well, as it is Robertson's.

But frontier freedom and self-respect in the nineteenth century can easily become unrestrained license and self-aggrandizement in the twentieth. Mary Frances Doner's *Glass Mountain* (1941) and Jay McCormick's *November Storm* (1943), perhaps the two best novels written about the Great Lakes merchant marine, are both concerned with the impossibility of escape from the shore into complete freedom aboard ship. *Glass Mountain* tells the story of an orphan's drive to become master of a laker because he covets the prestige he will have in his home town. His competitiveness, and the foolhardy wish for recognition that fuels it, cause the death of his son, the loss of his ship, the ruin of his career—and nearly end his marriage. The shore he tried to flee and yet to impress is his place at last. *November Storm* is more subtle but no less concerned with lives left behind and the impossibility of escape from them. In thoughtfully delineated portraits of the crew of the *Blackfoot*, McCormick works out the old conflict between an aging, alcoholic master who has nothing but his ship, and an ambitious first mate. He implies that the skipper who has isolated himself in his power is not the best man to command; there must be a life ashore interconnected with that afloat. To refuse to acknowledge these connections is death for the soul and perhaps the ship as well. Walter Havighurst also considers this theme in *Signature of Time* (1949); Constance Fenimore Woolson used it earlier in "Margaret Morris" (1872), "Ballast Island" (1873), and *Castle Nowhere* (1875); and George Vukelich describes it in the grim context of winter sailing in the 1960 story "The Bosun's Chair."

This rhythm between shore and lake informs the fiction of the fishing fleets as well. This is not surprising, since most fishermen work only with their families or a small hired crew, and seldom, if ever, pass the night on the water. But there is a difference in the land-water theme of the fishing novels. For the fisherman, the shore—aside from his family and other fishermen—represents the law and the enforcers of the law who know nothing of fish but would take away the fisherman's livelihood. In Great Lakes fiction the fishermen occasionally fight against each other, as they do in countless salt water novels, but they also always fight against the conservation officers and police who

have tried to regulate catches of the declining stocks of fish for decades. The fisherman may confront the regulators with anger and defiance, as in the fiction of James Oliver Curwood (*Falkner Of The Inland Seas,* 1931) and George Vukelich (*Fisherman's Beach,* 1962), or with passive trust in God as in Louis Kintziger's *Bay Mild* (1945), but for all fishermen the law-bound society of the shore is hostile.

Yet despite the vagaries of time and genre, as sail gave way to steam and steam to diesel, the one archetypal theme of lakes fiction is the sudden and deadly storm and there are very few works of lakes fiction that do not reach their climax in a gale. *November Storm* is a classic title in this respect, since fall storms as testers of mettle and winnowers of character begin with *Scenes On Lake Huron.* These storms in lakes fiction are no coincidence, since in fall, when the waters are still warm from summer, the cold wind sweeps down on them from Canada and breeds storms of hurricane force that last for days. The shipping history of the lakes—one of the world's most wreck-strewn coasts—catalogs its greatest losses in November, most recently the 729-foot *Edmund Fitzgerald* which sank with all hands on Lake Superior in 1975 faster than anyone in the pilot house could radio Mayday. For a shipping industry that had begun to think itself immune to gales by virtue of technology, the loss of the *Fitz* was a stunning blow.

Once the flurry of new journalism had subsided, a slender feminist novel by Joan Skelton, *The Survivor Of The Edmund Fitzgerald* (1985), asked more profound questions. *Survivor* is one of the few Canadian novels about the lakes, most of which are lighthearted entertainment. In contrast, this is the story of a reclusive Toronto woman awaiting death on the north shore of Lake Superior from a massive, untreatable infection. She meets or imagines another hermit, a young Canadian artist who had stowed away aboard the *Fitz* on her last voyage. After trying and failing to warn the complacent crew of water in the hold, he crawled into a lifeboat which survived the sinking. Aside from the ingenuousness of Skelton's implication that Americans and American culture are not healthy for women, ships, and other living things, the novel closes a circle that was first inscribed by *Scenes On Lake Huron* and Cooper. A century and a half after Uncle Cap mocked the lakes, it is the Americans who have

become the arrogant sailors. They have proved their place as mariners on the lakes and assumed its power, but with that power has come a complacency that wrecks ships and destroys lives. Now they are now to be instructed by another seeming novice, a Canadian who knows nothing about ships, but who will, by simple common sense and honesty, call into question all they believe. The telling difference in this century, however, is that the Americans do not always live to repent of their mistakes.

In one of her last visions before dying, the narrator of *Survivor* imagines that she sees Missiphesu, the great spined water-cat manitou of the Chippewa whose lashing tail raised storms on Lake Superior. She watches the waves rising like animals to come crashing over the ship, punishment, the Indians of centuries ago would have said, for those who set out unthinkingly upon the waters. The land surrounding the lakes has been explored, conquered, disputed, and settled until it is a wilderness no longer; the ships float serenely in a bubble of modern technology. But the unpredictable ferocity of the waters has not changed since the glacier that gave them birth retreated growling to the arctic. This Janus-faced character of the lakes, such bounded and seemingly placid waters that can become so quickly terrifying, informs nearly everything written about them. Kipling, travelling to Lake Superior in the nineteenth century describes it well:

> There is quiet horror about the Great Lakes which grows as one revisits them. Fresh water has no right or call to dip over the horizon, pulling down and pushing up hulls of of big steamers, no right to tread the slow, deep sea dance-step between wrinkled cliffs; nor to roar in on weed and sand beaches between vast headlands that run out for leagues into bays and sea fog. Lake Superior is all the same stuff of what towns pay taxes for (fresh water), but it engulfs and wrecks and drives ashore like a fully accredited ocean—a hideous thing to find in the heart of a continent.

His uneasiness mirrors that of many other writers who feel compelled to offer some explanation for waters that long since should have yielded to the hand of man but which have not. Thus, the lakes are seldom characterized as uncaringly destructive as is the ocean in Melville or Crane; rather, they are often personified as willfully malevolent or haunted by spirits who will punish

those who dare too much, who brag too freely of their omnipotence on a summer's day. All the themes of lakes fiction—the comeuppance of salt water men, the conflict between ship and shore, the gale as arbiter of character—begin in the attempt to understand the fury of the waters, as if words could reorder a reality that knows nothing of them. The Great Lakes are a true wilderness, untamed even now, that resists easy accommodation and mastery, and the stories they have inspired, from the earliest Indian legends to the present moment, bear witness to their unpredictable savagery.

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ISSUES AND IMAGES IN JACKSONIAN POLITICS: DAVID CROCKETT IN THE MIDWEST

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During the month of July, 1834, the citizens of the American Midwest played host to a most distingushed visitor. Colonel David Crockett, the noted Tennessee congressman, passed through their region on his way home from Washington. Prompted by local officials, he delivered major addresses in Cincinnati, in Jeffersonville, Indiana, in Louisville, and in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, which forcefully presented the prevailing Whig position on the issues of the day and roundly denounced President Andrew Jackson. This paper will analyze both the issues and images presented in these speeches in an attempt to reveal the nature of the speaker and of the era's partisan political oratory.

1834 was the climactic year of David Crockett's life.[1] He had risen from initial poverty to become a dominant figure on the frontier and one of the nation's leading citizens. The major elements in this climb were a native intelligence, a gift for witty speech, a favorable record as a soldier in the Creek Wars, and a fortunate second marriage to a wealthy widow. Crockett was twice elected to the Tennessee state legislature (in 1821 and 1823) and, after an initial failure, was elevated to Congress. As one of the first frontiersmen to sit in the House, Crockett proved to be a thorn in the side of the Jacksonians who formed the majority of the Tennessee delegation in Washington. Although he had been elected as a Democrat—indeed, it would have been impossible to run successfully under any other banner in the Tennessee of the 1820's—Crockett really had little in common with Andrew Jackson or most of his partisans. The Jacksonians represented the upper and middle classes; Crockett was truly the

supporter of the frontier poor and was "one of the few individuals who dared to support the rights of West Tennesseeans against the Nashville basin and East Tennessee regions."[2] His quests for improved western transportation networks and for favorable federal land policy were constantly thwarted by the Jacksonian majority who, following the President's lead, opposed internal improvements and cheap land. Constant legislative defeat, reinforced by a genuine dislike of many of Jackson's policies, drove Crockett, by the start of his second term in 1829, into the arms of the opposition Whig party.

Although temporarily forced out of office by a narrow defeat in 1831, Crockett returned to Congress two years later, eager to spread the gospel of Whig anti-Jacksonism. He accomplished this, and simultaneously promoted himself, by a series of tours throughout the Northeast and by speeches in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Once the congressional session was completed, Crockett resumed his tour, visiting cities along the Ohio River on his homeward jorney.

Although Crockett had expressed a strong desire to return quickly to Tennessee, it is clear that he was not at all unhappy about the opportunity to address the Midwesteners. There were several reasons for his eagerness to speak. First, since the Midwest contained a number of Whig strongholds, Crockett had every reason to expect a favorable reception of his views. In addition, as an avid opponent of Andrew Jackson, the Frontiersman actively sought opportunities to express his dislike of the President. Finally, there existed a personal connection in Crockett's friendship with Representative Thomas Chilton of Kentucky. Chilton was a member of the bar of Elizabethtown and, interestingly enough, was elected to Congress for the same three terms as was Crockett. Chilton was one of the first to defend Crockett when the latter broke with the Democrats and was apparently of great help during the writing of the Tennesseean's autobiography. Thus Crockett was only too happy to help his friend by speaking in Chilton's district.[3]

One characteristic of Crockett's Midwestern addresses which a reader quickly notices is the absence of extensive references to local personalities or conditions. Only two such instances are evident. In Cincinnati, Crockett rebuked the local Congressman who had publicly disowned those who had voted against him in

the recent election. Crockett preferred a more high-minded approach: "I consider myself the people's servant. If a man votes against me, he has a right to do it. . . . Let a man vote against me, and I am as much his representative as if he had voted for me."[4]

Crockett's second reference to local affairs occurred in Jeffersonville, Indiana, where he expressed a wish "to discuss the question of the President vetoing the Wabash appropriation, and yet signing the Van Buren, New York, Hudson River bill."[5] The surprising existence of only these two brief comments on local events may be explained in two ways. First, it is likely that Crockett was largely unfamiliar with local issues or regional concerns. As far as history records, this was his first and only major political tour down the Ohio River valley; thus he simply lacked the information necessary to engage in an extensive discussion of local problems. Second, and perhaps more important, the issues which were vital to Crockett and to the Whigs generally were national, not local, in scope. The question of internal improvements affected the entire West, while tariffs, political patronage, and the destruction of the Second Bank concerned the entire country. Thus it may well be that Crockett correctly analyzed his audience when he addressed them largely on matters of national interest.

Crockett was heard by quite disparate audiences. In Cincinnati, he spoke informally at a political picnic; or, as he put it, "a committee waited on me, and invited me to partake of a cold cut at three o'clock that day, and make them a speech."[6] In Louisville the address was delivered in the court house yard, as the speaker immodestly claimed, to "the largest concourse of people that ever has been assembled in Louisville since it has been settled."[7] The Elizabethtown speech was presented to a relatively small group at a dinner for party leaders; the nature of the audience at the Indiana speech is not recorded. Regarding specific persons, historical references give little evidence as to who actually was present. In the introduction to his Louisville address, Crockett mentioned "the celebrated Mrs. Drake," apparently a reference to the well-known actress Frances Ann Deeny Drake, who made several tours of the American West. Representative Chilton may well have been present at the Elizabethtown dinner, since one of the toasts at the conclusion of Crockett's speech was in Chilton's honor.

Regardless of what persons were present, Crockett was determined to acquaint them with "the real and true situation of our once happy country."[8] As might be expected, therefore, the arguments with which he regaled the audience were pure Whiggery: Jackson was a tyrant, his policies were moving the country to edge of ruin, and only a Whig victory in the next election would salvage the nation.

The three issues which Crockett argued in front of the Midwesterners were political patronage, the corruption of the post office, and the destruction of the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson has long been regarded as the father of the spoils system at the federal level, and Crockett was quick to attack the President for this aspect of his administration. According to the Frontiersman, Jackson had dismissed anyone who opposed his election and had then appointed his own partisans to fill the vacant offices. As Crockett explained the process, "as soon as he took his seat as President, the first inquiry was, who has had the audacity to vote against Andrew Jackson? The man that had dared to do this, had to take to his heels; he got his walking ticket. . . . The next question was, who had huzzaed most and loudest for the 'greatest and best?' The man that *had,* was *qualified* to fill any office in the government." So bad had this situation become that "men who had grown gray in the service of their country, and who understood their duty, were turned out of office to make room for the worshippers of Andrew Jackson."[9] Thus, according to Crockett, the President was guilty of partisanship of the worst kind, basing his administration on subservience rather than competence.

Secondly, Crockett deplored the wasteful practices of the post office and the partisan increase in the number of its officers. Initially he argued that the department was needlessly expanded: "In the old times, that is, in the prodigal times of Adams and Clay, there was *forty-four* clerks in the post office department, and now there is, I am informed, *ninety-six;* and at the last session, there was a modest demand on Congress for *forty thousand dollars* to pay for extra clerks."[10] Such extravagance had produced its natural result; the new postmaster "exhausted the surplus . . . and . . . actually got the department into such a state, that it is about half a million worse than nothing."[11] In spite of such increases, the department seemed less able than before

to perform its functions; witness Crockett's description of the situation in his own district.

> When in Congress . . . I tried to get a stage-route . . . but I couldn't succeed. . . . As soon as a Mr. Fitzgerald, my successor, one of the true stripe, went on, it was thought highly important to have the route established that I wanted. Well, in fixing the route, they left out Troy, in Obion county; and the people there began to complain of Mr. Fitzgerald, that he had neglected them, and in all probability they might neglect him at the next election.[12]

Now, all this new post office was good for was to produce "extra servility, extra impudence, extra electioneering, extra provision for friends, extra votes, extra trumped-up charges, extra printing offices, and extra loans for extra kindnesses."[13]

Finally, in true Whig fashion, Crockett excoriated the President for his attack on the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson had felt the Bank guilty of meddling in politics and of supporting opposition candidates; he therefore, against the advice of the House, had withdrawn the federal deposits from the institutuion and had vetoed its renewal charter. The Bank's president, Nicholas Biddle, then proceeded to call in loans, artifically restricted credit, and attempted to create a panic to force Jackson to alter his course. The Whigs, many of whom had been helped by the Bank, rose to its defense. Crockett launched several lines of attack against the President's action. First, the Bank was a perfectly safe place for federal monies. "The House of Representatives had declared, on solemn vote, that the deposits were safe; and this bank had actually paid out upwards of four hundred and sixty millions of dollars, without one cent of loss or expense to the government."[14] Secondly, Jackson's scheme for reallocating the deposits to local banks promised disaster, as history showed. "In 1811 . . . we were compelled, for several years, to deposit the revenue of the country in the identical kinds of banks that General Jackson tells us he is now depositing the revenue in. . . . In about five years . . . by making these local banks places of deposit, the government lost one million five hundred thousand dollars to the country."[15] Finally, those who managed the local banks would be the ones to suffer if anything went wrong; as Crockett asked the citizens of Louisville, "do you sleep sound, when you know that your name is on the paper, binding you and

yours to repay money deposited in the bank where you are a director, and have but one voice in twelve to prevent its being loaned out to Tom, Dick, or Harry? Remember, that a day of reckoning is coming."[16]

Thus concerning himself with patronage and finance, post office and banks, Crockett left the modern reader an insight into the major considerations of the day. Even more important than the issues, however, were the images which the speaker was attempting to create. In his addresses he was constantly trying to construct positive pictures of himself and negative views of Andrew Jackson.

Crockett presented himself in at least three different guises. He was, first, the poor uneducated frontiersman who had risen in spite of all disadvantages to the position he now held. Thus in one speech he apologized, "I shall be compelled to address you in homespun language—in my own plain manner; for I have never had the opportunity of an education, which enables men to use the refined language that is common for gentlemen to use, filling a high station, such as I have been chosen to fill, by a portion of the people of Tennessee."[17] Indeed, so destitute was he of ability that were it not for the desperate state of the country he would not dare to speak; as he told the people of Louisville,

> I have been requested by many citizens to address you. . . . This I would most assuredly have refused in common times; but from recent ocurances . . . I conceive it due from every public servant to present to the people the real and true situation of our once happy country. . . . And all I am sorry for is, that the citizens of Louisville had not a more capable organ to perform that duty than your humble servant.[18]

Such disclaimers served two important functions. First, they fulfilled the image of Crockett which his Whig supporters wished him to present and which his audience expected. The prevailing picture of the Tennessee Congressman emphasized his lack of formal training and his natural cleverness; any different image would have disappointed colleagues and auditors alike. Secondly, the apology served to neutralize any failings in the speech. If the address proved a disaster, the audience could not fairly claim to have been cheated; after all, they had been warned. If, on the other hand, a strong effort were forthcoming, the impact would

be all the greater, given the speaker's lack of initial advantage. In either case the speaker profited from the device.

In his second image, Crockett built a picture of glorious independence. As one of the few Tennesseeans who dared to speak out against the President, Crockett was able to make much of his refusal to be curbed by the administration: "When I was first elected I knew nothing about this party discipline. . . . I am no man's man. I bark at no man's bid. I will never come and go, and fetch and carry, at the whistle of the great man in the white house, no matter who he is."[19] This type of defiance was exactly the position most admired by the virulently anti-Jackson Whigs, and could not help but enhance the esteem in which they held the speaker.

Finally, Crockett revealed that he was honest and strong enough to admit error. In the opening lines of the Elizabethtown address he confessed to having been duped by Jackson in the early stages of the President's career. Crockett explained,

> in making my remarks, I will be reluctantly obliged to say some harsh things about the acts of a man I once supported. I was one of General Jackson's first soldiers; I helped him gain his glory; and I was as sincere in my support of him as any man in America. I had heard the hue and cry against Messrs. Adams and Clay; they were called the prodigals. . . . I believed this was all true, and I joined in the cry to put them down.[20]

Crockett thus allied himself with all those who found they could no longer support the policies of the administration and at the same time showed himself to be a man of stature. Not for Crockett the petty position that feared to admit a mistake; for him the grandeur of spirit which could say "I erred, but now I see the light."

Thus as an uneducated, but shrewd, frontiersman, proud of his independent honesty, Crockett fulfilled the audiences' expectations of him as a speaker and as a man. Even as he was building himself up, however, the Frontiersman lost no opportunity to tear down President Andrew Jackson. Three separate images of the man in the White House were created for the Midwestern audiences.

First, the President was pictured as a deceitful, inconsistent politician who had espoused certain positions in order to get

himself elected and who, once in office, had changed his stance on nearly every issue. In order to bring this situation home to his listeners, Crockett created an analogy to a candidating clergyman who during his trial period "would preach up your own doctrines foreordination and the Trinity," but who, having received the pulpit, "would preach the doctrines of Unitarianism, or any other different from what you thought." Such an individual deserved only to be expelled "with disgrace stamped on his forehead." Jackson was equally deserving of such treatment, for "has he not acted a fraud upon the people? Is it not political hypocrisy and moral dishonesty?"[21]

Crockett listed the issues on which the chief executive had altered his course. Before the election Jackson "was . . . the firm friend and supporter of internal improvements by the general government; . . . was then in favor of the tariff; and most of all . . . was to reform the government and retrench its expenditures!!"[22] Concerning this last, Crockett rhetorically questioned the Cincinnati audience, "where is the retrenchment and reform he promised? Has he done it?"[23] Clearly in the speaker's view, the President had not kept his campaign promises; such a turnabout "may suit some people," Crockett vowed, but "it does not suit me."[24]

Secondly, Crockett argued that the President was tyrannical; indeed, he deserved to be compared to the notable dictators of history. He was similar to the detested King George III in that he had rejected petitions of the people for redress of their grievances. "King George the Third . . . brought oppression after oppression upon the American colonies, till his burthens became intolerable. The people laid their petitions in heaps at the feet of his majesty. They were treated with silent contempt."[25] This was scarcely different from the recent bank crisis when "there were two hundred thousand petitioners, who sent their memorials to Congress, praying for a restoration of the deposites. And where were these memorials sent? To a packed committee, made by a party speaker."[26] Indeed, so close was the parallel that in Cincinnati Crockett found it easy to refer to the President as "King Andrew the First."

Jackson was also similar to another famous tyrant of old. Like Julius Caesar, the President had personally taken control of the entire government and scorned the people's representatives. The country now saw "one man holding the sword of the nation in one hand, and seizing in the other the purse of the people, bidding defiance to Congress, to the laws, and to the nation."[27] Certainly these acts, argued the speaker, placed the chief executive among the least worthy leaders in history.

Finally, the President had proved an incompetent administrator, for he had selected a group of partisan misfits to surround him. They were, according to Crockett, "a set of the greatest scrubs on earth."[28] They included Representative Stevenson of Virginia, the previously mentioned "party speaker" of the House, and future Chief Justice Taney, whom Jackson used merely as "his tool."[29] Most important of all was Vice President Martin Van Buren, "a political Judas" who "like a real Gopher, works more *under* than above *ground*" and who had been "smuggled into the vice-presidency, in the seat of Jackson's breeches" even though as a youngster he had been a "little, lying, tale-telling boy."[30] Clearly, one of the greatest charges against the President was his poor choice of subordinates.

Thus, in the eyes of the speaker, President Andrew Jackson was an inconsistent, tyrannical, mal-administering president, who deserved the scorn of every right-thinking citizen of the country.

In the end, the tide of Jacksonian popularity which he was bucking proved too much for Crockett; his Democratic opponent in the 1835 election returned him permanently to private life by a margin of two hundred votes. Yet Crockett left behind a notable legacy, and not the smallest part of it continues to be the spiteful, yet delightful, partisan oratory he exhibited in his tour through the American Midwest.

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NOTES

1. For the most comprehensive examination of Crockett's life, see James A. Shackford, *David Crockett: The Man and the Legend* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).
2. Stuart Stiffler, "Davy Crockett: the Genesis of Heroic Myth," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly,* 16 (June, 1957), p. 134.
3. For the role of Chilton in the writing of Crockett's autobiography, see Shackford, pp. 89-90 and 128.
4. David Crockett, *An Account of Colonel Crockett's Tour to the North and Down East* (Philadelphia: Cary and Hart, 1835), pp. 153-4.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-3.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

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INDICATIONS OF A WORLDLY SPIRIT: RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION TO THE ARTS IN EARLY CINCINNATI, 1815-1830

DENNIS P. WALSH

In January 1989, The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, the city's professional theater company, performed the Tony Award winning drama "Equus," but not before the Cincinnati Vice Squad had given its approval. Winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1974 and made into a movie in 1977, "Equus" had nudity in its climatic scene. A year earlier, The Playhouse performed Mary Shelly's "Frankenstein," again only after the Vice Squad had approved the production. In this instance, the police ordered that the "monster" be clothed at the critical "birth" scene to avoid tainting the morals of young people who might be in the audience. Local newspapers reported these incidents but failed to comment editorially. It is improbable that the police in any other major Midwestern city—Chicago, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Detroit or Des Moines—could wield such authority over non-obscene productions. However, Cincinnati is an anomaly. The city, which just celebrated its bicentennial, proudly adheres to a moral code formulated nearly two hundred years ago during its formative period. "If Cincinnati is good for anything, it's good for beating the dickens out of a latent Puritan," according to Harry Stoner, Jonathan Vallin's fictional detective who works the streets of Newport and Covington, Kentucky, the underbelly of Cincinnati. "there are too many of the real articles walking around . . . You can't beat a real Cincinnati moralist . . ."[1]

This Cincinnati "Puritanism" is the basis for the Vice Squad's near inpunity in legislating the theater. At the same time, it is a catalyst for the Queen City's cultural development. To understand

the artistic milieu of Cincinnati, it is necessary to explore the city's moral roots, which were planted in the early nineteenth century, when the tiny wilderness outpost flowered into a major metropolitan center. It was an era of remarkable material expansion, but it also was an epoch of intense religious activism. More than any other force, militant Christianity determined the controlling ethos of Cincinnati and shaped its artistic sensibilities.

By the third decade of the nineteenth century, Cincinnati was a sophisticated urban oasis amidst a rustic wilderness and served as the commercial and cultural center of what had been the Old Northwest. Founded by a handful of settlers in 1788, the little community on the banks of the Ohio River had only 460 residents at the turn of the century. But by 1816, Cincinnati's population had grown to 6,500, and by 1830, nearly 25,000 lived in the Queen City of the West.[2] In the forty-two years following its founding, Cincinnati experienced extraordinary growth, given that as late as the 1860s only a small percentage of Americans lived in communities with populations exceeding 2,000.

Cincinnati's expansion transformed the frontier society. Rather than finding a rude outpost west of the Alleghenies, its many visitors discovered a robust center of activity replete with libraries, schools, book shops, newspapers, reform movements, and a varied social life. In many aspects, Cincinnati more closely resembled Boston, Philadelphia or Baltimore than the "log cabin" settlement envisioned by strangers. Its boosters hailed the city as the "Athens," "London" or "Paris" of the West. Yet despite these flattering sobriquets, Cincinnati lagged the more established Eastern cities in one principal area—the cultivation of the fine arts.

Historically Cincinnati, as well as much of the Midwest, had been criticized by Easterners as being an artistic backwater. Poking fun at the city's cultural environment, Mark Twain reportedly quipped that he wanted to be in Cincinnati when the world ended, because everything there happened ten years late. No matter how city boosters sought to dispel this "backwater" image, critics remained convinced that Cincinnatians were an excessively pragmatic people singularly devoted to commerce and somehow deficient in the finer sensibilities. "The dominant mercantile temper of frontier centers seemed to militate against rapid cultural development," Richard C. Wade wrote in *The Urban Frontier*. "Undoubtedly the mercantile atmosphere of

Western communities retarded the growth of a rounded society" (104-105).

Cincinnati did enjoy a period in the latter half of the nineteenth century when it was the major cultural center of the Midwest, especially in music. But its preeminence was short-lived, and the city never achieved its lofty goal of rivaling New York and Boston for dominance in the arts. Robert C. Vitz argued in *The Queen and the Arts: Cultural Life in Nineteenth Century Cincinnati* that the city's demise as a financial and industrial center sapped its drive for superiority in the arts. "Commerce was indeed to be the handmaid of the arts," Vitz wrote. Without a strong economy, the arts could not flourish (6). However true Vitz's analysis may be, it ignores the fact that cultural foundation of the Queen City was tenuous at best. The true heritage of Cincinnati was rooted in militant Christianity, which distrusted imagination and cast a cold eye on the arts.

Isaac Appleton Jewett, a Harvard College graduate who visited Cincinnati in the 1830s and monitored the progress of the arts, perceptively wrote that "a religious-minded community absorbed in pork, politics and real estate and content with the status quo was a poor milieu for the arts."[3] Jewett's observation that Cincinnati was a "religious-minded community" is essential. According to the *Directory of Cincinnati, 1834*, twenty-one churches served a population of approximately 28,000. By 1840, there were twenty-four churches downtown between Fourth and Seventh streets alone.[4] According to one estimate, there were more than 30,000 active church members in a city of 46,000. Approximately two-thirds of the population attended church regularly.[5]

Organized religion was pervasive. Frances Trollope, author of the celebrated but snobbish book *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, was appalled by the power of religion in Cincinnati, where she lived from 1828 to 1830. "I never saw, or read of, where religion had so strong a hold upon the women, or a slighter hold upon the men," Trollope wrote (61). "I never saw any people who appeared to live so much without amusement as the Cincinnatians," she added, going on to describe one of the major cultural events of the season—an evangelical revival at the Presbyterian Church (59).

Why the arts languished in Cincinnati defies simple observation, but any analysis must take into account the impact of religion. The Second Great Awakening (1800-1830), which powerfully manifested itself in the Kentucky revival camps, paralleled the rise of Cincinnati.[6] The Queen City struggled with militant Christianity as it sought to artistically define itself. Nowhere was the conflict more observable than in the periodic skirmishes between the pulpit and the theater. From 1814 through 1830s, Cincinnati clergy, led by the Rev. Joshua Lacy Wilson, pastor of the dominant First Presbyterian Church and an "Old Light" Calvinist,[7] reviled the theater, its content, its actors and its patrons. These fulminations, like the stone tossed in still waters, had a ripple effect for the nascent artistic community. Religious opposition to the theater curtailed not only the performing arts, but created a rigid, if not inhospitable climate for the novel, sculpture, poetry and painting as well.

Religious fires burned brightly on the Eastern Seaboard during this period, quickly sweeping westward across the Alleghenies when a multitude of immigrants poured into the Ohio Valley. Largely of Scotch-Irish descent, these people were rugged, independent, pragmatic and mercantile in nature. But above all, they were a deeply religious people. Proponents of all American religions sought to transform this dynamic region into a fully Christianized nation. The Presbyterian and Congregational churches formed the Plan of the Union in 1801 and by 1830 had founded more than one hundred churches and two colleges in the area. The Methodist circuit riders and their "free will" theology scored remarkable advances, while the Baptists were equally successful in planting Christian democracy on the newly opened frontier.

"The strong influence of religion must be reckoned with in any analysis of this early western civilization," historian Beverley W. Bond Jr. has written. "The Influence of religion in the Old Northwest was far out of proportion to the number of church members" (25-26). The Bible assumed paramount importance in the daily lives of these devout people, shaping the preponderance of their private and public attitudes. Religion, Bond added, had become for these pioneers "a force for law and order . . . with a certain Puritanic attitude in favor of public control of private conduct" (29). The Puritan attitude toward the arts also is

well documented by Foster Rhea Dulles, in *American Learns to Play*, a thorough examination of the Puritan distrust of the imagination and its contempt for idleness. Nowhere was the Second Great Awakening more strongly manifest than its influence on recreation, Dulles wrote. "A new generation of spiritual leaders took up arms against any broadening whatsoever of the field of amusements. They preached the sinfulness of idle pleasure with a fierce intolerance" (88-89).

Such was the philosophy of the Rev. Joshua Lacy Wilson, who came to Cincinnati in 1808 as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and remained in that position until his death in 1846. During his thirty-eight years in the city, the Rev. Wilson rarely was out of the public view. A veteran of the Kentucky revival camps, he was a martial Christian convinced of his righteousness and dedicated to striking down God's enemies. It was his revival meeting that Francis Trollope condemned for placing young women on the "anxious bench" until they repented of their sins and surrendered to Jesus. The Rev. Wilson was so well known for his outspokenness that he was nicknamed the "Frontier Controversialist."[8]

He was particularly vocal about the arts. Writing to noted Cincinnati historian and booster Daniel Drake in 1820, the reverend explained that art served "the creature more than the Creator" and "inflamed in a high degree this lust and this pride which are clear indications of a worldly spirit." He was reiterating the ages-old Puritan complaint that the second commandment forbids the creation of "graven images." Differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable art, the Rev. Wilson explained:

> All articles of furniture needed in domestic life . . . all vehicles of conveyance by land or sea can be fabricated without making the image or likeness of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath. An artist may form a spoon, a table, a bureau and be not only innocent but an estimable workman. But should he give to the handle of a knife the form of a serpent or fix on his spoon the likeness of an eagle or cause his table to stand on the feet of a bear or mount his bureau with the heads of lions, he becomes, in my opinion, a transgressor of moral law."[9]

Art calls attention from the works of God to the "devices of men, from reality to fiction, from truth to lies," the reverend con-

cluded.[10] Thus when art, whether it be painting, sculpture, music, poetry or drama, strove to exceed the plebian, when it sought to amuse rather than instruct, tended to inflame passion rather than piety, or brought praise upon the artist rather than piety, or brought praise upon the artist rather than the Almighty, organized religious forces cried sacrilege and attacked.

It is not surprising, then, that painting and sculpture fared poorly in early Cincinnati. New York's Academy of Fine Arts was opened in 1817; Philadelphia's Art Academy was founded in 1822, and it was in 1825 that Thomas Cole founded the famous Hudson River School of painting. By 1834, William Dunlap felt secure enough to publish the *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States,* but there was no mention of Cincinnati in his book. Likewise, in tracing "Cincinnati as an Art Center, 1830-1865," Denny Carter dismissed the 1830 Queen City as "a still primitive frontier town" where there was little time for the appreciation of art. Neither account referred to the aesthetics of Joshua Wilson, who "never would have a portrait or picture in his house because it was an image."[11]

The first attempt to establish a Cincinnati art academy began around 1825. Frederick Eckstein, a sculptor who helped establish the Philadelphia Art Academy, proposed an art academy for the Queen City soon after his arrival in 1823. But the religious sentiment was strongly opposed to painting. Five years later supporters of the proposed academy assured the public that the art would be "correct" and "avoid the tasteless" and that the academy would "not waste our cares, our labors and our wealth upon things disproportioned and unsuitable."[12] Nevertheless, the effort failed, and it was not until mid-century—long after the demise of the religious fervor that marked the earlier years of the century—that the Western Art Union was established. The young Hiram Powers, who became one of America's leading sculptors (although he left Cincinnati to spend his creative life in Italy), first exhibited there. However, the Art Union failed after a year. Not until 1865 did Cincinnati finally gain a deserved reputation as a regional arts center.

In music, the renowned Theodore Thomas founded the Cincinnati May Festival in 1873, drawing national attention to the Queen City and its new Musical Hall. Yet the struggle to establish a musical heritage had been frustrated in the Queen City's early

years. The Haydn Society of Cincinnati was formed in 1819 to provide "rational amusement" for its members and "promote and diffuse a more correct taste for sacred music."[13]

Modeled after the Handel Society of Boston, the group had a difficult time from its inception and finally disolved in 1824 after five lackluster seasons. The Society received little support from the community, which seemed indifferent to its repertoire of religious music. In an effort to broaden its appeal to an indifferent public, the Society had planned an evening of "non-traditional" music. This excursion into the profane apparently caused further internal strife among its factious members, who already were divided along sectarian lines. The group disbanded after this performance, and it was not until the early 1830s that "non-sacred" music became acceptable in public performance.

Literature too felt the impact of religion. Francis Trollope complained that Cincinnatians, whose major "entertainment" appeared to be religion, were uninterested in literary matters. She gave a biased but amusing account of a literary discussion with an "educated" man. He had not read Wordsworth, did not approve of Byron, thought Chaucer's "English" was foreign and knew with certainty that Shakespeare was "immoral" because he wrote for the theater. Trollope added that in her two years in Cincinnati, it was her only literary discussion. Most Cincinnatians read either religious works or newspapers, and even the newspapers devoted many columns to religious topics. In fact, every leading sect had either a newspaper or a periodical. Joshua Wilson published *The Pandect* and wrote copiously on theological issues. "Religious worship, Scripture reading, hymn singing, sermon hearing . . . attendance at camp meetings, revivals, theological discussions and the universal custom of reading, thinking and talking on religious subjects had immense influence in shaping the literature of the Ohio Valley in its beginnings," Irene Cornwell wrote.[14] In sum religion dominated the field of literature in Cincinnati's formative years. Yet no single issue more galvanized the forces of militant Christianity than the theater, "the seat of Satan."

The theater in Cincinnati, in fact throughout the Old Northwest, had a humble but auspicious beginning in September, 1801. According to the fledgling newspaper *The Western Spy*, a group calling itself the Thespian Corps performed the popular British comedy *The Poor Soldier* in a shed near Fort Washington.

The amateur actors, assisted by troopers from the fort, performed the play at least twice during the year. The Thespians reprised the play five months later in February, 1802 along with another comedy, *The Mock Doctor or the Dumb Lady Cured.* Helen Langworthy, in *The Theatre in the Frontier Cities of Lexington, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio, 1797-1835,* noted that the Thespian Corps also performed several times in the loft of a stable and possibly in Yeatmen's Tavern, a two-story log cabin that served as post office, meeting house and, for a time, city hall.

By 1808, the Thespian Corps was well established, with many of Cincinnati's leading citizens, including Nicholas Longworth, Peyton Symmes, James Findlay and Dr. Daniel Drake, engaged in the amateur productions.

Before long "strolling players" or professional actors came down the Ohio River on flatboats to entertain in the frontier communities, augmenting the rising Cincinnati theater. These "strollers" or "itinerants" not only acted, but they danced, juggled, tumbled, sang and performed magic tricks. Supported by the amateur actors, they provided a full theater experience for the community. Among the plays performed were: *Secrets Worth Knowing, The Mountaineers, The Padlock,* and the Restoration comedies, *Love-a-la-Mode* and *The School for Scandal.*

Daniel Drake, the famed Cincinnati doctor and city booster, wrote in his *Picture of Cincinnati* (1815) that "theatrical exhibitions both by amateurs and itinerants have occurred at intervals for a dozen years. A society of young townsmen have lately erected a temporary wooden playhouse in which they have performed highly successful comedies" (167-168). The popularity of theater had grown so much that by 1814, the Thespian Corps felt strong enough to build a full-time structure on Columbia Street (formerly Second Street and now Pete Rose Way) between Main and Sycamore Streets. It was the construction of a permanent theater that apparently provoked the religious community into marshalling its forces and declaring a war against the theater that spanned more than a decade and had a lasting impact on the community's sensibilities.

In her history of the Cincinnati theater, Ophia D. Smith writes, "Cincinnati ministers, led by the Rev. Joshua Lacy Wilson, did all they could to kill the theater in their town. They wrote long columns of turgid prose for the newspapers, replete with

quotations from the classics to prove the wickedness of the drama" (251). Religious antipathy to the theater had roots in antiquity, when the early Roman Church objected to the Greek or pagan origins of the drama. For the Protestants, Puritan minister Jeremey Collier's 1698 *Short View of the Immorality and Profaness of the English Stage* served as the quintessential indictment of the theater. The major complaints were that the drama used rank and indecent language, profaned Holy Scripture, abused the clergy and made heroes out of libertines by giving them success in debauchery. The drama also seduced people into leading fantasy lives, causing them to ignore their proper duty to God and family. Moreover, it was believed that the theater was the site of sexual liaisons, vulgarities, and boisterous and indecent behavior.

Typical of Rev. Wilson's attacks on the drama was his 1815 letter in the newspaper the *Liberty Hall,* in which he wrote: "It [theater] is calculated to lead the minds of youth from serious reflection, or if they reflect at all, their thoughts are employed on things which never had existence except in the mind of some distempered fancy [imagination] like their own. It moreover unfits mankind, generally, for the common concerns of life, and induces them to believe they are what they are not" (Aaron 377). In subsequent years, as the theater continued, the Rev. Wilson pointed in horror to the indecency of the stage, to the actors pandering "to the tastes of the basest and most abandoned of our population" (Aaron 378). His fulminations were so well known that one wag, familiar with the Bible, raised a July 4th toast to the theater, saying, "The Cincinnati theater—may it not like the walls of Jericho, fall at the sound of Joshua's horn" (Goss 447).

In fairness to the Rev. Wilson, many of his depreciations were not altogether misguided. Mrs. Trollope described the audience at the Columbia Theater as reeking with the "mixed smell of onions and whiskey." She adds that the "spitting was incessant" and the variety of noises were "perpetual" and "of the most unpleasant kind" (110-111). Lending credulity to Mrs. Trollope's unkind observations were the famous house rules for the Columbia Theater:

I. Gentlemen will be particular in not disturbing the audience by loud talking in the Bar-Room, nor by personal altercations in any part of the house . . .

II. Gentlemen in the boxes and in the pit are expected not to wear their hats nor to stand nor sit on the railing, during the performance; as they will thereby prevent the company behind . . . from seeing the stage . . .

III. The practice of cracking nuts now abandoned in all well regulated Theatres should be entirely avoided during the time the curtain is up . . .

IV. Persons in the upper Boxes and Gallery will be careful to avoid the uncourteous habit of throwing nut-shells, apples, etc, into the Pit; and those in the Pit are cautioned against clambering over the balustrade into the Boxes, either during or at the end of the Performance.

V. Persons in the Gallery are requested not to disturb the harmony of the House by boisterous conduct, either in language or by striking with sticks on the seats or bannisters, etc. (Greve 640-641).

The rules continue for another seven prohibitions against unruly behavior, giving the sense that bedlam was entirely possible in the early Cincinnati theater.

The location of the theater at Sycamore and Columbia Streets (now Pete Rose Way) also gave credence to the Rev. Wilson's complaints. Like all bustling riverfront cities, Cincinnati had its dark underside. Gambling, drunkeness, murder, robbery and prostitution took place on the streets and in the numerous taverns near the waterfront. Newspapers of the era repeatedly complained about the "the outcasts of society who lurk about the streets and alleys" (Aaron 136). It appears that the Rev. Wilson's obloquies were in part justified, given that his church and several others were located within half a mile from the theater and the waterfront district.

Nevertheless, supporters of the theater were as enthusiastically committed to its defense as was the Rev. Wilson to its defeat. Writing anonymously as "Dramaticus," "Theatricus" and even "Shakespeare," the defenders denied charges that the drama was a corrupting influence, arguing instead that when properly used it was a tool for moral instruction. In an especially strong response, Theatricus, writing in 1815 in the *Liberty Hall*, condemned the Rev. Wilson for setting "himself up as Jehovah" in passing judgment on the morality of the drama and its adherents. Theatricus argued that men of exalted position and possessing

high virtue, including John Milton, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison and Dr. Johnson, approved of the theater, implying that if they approved, the citizens of Cincinnati equally could do so. Theatricus allowed that "licentious stage" was capable of corrupting the minds of the people, but when properly regulated the theater may be made into "a school of virtue, elocution and manners . . ." (Langworthy 205). Theatricus also argued that corrupting influences were not confined to the stage. In bitter reference to the clergy in general and the Rev. Wilson in particular, Theatricus wrote, "It may be averred with equal truth that the abuses of every other institution are fraught with no less mischief to the public. At this very moment the abuse of the pulpit is more apparent of public mischief than the stage" (Langworthy 205-206).

The confrontations over the Cincinnati theater ended in the late 1820s, almost the same time that the Second Great Awakening drew to a close. Locating a direct cause and effect relationship between the two occurrences goes beyond mere coincidence. It is safe to say that Cincinnati, and America, experienced vast changes during the early national period that undermined the religious revival and the effectiveness of the clergy's attacks on the theater and the arts. Central to the Second Great Awakening had been a national climate of anxiety, confusion and disjuncture. However, by the late 1820s, following the defeat of the British in the War of 1812 and the focusing of national priorities, America entered a period of unrestrained optimism, marked by the election of Andrew Jackson and the rise of the common man. The nation swelled with assuredness and enthusiasm, certain it enjoyed God's beneficence. The exhortations of the deterministic "Old Light" Calvinists and like-minded clergy had no place in a country exercising its "free will" and pursuing its "manifest destiny."

Bursting with pride, America searched for appropriate symbols and art forms, independent of British models, that would give shape to the newly discovered sense of self that suffused the young nation. In the novel, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper were hard at work, soon followed by the Transcendentalists—Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville—who would light the literary horizon. The American drama also was stirring. In 1827 James Kirk Paulding wrote his seminal essay, *American Drama,* in which he called for plays that would appeal to national

feelings, focus on American incidents and demonstrate "a generous chivalry in the maintenance and vindication of those great and illustrious peculiarities . . . of character by which we are distinguished from all other nations" (Meserve 21).

His call was answered. Theater historian Arthur Hobson Quinn notes that as many as 700 plays were written and produced by Americans between 1800 and 1860. The preponderance of plays from the mid-1820s to 1850 reflected the public taste, emphasizing "the power of the common man and the heroic qualities that all Americans could admire" (Nye 148). The popularity of the theater was unparalleled. For the majority of Americans, the theater became not only the major source of entertainment, but an important vehicle of patriotic expression. Joshua Wilson and his "foes of the drama" could not withstand the national consensus that favored rather than censured the theater.

Cincinnati became more hospitable to the other fine arts in the third decade of the nineteenth century. After 1830, music began to flourish, according to Vitz, who writes that "recitals, concerts and the increasing secularization of performances" coincided with Cincinnati's emerging economic importance (14). In 1830, several prominent Cincinnatians formed the Cincinnati Lyceum for the purposes of discussing literature. It was soon followed by Daniel Drake's Buckeye Club where the famous Lyman Beecher family joined in the literary conversation. The Semi-Colon Club, an outgrowth of the other two societies, soon dominated the small Cincinnati literary circle. During the decade, James Hall published the *Western Monthly Magazine*, a review dedicated to liberal social views. Despite its merits, it "clashed with Lyman Beecher's stout anti-Catholicism, and during this period of fervid nationalism his literary journal succumbed" (Vitz 23). The most prestigious journal of the era was *The Western Messenger* which was published in Cincinnati and Louisville by the Western Unitarian Association. It emphasized literature over religion and offered columns by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and other Boston literati. However, *The Messenger* folded in 1841 after the New Englanders were syphoned off the by famous Transcendental journal *The Dial*, which began publication in 1840. In general, the fine arts began slow but steady progress once the Second Great Awakening drew to a close. Clearly, the arts in Cincinnati were subject to a

myriad of other influences, including economic progress, improved education and an increased and diverse population. Still, religion was the major force in shaping the artistic sensibilities of the Queen City. It is impossible to chart the rise of Cincinnati without noting the growth of religious denominations and their impact on the values of the city. In 1792, Israel Ludlow, one of the original proprietors of Cincinnati, was "of the band of Presbyterians who did not forget the claims of religion, but set apart for religious purposes a plot of ground,"[15] in the newly founded community. Ludlow's plot became the site, 20 years later, of Joshua Wilson's First Presbyterian Church, the largest religious edifice west of New York, holding close to three thousand during its religious pinnacle in the mid-to-late 1820s.

The early Cincinnatians, a devout religious people who were deeply influenced by the Bible and the clergy, determined that art, especially the drama, should be subordinated to moral considerations. Cincinnatians were not necessarily more insensitive to art than other Americans; rather, they were obedient to what they believed was higher law. For religious reasons Cincinnatians restrained art to the pedestrian and pragmatic rather than encouraging the artistic imagination to seek realms beyond accepted experience. As a consequence, Cincinnati gained a reputation for being a "bad theater town" and a community where the arts failed to flourish. It is a legacy of conservativism from which the Queen City has never fully recovered.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Vallin, one of America's best mystery writers, has authored a series of Harry Stoner detective novels. The action always takes place in Cincinnati and across the Ohio River in Newport or Covington, Ky. This quote is from *The Lime Pit*. New York: Avon Books, 1981, p. 28.
2. See Drake, D. and E. D. Mansfield. *Cincinnati in 1826*. 1827 Reprint. Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Historical Society and Friends of the Public Library, 1976, p. 58.
3. Jewett's letters are quoted in Daniel Aaron's exhaustive study, *Cincinnati, 1818-1838: A Study of Attitudes in the Urban West*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Archives, 1942, p. 125.
4. See Geoffrey Gigllierano and Deborah Overmyer's comprehensive, *The Bicentennial Guide to Greater Cincinnati: A Portrait of 200 years*. Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Historical Society, 1988, p. 31.
5. W. A. Hotchkiss examines the patterns of religious growth in *Areal Pattern of Religious Institutions in Cincinnati*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1950, pp. 9-12.
6. See J. P. MacLean's "The Kentucky Revival in the Miami Valley," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications* XII (1903):242-286, for a detailed account of the

revival phenomenon in Kentucky and Ohio. Of particular interest is MacLean's finding that the camps were particularly important as social gatherings for isolated families. Also important is the notion that the camps were "theater" where participants "acted" out a theological drama far more emotionally satisfying than any play performed on the stage. Also see William G. McLoughlin's *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religious and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978, for a detailed analysis of the Second Great Awakening, its causes and its effects.

7. The "Old Light" Calvinists held to the original tenants of their religion, while the "New Lights" were more moderate, especially in terms of "free will." The new theology of the "self-reliant" individual in charge of his own fate was especially potent with the pioneers forging a life on the frontier.
8. Joshua Wilson charged the "Pope of Presbyterianism," Lyman Beecher, with heresy in 1835. Newspapers from New York and Boston came to Dayton, Ohio to cover the "trial," which was held before Presbyterian elders. Beecher was acquitted. Joshua Wilson could be found in the midst of most any controversy in Cincinnati from school books to the hours of the Post Office. Harriet Beecher Stowe remembered Wilson as being a bitter man whose religion weighed heavily on his shoulders.
9. Wilson's letter to Drake is quoted in Aaron, p. 380. Wilson's diaries are housed in the Durrett Collection at the University of Chicago Library and they contain fascinating insights into the religious temper of the times.
10. Quoted in Aaron, p. 380.
11. See Charles Theodore Greve's *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens*. Chicago Biographical Publishing Company, 1904, p. 482. Charles Frederic Goss also gives a brief portrait of Joshua Wilson in *Cincinnati—The Queen City*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912, pp. 476-477.
12. See Aaron p. 381.
13. Harry Stevens, "The Hayden Society of Cincinnati, 1819-1924," *The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* LII (1943): pp. 96, 117.
14. Irene D. Cornwell, "Influences of Early Religious Literature in the Ohio Valley from 1815 to 1850," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications* XXV (1916): p. 207. Also see James M. Miller's "The Genesis of Western Culture," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications*, IX (1938), a book-length study which explore the impact of religion in the Ohio Valley.
15. Henry Benton Teetor points to the strong religious leanings of Cincinnati's founders in *Sketch of the Life and Times of Col. Israel Ludlow*. Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1885, pp. 34-38.

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RELIGION OF THE REAL: BAKER BROWNELL'S *EARTH IS ENOUGH*

JOHN E. HALLWAS

Northwest University professor Baker Brownell (1887-1965) is known to residents of the Prairie State for his 1958 book, *The Other Illinois.* He is little known elsewhere. Brownell was primarily a scholar of contemporary thought, who produced several other books, including a widely acclaimed study of the cosmos and modern culture called *The New Universe* (1926) and a volume that advocates small-town life, *The Human Community* (1950). Few people realize that he was also a poet, whose lyrics appeared in *The Dial, The New Republic, Poetry,* and other magazines.[1] However, his finest writing was done in prose.

His most important achievement is a little-known book called *Earth is Enough* (1933), which displays his talents as both a philospher and literary artist. Sub-titled *An Essay in Religious Realism,* the work reverses much traditional thought by asserting that religious experience is not grounded in a system of beliefs but, rather, inheres in "the integrative moment of living," characterized by the fusion of value and action. From that perspective, even the commonplace experience of the individual is religious if the act of living has immediate personal significance.

Brownell's view is similar to John Dewey's philosophy of religious experience as expressed in *A Common Faith* (1934). In that work, the famous philosopher emphasizes "the religious values in normal community life," the "union of ideal ends with actual conditions," and he rejects supernaturalism because it locates values in idealizations beyond natural experience.[2] *A Common Faith* appeared one year after *Earth is Enough,* but the two men were acquainted and they corresponded, so Brownell may have been directly influenced by Dewey's view of religious experience.

In any case, the notion of value residing in action, in concrete circumstances, is central to the great philosopher's thought, and Brownell undoubtedly read *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), which also has religious ramifications. In that work, Dewey asserts, "The thing which concerns all of us as human beings is precisely the greatest attainable security of values in concrete existence," and he laments that "today many persons find a peculiar consolation in the face of the unstable and dubious presence of values in actual experience by projecting a perfect form of good into a realm of essence, if not into a heaven beyond the earthly skies, wherein their authority, if not their existence, is wholly unshakeable."[3] In *Earth is Enough* Brownell refers to T. V. Smith's study of Dewey's theory of value, especially to the notion that "values are imminent in human experience, rather than secluded in some transcendental or conceptual realm."[4]

Earth is Enough might best be viewed as an adaptation of Dewey's theory of value to the realm of religious experience and a performance of that theory in artistic prose. Like Dewey, Brownell was an atheist. He uses terms like "being" and "eternal moment" to describe value-laden action in the temporal, the vital wholeness of living meaningfully in the present, rather than participation in another, deeper reality. As he explains in a later book called *The Philosopher in Chaos* (1941),

> Each moment of life is an immediate living action. This, after all, is all that we have. Though we infer pasts and futures, remember them or project them into our plans and organizations, what we are directly is the glowing moment of activity now. . . . The presence of life is all that we have. With it is involved inseparably a sense of value, of significance in itself, which is the center and source of all values. A man, in other words, not only is the moment that he now lives . . . he is the importance of it as well.[5]

Thus, when the individual fails to recognize the value of the present moment of living, he diminishes his life. He becomes susceptible to fragmentation and despair. Such is the condition of modern man.

The significance of *Earth is Enough* does not reside in Brownell's perspective, however, but in his presentation of it. Because he asserts that religious experience is concrete and whole, a synthesis of value and action, an identification of self and

perception, the book centers around passages of lyrical and narrative prose which allow the reader to experience the religious in a secondary way, or to know it through Brownell's literary art. He focuses on life in the primitive Central American country of Guatemala (where he once lived for a year) and the industrialized state of Illinois, contrasting the two locations in order to reveal the breakdown of true religious experience that characterizes modern culture.

At the outset of the book, Brownell describes Guatemalan peasants, who are weaving in the shadows of a ruined convent. The scene is symbolic. The peasants are engaged in what the author would call religious experience: the weaving has inherent value for the weavers. The activity is symbolic of their integration with their culture, their deep sense of expressing the pattern of life in Guatemala. The ruined convent represents an opposing notion of the religious, the Christian conception. As Brownell says,

> This was the triumph [of Christianity]; a guarded portal [the convent] rose to mark the line between time and eternity. Gates were built there. A realm beyond mortal life in time was set apart, and the church placed censors by the gates, judged who should pass, damned those who failed or failed to try. Eternity was organized, set beyond life, and made attainable through death or imaginative projection beyond man's movements to and fro. . . .
>
> The segregation of eternity marked the real beginning of the Christian era. . . . The future was created. A system of postponed values, abstract because postponed, became preeeminent, and with it religion, as this book sees it, declined. From time the church withdrew eternity, and by that unconsidered abstraction, drained or helped to drain from man's life in time those finalities of each moment that can make life itself eternal. . . .
>
> By force and rational abstraction the Christian church built an eternity alien to the native meanings of the heart, outside of life, and fell with time into decay. Its doctrine was adjusted to despair, an old despair repudiating worthwile things within daily life. . . . (pp. 7-8)

As a result of this abstracting of ultimate values from life, the world was divided into inner and outer realms, the spiritual and the physical. Living became instrumental, mere progress toward

value, not value-laden itself. Life was divorced from the finalities that gave it wholeness and meaning. In Brownell's conception of religious experience, that is the cause of modern man's fragmentation and despair. It is equivalent to original sin in Christian thought.

In other words, Brownell employs the word "religion" to convey the unified integrity of living that characterizes traditional man. And the problem for modern man—who "has replaced integration by organization and has broken from the concreteness of living the enjoyments and direct values" (p. 29)—is to recover his former wholeness. The path to recovery necessarily involves the abandonment of formalized religion. As he puts it, "Religion is native in the human heart, like love. . . . For religion wants no institution nor establishment, no creed, no organization, no mass standards. It needs no projected uniformity, called heaven, nor the post-mortem status of an abstraction called the soul. Religion shines in life. It lives in living. It should be let alone" (p. 12).

Because Brownell felt that religious experience was "concrete, warm, primitive, undispersed by abstraction and classificatory segmentation" (p. 15), the "direct and simple integrity of a living moment" (p. 12), and a "way of seeing" (p. 16), ***Earth is Enough*** is not simply discursive. It is intended as a literary-religious experience for the reader, a means through which people can "rediscover religion in the modern world" (p. 15). As he says in a section that describes his approach, "An appreciative study of religion must first of all identify itself with religion, finding poetry and meaning . . . by trying, however awkwardly, to be what religion is" (pp. 21-22). In other words, like religious experience as he views it, ***Earth is Enough*** is an integrative unity, "A human fusion of diverse modes" (p. 22). It combines lyrical (descriptive), narrative, and logical elements. Brownell's technique is to present a passage of descriptive or narrative prose and then provide a commentary on the philosophical ramifications of that passage.

A thorough critical analysis of ***Earth is Enough*** would be impossible in a short article because the book has twenty-three sections of artistic prose (Brownell calls them "interludes"), but key passages can be examined. Part I introduces the central themes: true religion as appreciative (value-laden) living; the concrete moment of living as uniquely whole, infused with being;

the unfortunate Christian cleavage of life into inner and outer, time and eternity; and the modern world as an elaboration of that cleavage, the further sacrifice of present value to goals beyond the individual's experience.

Part II includes various descriptive and narrative passages that focus on Guatemala, Brownell's example of a culture in which living is religious, as he defines that concept. He acknowledges that peasants in Guatemala are limited by their cultural circumstances, but at least their lives have wholeness and meaning. They participate in being, in the timeless moments of living that are self-justified. Hence, Brownell depicts their culture as almost suspended in time—as in this description of a village along Lake Atitlan:

> Time makes no difference in Santa Catarina. Jocote trees have grown like great, immobile clouds over the Mayan families, fallen, and grown great again. The ageless tread of generations has beaten paths into the soil a yard or so below the level of household floors. . . .
>
> Juan and his small son on the dirt floor of the veranda are weaving mats of long yellow rushes. Juan is old; his hair is white, cropped stiffly, but his hand is strong as he thumps the mat upon the floor and gives his son orders. . . . They are Juan's mats. The old man is woven deeply into them. In a closed and vital symmetry of labor Juan makes his life. Though inarticulate and poor, except in terms of mats, though his thoughts go nowhere and he knows little and feels little beyond the small range of his vital oscillations, Juan's life is concrete, fused; in the rhythmic finish and completion of his work there is something eternal. . . .
>
> Pablo, on the other hand, will catch crabs for a living, brown crabs, tied on his strings of grass. Their shells are round, accurate, like old astrolabes. . . .
>
> The stubborn little town of Santa Catarina sits on its haunches under the great jocote trees. Its circle is complete. The maize is ripening on the hill. The beans are cleaned and dried. Juan will make mats, Pablo will fish across the generations. (pp. 53-54)

As the passage suggests, Santa Catarina is not only characterized by manual labor and slow change, but by the intrinsic worth of the work that is carried on. Juan and Pablo may be completely embedded in their traditional culture, so much so that they cannot think of themselves as separable from it, but at least their lives are entirely integrated, their work has immediate personal value. Life in the village is religious.

Brownell closes Part II with a prose poem about the Gulf of Honduras, in which lightning in a dark sky is symbolic of being, the pervasive reality that unifies and illuminates all existence. The passage evokes the essence of life in an inherently religious culture.

> On the Gulf of Honduras darkness comes mildly and with a kind of wisdom, as it were, that dissolves the pretense of this thing and that in its own scope and being, existinguishes their particular bodies and leaves them only the emptiness of an unlighted world as a symbol of existence. . . .
>
> The lightning over the highlands of Guatemala creates, as it were, brief worlds between frontiers of darkness, but all worlds could be contained therein. . . . It founds new silhouettes of being. It flits and shudders over strange boundaries, new invented lands. Its brief dawns, the pale, trembling yellow behind the distant mountains enclose new orders, new glories that lay their mystery and pattern there for new worlds to tread upon. Of clouds the lightning makes dark islands, continents, cordilleras on the sky. It moves, trembles on the hills; it flickers over the highlands where the Mayans live and is their past, no doubt, the brief beating of glory from death to death, a flame between margins of darkness. (pp. 133-34)

In Part III Brownell depicts Chicago as the exemplar of modern social organization, the antithesis of the traditional villages in Guatemala. He opens that section of the book with another prose poem, meant to contrast with his description of lightning above the Gulf of Honduras. His subject is a bronze horse along Sheridan Road on Chicago's North Side. It is symbolic of the spirit of life in modern, irreligious society—that striving which moves the patterns of existence beyond the scope of appreciative living:

> The Mayan Indians laid a regimen of peace, closed control, the slow, surly rhythm of labor on the hills, but Chicago storms up in sudden blasts of power and darkness from the prairie. Long monotonies of slum and desolation lie along the little stream like cold, broken beds of lava; the flame of the mills, the surge of wheels on the boulevards, the iron tonnage of the railroad yards are huge ejections, as it were, from fiery vents. The clamor of

power is in all of them. They are more words, in a sense, more broken patterns of being, fragments of steel and dust in a quest that is always smoke over the horizon. They are dynamic articulations; they rise from movements outward; they come of longing and centrifugal desire.

A bronze horse rears against the northern rim of Chicago where Sheridan Road begins. It towers on the air, wheeling almost on its haunches; the hooves strike at the low-lying stars of the northern sky. It paws upon the sky with a power, as it were, naked and utterly revealed. . . . The bronze horse of Sheridan Road rears against the northern edges of Chicago with massive fire, snorting the wild will of life. (pp. 141-42)

Later in the same section of the book, Brownell describes Chicago itself as the characteristic modern city, aflame with energy and will but disunified, destructive of value-laden human life. Through force of language he conveys the oppressive reality of a metropolis to which individuals cannot meaningfully relate:

A city is a flower of steel, flame, elaborated desire. It burns against the sky in yellow smoke. It fumes, stinks, pushes into new things and wild creations. . . . The city blooms in the muck, in steel, work, in yellow smoke, fevers of decay. Its cosmic straining and elaborations are a massive kind of dying . . . its violence is a poisonous convulsion of being to those who do not welcome a world's willfulness and proliferation. From Indiana and from downstate on the south, from western Illinois, from Wisconsin on north, the roads move in towards Chicago and are contaminated with its fog, its light, its dense desire as they approach town. Chicago rots at night. Existence is a stench and burning. Flames, huge music, enlarge the air and batter through the emptiness and calm.

Made possible by cool and reasoned science, if not thereby created, the city grows like a beast and breaks across the world of appreciative life in a wild beating—untamed, massive in its weight on man. (pp. 152-53)

Because Chicago thrusts people into the service of multifarious future goals, living there is instrumental, not appreciative. People are not individuals whose selfhood is expressed in their work. They are simply a mass. They are patterns, abstract configurations, shuffled around by gigantic forces which do not relate to their inner selves. Their lives are a restless burning, a constantly shifting arrangement without human value. And the city is a

continuous enigma because its essence is time and change. It is known only in "fictions, patterns, artifice, designs" (p. 162)—never in its own being. As Brownell says,

Every year the town consumes its past. It burns back across the litter and leavings of the years. It flares into the future. Time is the breath of Chicago. The past has no repose.

Time and place, matter, men melt here and digest in the heat and living of Chicago. They are drawn in. They go smoking into action. Their separate character and abstraction are lost in the red vortex. History is in flames. Places have few memories. Matter and men are joined in the thrust of new events, and the past, always assimilated, leaves small trace. (pp. 162-63)

Of course, the sentiment here is similar to Carl Sandburg's line, "the past is a bucket of ashes," but Brownell is not simply referring to the lack of interest in the past among Midwesterners. He is depicting that spiritual thrust of modern city life which destabilizes culture and destroys the past. His metaphor of a gigantic burning, used to describe restless action that consumes human selfhood, is especially appropriate for a city whose early history ended with the Great Chicago Fire.

Later in *Earth is Enough*, Brownell contrasts life in Chicago with life in the downstate community of Vandalia. He creates two characters, city resident Tom Fisher and villager Fred Esterday, whose lives illustrate the difference between appreciative and non-appreciative, or religious and irreligious existence. In a passage of commentary on an interlude set in Vandalia, he points out that difference:

The days move in Vandalia without motion, as it were; they have their sun and old rooms, their songs, birds, their mists rising from the marshes in the morning, their rambling hunts through woodlands and back pastures, their friends, daily work, their setter dogs and dinners of wild duck. The days are not discursive in Vandalia. Where Tom Fisher of Chicago lives in movement in long horizontals through one "function" after another, Fred dwells more natively in each abiding day. Vandalia is not high-pressure living.

And where Fred lives deeply in the little place, Tom's life is lateral. It is composite in a pattern wherein he enters many systems whose whole scope and compass he cannot well appreciate. It is an aggregate of fragments, of parts of larger systems,

> sharply divided from each other, whose reach and identity are beyond life. Though Tom's actions are organized distributively into larger orders, his appreciative life is dispersed and broken. Only unusual energy and living power, denied most men, gives him a vital world.
>
> But Vandalia, though slow as the saying is, has less need for system-making action. Though functionally less specialized, it gives more directly a whole appreciative life. It is more present, less instrumental. Evils the small town has, without question, but in this sense Vandalia is more religious than Chicago. (pp. 228-29)

In other words, one answer to modern America's fragmentation and instrumentalism is the small town. Life there is simple, direct, unified, primal, real. It is an immediate world, in which values are inherent in everyday human action. Religion is lived, not thought.

Brownell does not pursue the implications of this view in *Earth is Enough*. He does not recommend the abandonment of cities. But for the rest of his life, he was a champion of the small town, asserting in *The Human Community* and other works that the best communities were on a scale that allowed for meaningful human interaction, for wholeness rather than functionalism. And like that other Illinois champion of the small town, Vachel Lindsay, he saw in village life the potential for reforming modern culture.[6]

But his main purpose in *Earth is Enough* is simply to assert the nature of true religious experience. The critique of modern culture that emerges is a secondary consideration. Moreover, he recognizes that religious experience is also possible, if only on an occasional basis, for those who live in the city. Toward the end of the book he includes a narrative about Bates Dahl, a fat, philosophical man who has come to terms with life in Chicago. As Brownell says, "for Bates Dahl life is concrete. It is appreciatively whole" (p. 246). His adjustment stems from an experience he had while swimming in Lake Michigan. He recalls that one afternoon he settled into the water and felt that he was "Drowned in being," or was "awakened to being" (p. 249). In other words, he experienced the timelessness of a moment lived with wholeness, intensity, and personal value. But of course, that took place away from the city itself, in the primal environment of the lake—which he calls "a kind of God" (p. 248). That is to say, it

is a great reality, an expression of being, which helps man resist the thrust toward instrumentalism. Brownell is suggesting that the experience was a kind of baptism, an awakening to a new religious condition, a deeper consciousness that allows adjustment to being, even in the midst of fragmented, dehumanized city life. Thus, if modern man cannot change cities into villages, he may at least be able to change his orientation toward his metropolitan milieu. After all, the source of that essential value which gives meaning to experience is, ultimately, the individual himself.

Brownell closes the book with Part IV, "Religion in its Own Terms," which summarizes his philosophy of religious experience. In perhaps the clearest expression of his perspective, he says,

> As an integrative moment of living, religion is found in primal aspects of life. This integrative moment of living is an identification in the real rather than an observation of it; it is direct and without symbol or concept; it is concrete, an unique integrity of a situation in which dichotomies such as observer and observed, man and environment, present and future, are inseparably fused. This is the real. As the mystery of being, religion goes beyond words. It is the integral source of living, while the life of reason is the end of it. It is a mystery below the stratum of thinking. Religion is always, eternally, the direct integrity of the moment of being. (p. 311)

As this comment suggests, a literary work will always ultimately fail to be religious experience because it involves words and concepts. But it can be the imitation of religious experience, rather like drama is the imitation of an action. It can be a kind of "identification in the real" as a reading experience, and that is surely what prompted Brownell to write *Earth is Enough*, his "Essay in Religious Realism."

Whether or not it is important as a philosophical statement, the book is interesting and valuable as literary art. It is a complex work that combines the lyrical and logical, the fictional and the discursive, to produce an engaging and original achievement. The artistic prose is often poetic and the commentaries are thought-provoking. Brownell's subject is nothing less than the interrelationship of culture and consciousness. As an affirmation of concrete living, as a celebration of the integrative capability of the self, and as an artistic attempt to foster the synthesis of

experience in a modern world of philosophical chaos, the book has much in common with the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens. Those famous poets would have understood his literary purpose. And Brownell's interpretation of Chicago as a hostile environment which promotes the fragmentation and dehumanization of individuals relates *Earth is Enough* to such well known naturalistic novels as Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) and Wright's *Native Son* (1940). In other words, the book's combination of artistic and discursive prose may be unique, and the author's philosophical stance may be unusual, but *Earth is Enough* is nevertheless thematically related to an important aspect of the Illinois literary tradition. For all these reasons, Baker Brownell's remarkable book deserves a wider readership than it has received.

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NOTES

1. The Baker Brownell Papers are at Northwestern University Library. Included in that collection are manuscripts, correspondence, clippings, and published items (articles and poems). The library also has a complete collection of Brownell's books. There has been no published study of his achievement.
2. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Have, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1934), pp. 73, 51.
3. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1929), pp. 35, 33-34.
4. T. V. Smith, "Dewey's Theory of Value," *The Monist*, 32 (1922), as quoted in *Earth is Enough* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1933), p. 136. All subsequent page references to *Earth is Enough* will be given in parentheses in the text.
5. *The Philosopher in Chaos* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1941), p. 123.
6. See, for example, Linday's "The Illinois Village" and "On the Building of Springfield" in *Collected Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 72-76. Brownell co-authored a book on community design with Frank Lloyd Wright, entitled *Architecture and Modern Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), and he also co-authored *Life in Southern Illinois* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1953), which sets forth an approach to the cultural renewal of small towns.

A LOSS OF INNOCENCE: RUTH SUCKOW'S *THE JOHN WOOD CASE*

MARY JEAN DEMARR

Always respected as a regional fiction of depth and integrity, Ruth Suckow's spare, sometimes almost plotless character studies and examinations of thwarted or narrow Iowa lives were often, during her lifetime, criticized for being too unpleasant and for piling up excessive detail. This criticism now seems overdrawn, accurate perhaps only for *Country People*, her first novel, and for some of her short stories. The novels of her middle period, studying Iowa women and families, are more even-handed, although their emphasis on relatively shallow characters living unconsidered lives and dreaming only limited dreams lends them also an air of pathos. However, her two last novels, *New Hope* (1942) and *The John Wood Case* (1959), more symbolic as well as more overtly concerned with moral issues, balance bolder dreams and goals against deeper disappointments. In both novels, a central theme is a loss of innocence, and the passing of the optimism of the frontier, or at least of early settlement, is mourned, even as the strength and endurance of those worthy of the dream is revealed. *New Hope* dramatizes this tension through the growth into awareness of a child, and *The John Wood Case* reveals it through the device of the discovery of a long-concealed crime.

Ironically, perhaps, Suckow's last novel, the only one directly centered around a clearly identified evil, is also her most optimistic. Beginning with an almost idyllic view of a family and its environment, it moves through the revelation that the idyll has always been merely an appearance to a final, hard-won sense that one at least of the participants is worthy and will be strengthened by his suffering. Central is the notion that the town

has allowed itself to be misled by a romantic view of reality, and thus the revelation of the truth beneath the appearance restores the town to a new order, one now based on an understanding of actuality, not on a lie.

The John Wood Case was inspired by an occurrence within a congregation which Suckow's father had served as minister when she was a girl. It had apparently lain in her imagination through the years until finally, in her last novel, she chose to develop it as a vehicle for exploring the nature of hypocrisy within an apparently open, harmonious church and village. What happened, in both the historical fact and Suckow's fiction, is that a trusted church and civic leader is suddenly revealed to have been, over a period of years, embezzling money from his employer and neighbors, including persons who had little to lose. In her fiction, Suckow is less concerned with why the crime occurred that with its effect on family and community. John Wood, a deacon in the Congregational Church and a man looked up to by almost all the citizens of Fairview, has been appropriating to his own use funds coming to his employer, the Merriam company, a lending institution. The discovery is made; John Wood immediately admits his guilt; an inconclusive meeting of church leaders is held; and the life of the community proceeds, as we observe the effects of the revelation upon John Wood and his family and upon the members of the community. At the novel's end, little else has actually happened: Philip, John Wood's son and the novel's central character, has gone ahead with his planned high school valedictory address and it is clear that the Wood family will leave town; where they will go and what will become of them is unclear, but we are assured that Philip will surmount the obstacles placed in his way by these events and will become a man more like what his father had seemed than his father had actually been. One result, in other words, will be a real virtue and strength won through suffering.

Both structure and narrative method are effectively manipulated to stress Suckow's concern with effects rather than with causes and her vision of the tension between a romantic view of life and reality. The novel, which covers less than two weeks, is structured into fourteen chapters. Of these, the first five, comprising Part I, take place on a single day before the revelation of the embezzlement. They take us through what we assume to be

a typical Sunday: chapter 1, from Philip's point of view, describes a spring Sunday morning in the Wood house, as Philip rises and he and his father prepare breakfast for Philip's delicate and pampered mother. Chapter 2, continuing Philip's point of view, depicts Sunday School and church services and then a communal noon dinner. The third chapter, still in Philip's viewpoint, covers the afternoon, as Philip visits the Merriams, his father's employer's family, and spends some time with the lovely and shallow Elaine Merriam, who has just arrived for her usual summer visit to her grandparents. The fourth chapter shifts to the viewpoint of Bradford Merriam, Elaine's father, who has brought her for her visit and who leaves at the end of the chapter to return to his home in the East; through his eyes we observe the respect of the community for both John and Philip Wood. Chapter 5 returns us to Philip's point of view, as he attends the Sunday evening Christian Endeavor meeting at his church.

Part II, the final two thirds of the novel, covers the revelation of John Wood's crime and its aftermath. Chapters 6 through 9 continue the pattern of each chapter being seen by a single character. Chapters 6 and 7, which occur on one day within the week following Book I, belong to Mrs. Merriam as her husband tells her of the discovery of John Wood's falsifications and she then visits Philip and his mother, of whom she has been extremely fond. Chapter 8 returns us to Philip's point of view, including a brief flashback to John's telling Philip what has happened and then covering the meeting in which the church deacons confront the embezzler. Chapter 9 belongs to Jeremiah Storm, the young Congregational minister, who is troubled by his inexperience and sense of inadequacy to deal with the challenge presented him by the scandal; we follow him as he goes first to talk with Mae Meserve, the young woman he has fallen in love with, and her family, and then as he goes to the Woods' to attempt to offer them comfort and guidance.

Chapter 10, on the following Sunday, at first continues in Jerry Storm's viewpoint, shifts to that of Mr. Rakosi, a Hungarian photographer who has settled in the community and serves as its resident cynic, and then returns to Jerry's point of view. The opening section, in Jerry's perspective, depicts Sunday School and church services which contrast with those of a week ago, now that the snake in Eden has been revealed. The middle

section, Mr. Rakosi's, takes us again to the usual communal Sunday dinner and dramatizes the effects of the revelation of John Wood's crime, the first time we have seen beyond family, close friends, and church. Finally, the third section, again Jerry's, presents Jerry's attempt to bring comfort and understanding to a very troubled Philip. Chapter 11, set on a school day, is seen first through the eyes of Eleanor Janeway, a sympathetic young teacher, and then through Philip's perspective, as Philip continues to try to comprehend what has happened and to behave in an appropriate manner. Chapter 12, in Jerry Storm's point of view, follows the likable young pastor through his moment of deep confusion, even despair, as he first determines to leave his pastorate and is dissuaded, wisely, by the anger of his sweetheart's sister. Chapter 13 returns to Philip, as he visits Colonel Merriam, to tell the Colonel he will not hold him to a promise of the loan of funds for his college education, then is snubbed by the lovely Elaine, and finally meets with Mrs. Merriam, the wisest, most helpful, and most comforting of all those who strive to help him; a second section of this chapter, seen through Mrs. Merriam's eyes, concerns the reconciliation of husband and wife, two totally different personalities, who have been at odds over issues presented them by the Woods. And finally, chapter 14, through Philip's perspective, covers the commencement ceremony of Philip's high school class and looks forward to a very uncertain future.

From this long summary, several points should be clear. Philip's point of view is most often used, and it both begins and closes the novel. This sets him firmly at the center of the issues and themes of the novel, making his the controlling intelligence. However, other perspectives are used, giving us broader knowledge of the events and of the attitudes of the community, as well as enabling us to observe scenes of which Philip could know nothing. Relatively unimportant among these alternative points of view is that of Bradford Merriam, used in the third chapter. He is the briefly visiting son and only remaining child of the Merriams, an Eastern college professor who has made a marriage which is unfortunate in some unspecified way and who has been a general disappointment to his parents. Nevertheless, parents and son are on cordial terms, and Bradford brings his lovely, if delicate and shallow, daughter to them each

summer. On this visit he is impressed with Philip and goes so far as to encourage that young man to pay court to her, even to dream of eventually marrying her.

Also relatively minor, because quite brief, is the portion of a chapter given to Eleanor Janeway, a young teacher. In a short passage covering fewer than five pages, she observes Philip at school and meditates on her relationship with Anton Rakosi, the Hungarian photographer, and their disagreements over the virtue or guilt underlying the previously placid surface of the community. She acts as a representative outsider, shocked by the revelation but warmly caring about its effects on the criminal's son.

A more important although still relatively minor point-of-view character is Mr. Rakosi. An insider because he has been accepted into the community and an outsider because of his literally foreign background, he both finds justification for his earlier cynical doubts that the Woods could be as perfect as they appeared and sympathizes with Philip's uncomfortable situation. Indeed, he is one of those who attempt to defend Philip, and his eventual decision to marry Eleanor Janeway and settle permanently in this little Iowa village so far from the cosmopolitan scenes of his past is motivated by his delight in Eleanor's championing of Philip. His previous scepticism about the assumptions of virtue of the community and especially of John Wood, its paragon, are proven right—yet, paradoxically, this justification of his cynicism leads to his becoming a part of the community in a way he might earlier have scorned.

The most frequently used of these secondary perspectives is that of Jerry Storm; the young Congregational minister, though older and certainly with broader experience behind him than Philip, nevertheless is paralleled to him in some significant respects. Both begin the novel joyfully, with optimistic dreams of successful futures, and both are hopeful of winning young women whom they view with romantic idealism. Jerry loves Mae Meserve, a gifted musician and member of a leading family of his church, while Philip adores Elaine Merriam, the lovely visitor whom he believes he can cherish and protect as his father has cherished and protected his mother. Their fortunes through the course of the novel, of course, move in different directions: Jerry, after briefly trying to renounce Mae, discovers that her strength and courage are not less than his own; she proves

worthy, and their happy marriage seems assured. Philip, on the other hand, knowing that he must give up any hopes of Elaine, is cruelly snubbed by her, in her shallow selfishness.

Finally, Mrs. Merriam, one of those outside the family most deeply touched by events, is the point-of-view character for several sequences. Her perspective is used in the two chapters that reveal John Wood's defalcations and then much later, briefly, as the various reconciliations of the end of the novel occur. Through her genuine concern for Philip's mother and for Philip, we see the best of loving humaneness of the community. Her concern for her husband, who sees a company he had built and taken pride in destroyed by his overconfidence and his misplaced trust in John Wood, conflicts with her love for Minnie Wood, who had come to be to her nearly as dear as the two daughters she had lost. And, of course, beyond this is her concern for their own financial situation; from the beginning it is clear that Colonel Merriam, a man of stubborn integrity, will insist on making good all the losses suffered by those whom John Wood had defrauded. Mrs. Merriam stands by her husband's angry insistence that all debtors must be paid, going further to insist that even their home must not be held back. But she also pleads, successfully, with her husband for generosity to Minnie and Philip, not just the simple justice he would have demanded.

Thus Philip's point of view is primary, and the other points of view are all, if in varying degrees, sympathetic to him. Bradford Merriam's initially helps set him up as a young man with the world and all good hopes before him, while Mrs. Merriam's, Eleanor Janeway's, Mr. Rakosi's, and especially Jerry Storm's, all present good-hearted, well-intentioned characters trying to help him after his father's fall even as they struggle with the various problems presented to them and their community by the revelation of his father's actions.

The very nature of the plot of the novel, the revelation of a long unsuspected evil, insures that a central theme will be the tension between appearance and reality. That tension here appears primarily as a conflict between romantic idealism and an honest devotion to a blemished truth. The romantic idealism is seen in a number of ways. Part I, that Sunday just before the complacent world of Fairview is disturbed, establishes an almost idyllic scene. The novel's opening paragraph sets the tone:

> Philip Sidney Wood got up on a bright May morning. The house seemed filled with sunlight. In the Fairview high school, in which he was a senior, Philip had much the standing of a youthful king; but he looked forward with exultant joy to graduation in June, after which he would "go out into the great world." This whole springtime was glorified by the coming Commencement. (3)

The next lines speak of the "opening years of the twentieth century" and indicate that although the town had existed since the Civil War, it "still showed its newness" (3). The images of joyous beginnings are obvious here: spring, sunlight, graduation. Even the text of the sermon during that first Sunday's worship service adds to Philip's—and the reader's—sense of optimism and of beginnings: "Philip's listening this morning stopped with the giving out of the text; it was one which the Reverend Jerry Storm might have chosen for Philip himself: 'I will sing unto the Lord a new song' " (29). Also obvious are the names: Fairview, for the town, indicating the optimism of the community, and Philip Sidney Wood, for the protagonist, indicating a romantic ideal Philip is expected to live up to. That name is repeatedly referred to, both by those who believe Philip is a worthy namesake of the gallant poet and by those who believe he cannot be as good as he seems.

Also established early is the specialness of John and Minnie Wood. Minnie is delicate, tubercular; in fact, she and the community are persuaded she owes her very life to her husband. She had been expected to die young, and as a girl she had played the part of the languishing heroine of romance. Her initial meeting with John Wood, described in flashback through Philip's vision of it, is of a storybook quality. The Merriam daughters would help Minnie to a hammock "in the warm spring and summer days" (40), where the invalid would "lie looking up at the sky through the branches and watching the apple blossoms drift past—feeling unattached to earth, like those floating petals" (41). She was lying thus when a stranger who had recently come to town and who, she had been told, was " 'the handsomest man you ever beheld' " (41), appeared.

> To Minnie Terrell, lying half helpless in the unsteady hammock, fever beginning to mount through her frail body so that she had seen the world, the trees and flowers and grass with their spring-

> time beauty, heightened and wavering as in a dream, the young man with his brown hair and blue eyes had seemed more than human. His sudden appearance, as if from nowhere, with no human background that any one knew about, added to the Greek-god impression. . . . Then . . . "before very long John was insisting that we were to be married. He would keep me with him just as long as he could. If it should be only a few days, then we would have those days. But God has been good. . . . It was like a miracle." (41-42; the second ellipsis is Suckow's.)

Minnie's view, then, as filtered through Philip and as accepted by the wider community, is that John Wood saved Minnie's life and that his loving care continues to preserve her. A peripheral character's vision of their "love like that of the Brownings' " (227) makes explicit a comparison that must occur to many readers: a vigorous young man saving a sickly young woman for a full married life.

Chivalric images underscore the theme of romantic idealism, and Suckow uses the taste in literature of her characters to reveal their inclinations. Minnie reads *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (96) and Philip, who despite his name "did not consciously live up to a vision of chivalry," has been a "avid" reader of "the round table stories of Howard Pyle in *St. Nicholas*" (102) and "felt himself chosen for some form of knightliness as a kind of vocation" (102).

Indeed, Philip's chivalric ideals are related to his reverent adoration of Elaine Merriam. He sees her as in some ways like his mother and envisions giving her the sort of loving care and cherishing his father has given his mother. His very awareness of her flaws appeals to his knightlike ardor, to his hope of somehow saving her as his father has saved his mother: he sees her "solitariness and strangeness," her snobbishness, as the results of some "malady," and accepts them as a challenge (48). He is misled, then, by the example of his parents and by his romantic view of the world to place value on a person utterly unworthy of him. And because of his romantic attachment to Elaine, he is led to overlook and to hurt a far worthier, though unromantic, local girl, Gladys Cornwall, because she is merely attractive, is sturdy and plainspoken while Elaine is beautiful and aloof.

If Philip is "a youthful king" (3), a "young monarch of the high school" (16), and Minnie is a heroine of chivalric romance,

John Wood is a man of mystery. The Wood couple, admired by all, is nevertheless "set . . . apart from ordinary couples" by the special passion and intensity of their love (174). In Minnie this special quality is her response to the wonder of John's saving her from an early death and the added miracle of their perfect son. In John, however, there is a deeper mystery. The structural summary above indicates that we are never taken into the consciousness of either John or Minnie. Minnie does occasionally speak for herself, however—in flashbacks such as the one in which we observe her first meeting with John as she had told it to Philip and in her brief but passionate defense of her husband after his crimes are revealed. She refuses to admit that he has done anything wrong, seeing his actions as part of his chivalric protection of her. He, on the other hand, says nothing of himself—neither about his background or past before coming to Fairview nor in defense of his embezzlement. His only explanation, when confronted with the facts of his crime, is that he had "special needs" (169)—Minnie's medical care and the bathroom and other unusual conveniences installed because of her delicate health.

There had been some indications of falsity beneath the seeming perfection of his handsome exterior. Twice Philip is early almost aware of something "ambiguous" in his father (7, 17-18), and he consciously avoids trying to penetrate beneath his "habitual reticence" (7). There is something odd, a kind of "misalignment" (153) of John Wood's eyes, noticed mainly by Mr. Rakosi, with his photographer's—and outsider's—perception. But none of this is explained; we learn only that the embezzlement had evidently begun early, with his appropriation of funds from his wife's inheritance, that he had gambled in futures on the Chicago Stock Exchange, and that his motivation had apparently been Minnie's needs for care and ease. He had never had intimates, except perhaps for his wife; even Colonel Merriam, his closest associate outside his family, "had been acquainted with him in only one capacity" (152). He remains impassive, except for an occasional glimpse of pain in his eyes, until the novel's end.

The effects of his acts on others are, however, clear. Minnie is led to passionate defense of her protector. She maintains the rightness of his behavior, holding to the romantic notion that their great love justifies his actions. Indeed, she is "strangely

uplifted" (142) and somehow strengthened for her vigorous defense of her husband, so that their roles of weakling and protector are reversed. But she is clearly clinging to an unrealistic illusion.

Next to the family, the people most nearly concerned are the Merriams. Colonel Merriam, betrayed by the actions of a man whom he had treated with perfect trust, is both angered and deeply hurt. Because of his disappointment in his own son, his only living child, he had treated John Wood almost as a son. Upon learning of the embezzlement, he resolves that all creditors will be fully repaid, if it means his own ruin. And he believes that John should be harshly treated; the possibility of bringing him to trial is very real. Colonel Merriam's anger is tinged with guilt: he blames himself for having trusted John Wood too much, for not having overseen his business decisions and bookkeeping properly. An elderly man who had lived on the frontier, had fought in the Civil War, and had helped build Fairview, he seems to see in John Wood's falsity the destruction of all that he had created and lived for.

His wife's reactions to events are poignant. She had loved Minnie almost like a daughter. And here, too, guilt played a part. She felt that she had failed in rearing her own daughters, leading to their alienation from her and then their early deaths. From New England originally, a member of the Bradford family, she had considered herself—and been considered by her husband to be—a Puritan. A strict, unforgiving faith, she later came to feel, had led to her problems with her daughters. She had mellowed and softened because of her pain over their short histories, and by the time of the novel she has become a disciple of Emerson. Though puzzled by the poems, especially the ending of "Leave All for Love," she adopts the tolerance and self-reliance of the essays as principles for life. She truly loves Minnie and Philip, and almost her first thoughts upon hearing of John Wood's actions, are for them. She pleads with the Colonel for mercy for John, primarily because she wants them to be as little hurt as possible. And she presents Philip with three gifts which symbolize her hope that he will surmount this trial: two hundred dollars "For Current Expenses" for the family, two thousand five hundred dollars for Philip himself (probably to make up for the loan for Philip's education earlier promised by the Colonel and renounced by Philip after his father's crime became known),

and her Bradford family Bible (308-10). The gift of the Bible at first puzzles and even angers Philip, but finally he realized that it suggests that he is now her spiritual heir, that she hopes he will carry on in his own life the lessons of love, tolerance, and endurance that she has learned.

Most central to the novel are the effects of the revelation and the town's reaction to it on Philip. His initial sense of confusion and unbelief as his father tells him (seen in briefly in flashback; 151) is deep and debilitating. His faith in his father had been so strong that his disillusionment must hit him hard. When Mrs. Merriam first sees him, she is stunned at the difference between his mother's and his reactions:

> For all his careful poise, Philip looked dazed, bewildered. If his youthfully curved lips did not actually tremble, they were unsteady. His eyes kept their same gray-blue color, but their shining confidence was somehow drained out of them, and they showed a kind of distracted incredulousness. . . . Philip was obviously struggling to keep mastery of himself. (145)

The very act that has confirmed Minnie in her romantic view of her husband's great and noble love has shaken the foundations upon which Philip's optimistically romantic view of the world rested. That he feels himself besmirched by his father's shame is clear from his immediate withdrawing of his invitation to take Elaine to the school picnic (148), an invitation which he had been encouraged to offer by Elaine's father.

Philip's confusion mirrors that of the community at large. A great question facing them all is what to do about John Wood. That the money will be repaid, if it impoverishes the Merriams, does not solve this problem. It is clear that matters cannot be hushed up, but it is not initially clear whether Colonel Merriam will wish to bring him to trial. Philip at first hopes desperately for a cover up, and then at least that a trial can be avoided. His mother's passionate ecstasy adds to his confusion. His mingled hopes and terrors during the meeting between his father and the church deacons both reveal his confusion and set him on the path toward a maturer acceptance of his and his family's situation:

> Philip's hopefulness sank. The atmosphere which prevailed in this room taught him all over again that, although these men might come as friends, the disaster was real. At the same time, he

> looked to friends to change it. They could not let disaster go on being real for John and Minnie Wood—and it could not possibly be real for himself, for Philip Sidney Wood. It was totally incongruous. (156)

This is the same young man who had, in his Sunday School class, spoken glibly if sincerely of the value of suffering (22). Now in desperation he hopes to count on the good will of others to take suffering from him. That first Sunday School class had been based on the book of Job; the following Sunday, after the revelations, the text "dealt with the Old Testament story of the young David sparing the life of his enemy, King Saul" (206). This time, Philip sits silent, though the ironic relevance of the text must be apparent. Mercy given on a personal basis, even if it is forthcoming, will not comfort him. Perhaps it is that ironic lesson that leads him to go, that afternoon, to Jerry Storm, the young minister and teacher of the boys' Sunday School class.

By the time Philip goes to Jerry, he has traveled beyond his earlier frantic hopes for some kind of reprieve to an almost desperate attempt at viewing his father's act and its merited consequences objectively. He pours out his concerns:

> "I'm not sure any more whether my folks really care for me. . . . Mr. Storm, you don't know *how* good my father is to my mother!" Philip raised his head with a puzzled, yet half-proud expression. . . . "But isn't there a doing right? . . . It wasn't because I didn't care for my father that I went to the class this morning. . . . Sometimes, though, I don't love him. I'm even against *her*. I didn't suppose I could ever be against my mother—or either of them." Philip sobbed. . . . "If my father"—he sobbed again—"if my father didn't act out what he said he believed all these years, I don't know what difference the whole thing makes. . . . I don't know whether I'll ever go to church again." (218-19)

Jerry gently and wisely counsels with him and is able to bring him some relief. But at the end of their conversion, Philip is still left, as is Fairview, with the ultimate puzzle: "But I don't see how *my father* could have been double-dealing. I don't take it in" (220). And Jerry has no answer for him.

In fact, the novel never does answer that question. We are left with the mystery of an evil dissembled, and evil mixed with good—for the possibility is open that John Wood really did

believe all that he had seemed to believe, that he really cared for his church as he surely cared for his wife and son. And there is both good and evil within the town. If Elaine and others deeply hurt Philip by cutting him, Gladys Cornwall is staunch in her defense of him, and Lyle Meserve, his closest friend, is loyal. While Colonel Merriam wants strict justice for John Wood, Mrs. Merriam pleads for mercy for the sake of Minnie and Philip. Jerry Storm feels inadequate but meets his challenge with loving sensitivity. Mr. Rakosi is led to decide to settle permanently in Fairview by the confirmation of a lurking evil which paradoxically brings out much that is kind and loving in the community. And both the minister and the photographer, originally outsiders to the town, will be symbolically merged into the community in their marriages to Mae Meserve and Eleanor Janeway, two unions partly brought about the scandal.

The John Wood Case bears obvious thematic resemblances to Mark Twain's "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." Both tales bring to the surface a hidden, hypocritical evil, and both deal with the effects on individuals and on community of bringing that evil out into the open. Suckow's story is more realistic and at the same time more optimistic. Fairview turns out not to be as permeated by hypocrisy as Hadleyburg. In the novel's closing pages, Philip thinks of all those who had stood by him:

> Somehow he felt the beginning of a strength in himself that was of a different kind from his old easy exuberance. It was steadier, more wary. . . . Even if he went to a new place, to make a new start, something of his life here in Fairview would go with him. Gladys Cornwall, Lyle, Jerry Storm, Hank, Mrs. Merriam—all of them, in different ways, had stood by him and proved their friendship for him. (312-13)

In Hadleyburg, neighbor had been set against neighbor by the testing, but most citizens of Fairview respond more nobly to the challenge facing them.

In her closing pages, Suckow again ties in the theme of chivalry—which Philip, unlike his parents, has grown beyond. His father, while suffering, has "not openly accepted responsibility" (302) and his mother is still caught up in her romantic vindication of her husband. His own oppressive sense of alienation comes to seem less extreme to him than the special unity

which had always set them romantically apart from others: "Suddenly the couple appeared to Philip in a solitude far more tragic than his own. . . . His parents seemed to Philip to be living in a world of their own, a dream world, while he had stepped out of the dream into actuality" (302).

The deceptive if seductive romantic idealism of the springtime idyll at the novel's opening is now clear to him:

> Philip had joyfully believed in his inmost mind . . . that the name "Philip Sidney" exactly suited him. He had never read Sir Philip Sidney's sonnets—nor had his mother. Both Minnie and Philip knew only that Sir Philip had given his cup of water to his dying enemy. . . . Philip had secretly, confidently believed that he himself would have done just that. In the same way, he had supposed he could rescue Elaine. With sorrow he had to leave her in that half-illusory world out of which he had stepped. (313-14)

A following paragraph contrasts with the lovely spring morning of the opening. It is still spring, as less than two weeks have passed, but spring is moving toward summer, and the description here, no less lovely, stresses Philip's alienation from Fairview, as contrasted with his earlier lordly position in it; the sensory images are those of a mature and sensitive if objective viewer rather than of a romantic boy:

> The cool night air of June came in through the open window, redolent and freighted with the odors of growing things in Fairview, which was no longer Philip's home—the "nice town" in the wide, rolling countryside smelling of deep, rich, plowed earth and young green corn; the muddy river flowing through Merriam's Grove under the bent boughs and heavy foliage of virgin timber. Rain was again falling intermittently. (314)

Suckow is quite explicit that for Philip there still is "confusion instead of clear confidence" (314). But she also stresses his "strength" and the "foundation" that enables him to face the future. His last image, we are told, "was that of a long, dark tunnel, at the far end of which there seemed to be light; although he could not give a name to the light, and did not know what its meaning was, or why it should be there" (314). And on this note, the novel closes.

The John Wood Case, then, while it began as a study of a small town disturbed by the revelations of a crime committed by one of its most respected members, became an examination of the tension between romantic and realistic views of life and human relationships. It also became the story of the maturing of its protagonist, who learns the real meaning of ideas and beliefs he had earlier wrongly felt he understood. That protagonist, a promising if naive boy at the beginning, learns through his disillusionment, confusion, and suffering, the real meaning of the false romanticism on which his life had been based. His coming of age mirrors that of Fairview, which like him has behaved well and won through to a mature understanding of reality. Suckow's last major depiction of smalltown Iowa and of the foundations upon which her people base their lives is ultimately hopeful. The novel is, finally, an eloquent statement of possibilities of growth to moral and emotional maturity through suffering and through the discovery of an honest apprehension of reality.

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON IN FICTION

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That Sherwood Anderson was his own favorite fictional character is obvious to anyone familiar with the facts of his life and the substance of his fiction. So fascinated was he with the almost mythological unfolding of twin patterns of escape in his life—the first, in Horatio Alger, Jr. fashion, from a rustic poverty-ridden childhood to middle-class respectability and affluence, and the second from the service of Mammon to the service of Calliope—that the protagonists of many of his short fictions and almost all of his novels reflect, literally, symbolically, or both, Anderson's journey from Clyde, Ohio, newsboy to Elyria, Ohio, company president, respectable marriage, and membership in the country club. His early life was an American dream realized through practicing the virtue instilled in the American character by William Bradford and John Winthrop two hundred years earlier.

This is the Sherwood Anderson myth reflected in the rise of Sam McPherson, son of Windy, from youthful poverty and shame in Caxton, Iowa, to affluence, respectability, and power in Chicago; in the confidence with which young George Willard goes off to Chicago, west with the setting sun to find his fulfillment, in the inventive genius of Hugh McVey of Bidwell, Ohio, in the success of John Webster, washing machine manufacturer, for each of whom, however, material success turns to dust in his hands even as he grasps it.

Consequently, also reflected is the second Anderson myth, that which enables Anderson's protagonists to turn their backs on material success and to transcend material values in the search for a truth and fulfillment that are at once human and spiritual. For Anderson it is a higher, truer myth; it is the rejection of

Puritanism introduced into the American character by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman earlier in his own century.

This second Anderson myth, engendered by his departure from Elyria in 1913 and his many tellings of the story in admitted fiction and purported fact, is that which brought Sam McPherson to reject success and wander through the Midwest seeking Truth, that led Beaut McGregor in *Marching Men* to seek in purposeless marching order a new meaning for men, that told Hugh McVey to seek meaning beyond the whistles of Bidwell, that made John Webster walk, through a morass of murky symbols, out of the night and into a new day with his secretary, that sent Bruce Dudley of *Dark Laughter* out of Chicago and an empty liberation and marriage to a refuge down the river.

In each of his fictional self-portraits Anderson is not merely the confused groper portrayed by the Eastern and academic critics of the 20s and 30s or even by Irving Howe and Kim Townsend, nor is he "a puzzled Sherwood Anderson" (685) as Oscar Cargill described him. Rather, his groping is that of the seeker who knows that somewhere beyond reality lies truth. "If it is meant by groping, that I do not know the answers," Anderson wrote a few years before his death, "O.K." (560)

If Anderson remained in his own mind a groper, a seeker to the end, confident that, as his epitaph proclaims in his own words "Life, not death, is the great adventure," he adopted another *persona* almost immediately after his initial literary successes in Chicago. This was his dual role as literary artist-craftsman and mentor, which he had adopted as early as the initial issue of *The Little Review* in 1914, for which he wrote "The New Note," his first literary publication and his definition of the literary artist as craftsman.

As "The New Note" makes clear, almost from his return to Chicago early in 1913 Anderson saw himself as a serious artist who had rejected the standards of the literary marketplace as well as popular literary success, and to the younger members of the Chicago Renaissance—Margaret Anderson in 1913 was 22, Floyd Dell was 26, Susan Glaspell was 30, Maxwell Bodenheim was 20, Ben Hecht was also 20—Anderson at 36 presented himself as experienced, a genuine rebel, and a dedicated artist with a trunkful of unpublished manuscripts. While the others wrote, talked, edited, and listened to Anderson, he was the first to enjoy

recognition with "The Rabbit-Pen" in *Harper's* in July 1914, with stories in *The Little Review* and elsewhere, and most importantly, even as the Renaissance was already running its course, with the publication of *Windy McPherson's Son* in September 1916, a work hailed by Waldo Frank in *The Seven Arts* as an indication of Anderson's "emerging greatness." (73-78)

Anderson wrote no major fiction based on his experiences in the Renaissance, although it is reflected in short fiction—"Seeds," "The Triumph of a Modern," even "A Chicago Hamlet," "Milk Bottles," and "A Man's Story,"—and Bruce Dudley in *Dark Laughter* is clearly a refugee as Sherwood was a refugee, each from a movement and a marriage in Chicago, both of which had become hopelessly artificial and confining. The great themes of Anderson's work were fixed by the time he left Elyria for Chicago in 1913. But curiously, few of the younger members of the Renaissance used what to them was their first major liberating experience in fiction; indeed, these younger artists produced little fiction that reflected the experience in terms other than the perennial searches of the young for love and for identity. Thus, Susan Glaspell's first novel, *The Glory of the Conquered* (1909) is the story of selfless love on the University of Chicago campus; her second, *The Visioning* (1911) permits her protagonist to discover a cause; Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920) defines Felix Fay's escape from a provincial Bohemia to the experience of Chicago; in effect, it is Dell's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Dell's second novel, *The Briary Bush* (1921) was his first attempt to deal directly with the Renaissance experience in fiction. In the novel Felix Fay finds love, a cause and his art. Significantly, however, both of Dell's novels were published after he had found a new perspective, a role, a new place, and a new love in New York, together with a measure of maturity against which to view the Chicago experience. Like Glaspell one of the first members of the Liberation, he was the first to leave it behind. With him on the train to New York he carried the manuscript of *Windy McPherson's Son* in order to seek a publisher for it, a role he later insisted made him Sherwood Anderson's literary father.

As the Renaissance dissipated or went to New York and beyond, *The Little Review* and Margaret Anderson moving briefly to San Francisco in 1916 and then to New York, and Glaspell and George Cram Cook taking Provincetown by storm,

thereby awakening a young man named O'Neill, Sherwood Anderson and Ben Hecht, both still in Chicago, had become close. Anderson, in spite of the prominence he had achieved with *Windy McPherson's Son, Marching Men, Mid-American Chants,* and finally, in 1919, *Winesburg, Ohio,* seemed destined to spend his life in Chicago, in "the writing of advertisements for somebody's canned tomatoes" (45), as he described his lot; and Hecht, a reporter on the *Daily News* had begun to write stories for *Smart Set* and to collaborate on plays, at first with Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, and then with Maxwell Bodenheim. In his memoir, *A Child of the Century,* Hecht remembered listening to Anderson read the stories of *Winesburg, Ohio,* and he recalled, whether literally true or not, that he and Anderson had begun collaboration on a play about Benvenuto Cellini, with whom, Hecht recalled, Anderson identified himself and spent hours declaiming Cellini's speeches. The project was eventually abandoned after a first act of about 150 pages—enough proportionately for an eight-hour drama had it been completed.

Anderson, Hecht recalled, was truly a poet, truly an artist, aloof from the concerns of the literary market places. "He was never hack and artist too," he wrote. "Unlike Hemingway *et al.* he did not grandly play the poet while wooing the box office." (252) Hence it was perhaps inevitable that when Hecht's first novel, *Erik Dorn,* was published in 1921, after his return from a two-year stint as foreign correspondent in post-war Germany for the *Daily News,* Sherwood Anderson would play a perceptible—and predictable—role in the novel.

Eric Dorn is Hecht's novel of the Chicago Renaissance, and it is Hecht's story, too, of his search for love and for identity if not for art. Erik is clearly Hecht, a marvelously exaggerated egotistical self-portrait of a brilliant, talented man with, however, neither Hecht's literary pretensions nor an outlet for his talent. Like Hecht, a Chicago newspaperman, Dorn can only coin epigrams as in frustration he watches his marriage to Anna deteriorate and his attraction to a young magazine artist, Rachel, grow. The young woman is attracted to Dorn's Bohemian insouciance, but she is also attracted to Hazlitt, a young lawyer, who is clearly Hecht's ambitious and inner-directed *alter ego.*

In mid-novel, Dorn avoids both women to spend a night on the town with Warren Lockwood, an older, reasonably successful

novelist who is abruptly introduced at that point. Lockwood is clearly Sherwood Anderson and, in a long digression, as omniscient author, Hecht writes of an increasingly ambigious relationship between the two men:

> Dorn had been attracted to him at first because of the curious intonations of his voice. He had not read the man's novels—there were four of them dealing with the Middle West—but in the repressed sing-song of his voice Dorn sensed an unusual character.
>
> "He's a good writer, an artist," he thought, hearing him talk. . . . He talks like a lover arguing patiently and gently with his own thoughts.". . .
>
> . . . The idea of Warren Lockwood being a lover grew upon Dorn. Of little things, of things seemingly unimportant and impersonal, the novelist talked as he [Dorn] would have liked to talk to Rachel—with a slow simplicity that caressed his subjects and said, "These are little things but we must be careful in handling them, for they're a part of life." And life was important. People were tremendously existent. Dorn, listening to the novelist, would watch his eyes that seemed to be always adventuring among secrets. (216-217)

Dorn's introspection concerning Lockwood continues:

> There grew up in Dorn a curious envy of the novelist. He would think of him frequently when alone. "The fellow's content to write. I'm not. He's found his way of saying what's in him, getting rid of his energies and love. I haven't. He feels toward the world as I do toward Rachel. An overpowering reality and mystery are always before him, but it gives him a mental perspective. . . . Yes, I have wings but there's no place to fly with them. Except into her arms. There must be something else. . . . (217-218)

And again, Hecht relates that

> The friendship between Lockwood and Dorn matured quickly. The two men, profoundly dissimilar in their natures, found themselves launched upon a growing intimacy. To Lockwood, heavy spoken, delicate sensed, naive despite the shrewdness of his forty-five years, Erik Dorn appealed as some exotic mechanical contrivance might for a day fascinate and bewilder the intelligence of a rustic. And the other [Dorn] . . . thought "If only I had this man's simplicity. If on top of my ability to unravel mysteries into words I could feel these mysteries as he does, I might do something." (219-220)

Again, Dorn finds his envy overpowering him:

> . . . "I'm alive. He's static," he sometimes told himself. I live above him. There's nothing beyond me. I can't feel the things out of which he makes his novels, because I'm above him." (220)

And finally, Dorn felt himself hurling through life, to "hurl himself through crowds, pulverize Warren, bang out astounding fictions on the typewriter, watch the faces of acquaintances light up with admiration. . . . (220)

After this soul-searching reflection, the actual night out is almost but not quite anti-climax. Lockwood takes Dorn to visit an avant-garde sculptor he admires, but Lockwood's excited admiration eludes Dorn; they then eat in an unappetizing restaurant, and Lockwood threatens to put Dorn and his tensions in a novel; they walk on through heavy rain, and finally go into a low dive in a basement full of drink, laughter, obscenity, strong odors of perspiration and sex and the loud sounds of jazz; it is an orgy in Dorn's words, and he abruptly seizes a woman and takes her up a flight of stairs, outdoors, and through the rain into a reeking room.

Later, Lockwood finds Dorn out in the night, his clothes torn and bloody. "'I've had a look at hell,' he whispered, [to Lockwood] and with a laugh hurried off alone. Lockwood watched him moving swiftly down the street, and yawned." (239) Later Dorn tells Rachel that "That damned Warren Lockwood led me astray." (240)

Even this incident does nothing for or to Dorn; his relationships erode; he is sent to Germany by his paper, and he becomes acquainted with the political turmoil of post-war Germany and its decadence. He learns that he has lost both Anna and Rachel; he observes a new, grotesque German government threatened by communist revolution; he has a brief affair; and finally, unchanged, like Hecht himself, he returns to Chicago to work at the paper.

Although Hecht remembered in his memoirs that his tribute to Anderson in the novel was well-intended, his portrait of Anderson was not Anderson as he saw himself, and its publication marked the end of their friendship. The novel was not bad, Anderson reportedly told him, but they could both best advance their literary causes not through friendship but through enmity.

Hecht should attack him and he would attack Hecht—beginning with *Erik Dorn.* But there is no evidence that Anderson did so.[1]

Nevertheless, their friendship was over, and while Hecht founded the *Chicago Literary Times* and then went East to *Front Page* success, a column for *P.M.*, and movie writing, Anderson went East and then South, and his literary reputation stagnated. Only once more did they meet, twenty years later, accidently, in Twenty-One in New York. Anderson was to sail for South America in the morning. It was, Hecht remembered, as if the twenty years had been two weeks, and the next day Hecht wrote a column for *P.M.* about Anderson—his successes, his failures, his faith. In it he wrote that Sherwood Anderson had re-invented the long-dead American soul. The column appeared a few days later, beneath an announcement of Anderson's death in Panama.

Interestingly, when *Erik Dorn* was reprinted in a new edition in 1963 by the University of Chicago Press, it was prefaced with a foreword by Nelson Algren, who, while complimentary, commented that "in no other American novel is the relationship between the book's hero and the novelist revealed so lucidly." Hecht became incensed, refused to go the the publication party, and wrote that he had "no hankering to pose in your local festivities as a literary patsy," later adding about Algren that "I haven't the faintest idea of what he writes like. In this case it [the preface] stinks."

Algren, equally incensed, replied that Hecht "hasn't done anything good since Erik Dorn," that he "made one or two good movies and some awfully bad ones," that he had neglected his talent. Algren's comments are typical of assessments of Hecht's career in the years after he left Chicago.

Anderson's break with Hecht in 1921 was part of a series of breaks that he brought about in the early twenties as he sought to redirect this life and to find a place conducive to work and a meaningful relationship to make the work possible. He befriended Ernest Hemingway; he went South, hoping to leave Chicago permanently; he traveled to Europe and back; he published *Many Marriages, Horses and Men, A Story Teller's Story;* he spent months in Reno, finally freeing himself from Tennessee Mitchell and marrying Elizabeth Prall. By summer, 1924, he had settled, presumably permanently, in New Orleans. Late that year he became acquainted with an aspiring twenty-seven-year-old poet from Mississippi, a meeting Anderson later fictionalized in "A Meeting South," published in *The Dial* in April, 1925.

That young poet, whom Anderson called David in the sketch, was William Faulkner, and "A Meeting South" is the most idealized portrait Anderson was ever to write of a living person. The story is slight, but it is clear that Anderson had accepted Faulkner as he had presented himself. Like Hemingway, Faulkner had constructed for himself a distinguished ancestry and military career: he came from an old Southern family, and he had enlisted in the R.F.C. at the outbreak of war; he had flown gallantly over the Western Front for four years; his career had ended in a crash that left him badly wounded, to walk forever with a Byronic limp. His ambition was to write poetry in the manner of Shelley; he was thoroughly and easily and affectionately familiar with the blacks of Harlem and the South that Anderson and others of his generation had begun to romanticize.

In reality, of course, Faulkner had enlisted in the R.C.F.C. late in 1918; he was in pre-flight training in Canada at the Armistice and never served overseas. Conversely, Hemingway, the "*Soto Tenente* Hemingway," of his self-image, who had enlisted in the Italian Army before America entered the war, and had served heroically, been decorated, and badly wounded, according to his self-created myth, had actually joined the Italian Red Cross in May 1918 and had just arrived at the front—on a bicycle to distribute candy, gum, and cigarettes to the troops—before being actually if accidentally wounded—presumably seriously, although he managed to emerge with no broken bones.

There is a suggestion in several of Anderson's later comments that he had learned the truth about both men's military service—or lack of same—and that it later colored his attitude toward both of them. After all, Anderson's own military career in Co. I, Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry, which he always deprecated, had been, while scarcely distinguished, certainly longer and more demanding than either Faulkner's or Hemingway's. Yet in "They Come Bearing Gifts," an account of Anderson's relations with younger writers published in the *American Mercury,* October, 1930, Anderson describes them as two young heroes, one Northern, one Southern, both of whom served bravely and had been badly wounded in the Great War.

The close relationship that developed between Anderson and Faulkner in New Orleans in 1925 has been often described, although some parts of that relationship are still obscure or debated. They sauntered together through the French Quarter and along the docks; they talked, they drank moonshine together, Anderson presumably turning Faulkner away from poetry and into prose. Faulkner served a prose apprenticeship writing sketches for the *Double Dealer* and the *Times-Picayune* and then wrote *Soldiers' Pay,* which Anderson persuaded Horace Liveright to publish, after which Anderson told him to write of the patch of ground back in Mississippi that he knew. Anderson and Faulkner had collaborated, to a greater or lesser extent, on a rustic character named Al Jackson, central character in a rustic, never-ending tall tale; they, had, too, according to critical wisdom, taken at least one excursion on Lake Pontchartrain, an experience that led to Faulkner's second novel, *Mosquitoes,* also published by Liveright, in 1926.

Although Faulkner left New Orleans for Europe with William Spratling in July 1925, to return to Mississippi late that year to write *Mosquitoes,* and then returned to New Orleans late in 1926, he and Anderson apparently did not meet again. Conventional biographical and scholarly wisdom has it that Anderson became upset at Faulkner's parody of Anderson's style in the foreword to *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles,* itself a parody of Miguel Covarrubias's *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans* the previous year. The parody included caricatures by Spratling of Anderson, Roark Bradford, Hamilton Basso, and others of the New Orleans literati. It was dedicated "to all the artful and crafty ones of the French Quarter." Four hundred copies were sold at $1.50 each. The conventional scholarly wisdom has it, too, that this parody, published almost simultaneous with Hemingway's unfortunate "The Torrents of Spring" (1926), offended the older writer, who was further offended by Faulkner's unflattering portrait of him as Dawson Fairchild in *Mosquitoes.*

The parody of Anderson's style in *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles* is skillfully done; with more restraint and good humor than Hemingway's heavy-handed work, it is less a parody by Faulkner than an exercise in attempting to find a style of his own. But in *Mosquitoes,* truly a period-piece of the

mid 1920s, as an attempt to satirize artistic and intellectual pretensions, Faulkner portrayed Anderson as friends and acquaintances had always known him, as one who enjoyed people, as one who liked a drink, as one who remained sensitive about his unsophisticated background and lack of education. But above all, Faulkner portrayed him as a teller of tales.

Unlike *Erik Dorn, Mosquitoes* is less a serious novel than an attempt at a light-hearted—that sometimes becomes heavy-handed—satire of the artful and crafty ones to whom the earlier satire was dedicated. The group in the novel spends five days on the yacht *Nausikaa,* owned by socialite/arts patron Mrs. Maurier; they drink, romance, play cards, take excursions, on occasion run aground, but above all, they talk, and the major romantic interest—an attempted elopement by Mrs. Maurier's niece and the young steward David—is aborted by hordes of bloodthirsty mosquitoes, the insect equivalents of Mr. Talliaferro—born Tolliver—, Major Ayres, Mrs. Wiseman, and various others.

The artists—Gordon, a sculptor with little to say but much good work to do, and Dawson Fairchild, a successful, middle-aged Midwestern novelist—remain largely aloof, below decks, drinking and talking with the nameless Semitic man called Julius, who functions as foil, philosopher, and confidant. Of the three, Dawson Fairchild is the most compelling character, clearly Anderson as Faulkner saw him in the mid-20s.

The caricature is clear and sometimes clever but far from vicious. Unlike his counterpart in *Erik Dorn,* Fairchild is frequently present in the novel, "a novelist," Faulkner writes, "resembling a benevolent walrus too recently out of bed to have made a toilet" (33): with a loud "burly jovial voice" he is, as the Semitic man tells him, not an artist but ". . . a bewildered stenographer with a gift for people . . . an artist only when you are telling about people . . ." (51) He is, as Mrs. Wiseman describes him, ". . . an American of a provincial lower middle-class family . . ." (24); further, he is, as the Semitic man tells him, "a man in all the lusty pride of his Ohio valley masculinity. . . ." (209) In swimming, "Fairchild looked more like a walrus than ever: a deceptively sedate walrus of middle age suddenly evincing a streak of demoniac puerility." (80)

None of these descriptions is unkind, and the remarks come from sources of varied reliability in the novel, but the portrait of

Fairchild the raconteur, like Anderson the story-teller, is as true as the later descriptions by Margaret Anderson in *My Thirty Years War* of a younger Anderson in a younger age in Chicago a decade before. Yet Mrs. Maurier tells herself that "Mr. Fairchild's way was—well, uncouth; but after all, one must pay a price for Art." (66)

In the tale Fairchild tells, to the consternation of Mrs. Maurier, as he pulls the leg of the proper English Major Ayers (apparently based on one Colonel Charles Glen Collens, a Scottish adventurer who had spent weeks in the New Orleans jail fighting extradition to Bombay for failure to pay for $50,000 worth of jewelry) Faulkner draws on the tall tales he and Anderson had created in their conversations and in letters during the summer and fall of 1925. Fairchild's telling of the tale begins after lunch, after a discussion of the Major's scheme to sell fancily bottled salts to Americans: "Fairchild was in the lead, burly and jovial, a shade unsteady as to gait." (61)

> And now Fairchild was saying:
>
> "Now here's a clean case of poetic justice for you. A hundred odd years ago Major Ayers' grandpa wants to come to New Orleans, but our grandfathers stop him down yonder in those Chalmette swamps and lick hell out of him. And now Major Ayers comes into the city itself and conquers it with a laxative so mild that, as he says, you don't even notice it. . . . Say, he certainly ought to make Al Jackson a present of a bottle, oughtn't he?'"
>
> . . . Major Ayers repeated: "Al Jackson?"
>
> . . . "Why, didn't you ever hear of Al Jackson?" asked Fairchild in unctuous surprise. "He's a funny man, a direct descendent of Old Hickory that licked you folks in 1812, he's quite a character in New Orleans . . . You can always tell him because he wears congress boots all the time—"
>
> "Congress boots?" murmured Major Ayers, staring at him. . . .
>
> "Sure. On the street, at formal gatherings, even in evening dress he wears 'em. He even wears 'em in bathing."
>
> "In bathing? I say." Major Ayers stared at the narrator with his round china-blue eyes.
>
> "Sure. Won't let anyone see him barefoot. A family deformity, you see. Old Hickory himself had it: that's the reason he outfought the British in those swamps. . . ." (66-67)

The tale continues through Old Hickory's cavalry, mounted on half-horse, half alligators, from his stock farm in Florida.

Finally, the Major surrenders: "Go on,' he says at last, "you're pulling my leg."

> "No, no:" Fairchild answers him. "But then, it is kind of hard for a foreigner to get us. We're simple people, we Americans, kind of childlike and hearty. And you've got to be both to cross a horse and an alligator and then find some use for him, you know. . . ." (86)

The tall tale continues on another occasion; in the second telling Al Jackson is a fishherd in the Gulf; he owns a fish ranch; he notches his fish's tails for identification. Those fish the Major has noted in England with notched tails are runaways from the Jackson fish ranch. Finally, Mrs. Wiseman tells him: "Dawson . . . shut up. We simply cannot stand any more." (88) Ultimately the yacht and its strange cargo return to the city.

The last scenes in the novel belong triumphantly to Fairchild. He, the Semitic man, and Gordon become magnificently drunk and wander through the Quarter. In the last scene the Semitic man declaims about color and form with "Fairchild beside him, leaning against a dark wall, vomiting." (340) Recovering, Fairchild testily gives Mr. Talliaferro advice about his problem with Jenny: "Do? Do? Go to a brothel if you want a girl. . . . And here I am, wasting my damn life trying to invent people. . . ." (345) Later that night, Talliaferro phones him, having solved his own problem:

> "Fairchild? So sorry to disturb you, but I have it at last." A muffled inarticulate sound came over the wire, but he rushed on, unheeding. "I learned through a mistake tonight. The trouble is I haven't been bold enough with them: I have been afraid of frightening them away. Listen: I will bring her here, I will not take No; I will be cruel and hard, brutal, if necessary, until she begs for my love. What do you think of that? . . . Hello! Fairchild? . . ."
>
> An interval filled with a remote buzzing. Then a female voice said:
>
> "You tell 'em, big boy; treat 'em rough." (348-349)

Faulkner's Dawson Fairchild is no less sympathetic than Hecht's Warren Lockwood, but clearly there is a difference. Faulkner's is a caricature rather than a realistic portrait, and yet in many ways the caricature is the reality and the realistic portrayal an idealized portrait, or, in other words, the attempts by

two young writers to portray the Sherwood Anderson who had come into their lives to contribute to their direction represent not different Andersons but different views of the same man, neither of which touches his reality and all his uncertainties as he saw himself.

Whether or not Anderson took offense at Hecht's portrayal is debatable, although Anderson broke off his friendship with Hecht at that point, just as he broke with Faulkner at the time of publication of *Mosquitoes*, and broke with Hemingway after the publication of *The Torrents of Spring*. But, unlike Hemingway, both Hecht and Faulkner continued to praise Anderson as a writer, an influence, and a man, each purporting not to understand the break. But in "They Come Bearing Gifts" and in his *Memoirs* Anderson ascribed the break with Hemingway and Faulkner to other reasons: a vicious letter from Hemingway and an argument with Faulkner in New Orleans in which Faulkner insisted that the product of a white-black relationship, like that of a horse and a burro, could only be sterile, a comparison Anderson found offensive. Nevertheless, when Faulkner published *Sartorsis* in 1929 his dedication to Anderson was touching:

> To Sherwood Anderson
> through whose kindness
> I was first published with the belief
> that this book will give him no reason
> to regret that fact.

Later, in an essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1953 and in a 1956 *Paris Review*, Faulkner was gracious in acknowledging Anderson's influence on his career. Hemingway, conversely, commented in *A Moveable Feast* that Anderson had written a few good stories.

At this stage myth and reality are irretrievably interwoven in the stories of Anderson's relationships; and the truth is still the subject of scholarly debate. The fictional portraits that resulted from those relationships have, however, been too frequently overlooked or forgotten, but they remain testaments to Anderson's nature and personality, portraits as significant—and perhaps as real—as those he provided of himself and perhaps even more significant than those provided by his biographers.

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NOTE

1. In a later novel, *Humpty Dumpty* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), p. 224, Hecht includes the following exchange between two characters:

   "I was reading that Sherwood Anderson book," Stella smiled. "I had it on top. It's mine, you know. I bought it."

   "You will waste your time reading Anderson," Savaron answered. "I can give you all of Sherwood in a sentence—the wistful idealization of the masculine menopause. . . ."

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THE POETRY OF PAUL ENGLE: A VOICE OF THE MIDWEST

ROBERT WARD

I have given lectures in Canada, Romania, Spain, and England on Midwestern Literature and one of the things I have discovered is that everywhere I go in Europe, the image of America is often something similar to "Dallas" or "Dynasty." And so, since my first visit to Europe in 1981 I find myself saying,

> No, no, America is not "Dallas" and "Dynasty." America isn't simply New York and Chicago and San Francisco and L.A. Between the Allegheny Mountains and the Rocky Mountains, especially in the northern half, there's an area called the Midwest where most of our people live and which throughout most of our history has produced most of our food and most of our materials. They get up, work hard, they come home, and they enjoy their families. They live very unglamorous lives and that's the real America.

In Spain, the college students were more knowledgeable about America than were my Romanian college students, but they still have a rather limited view of what America is. So I have become somewhat of a missionary about Midwestern Literature and especially about the poetry of Jim Hearst and Paul Engle, both of whom I have admired as men and as writers for a long time. Two years ago I talked about Jim Hearst's poetry here. Now I want to introduce you to a few of the vast number and variety of poems that Paul Engel has written in his lifetime. Paul Engle is more than eighty years old now. He has been around a long time. And his forbearers were around a lot longer in Iowa. He is part of that group we call Midwestern writers. This Midwest America is agrarian and factory country. It is full of rolling hills

in the east and plains in the west. Its land and its people have shaped its art and architecture. A wood frame house is particularly Midwestern. So are the large red barn and the round grain-storage elevator. And do not forget, even the skyscrapers started in Chicago. As John A. Kowenhowen, the art scholar, pointed out years ago, the skyscraper is particularly American. This architecture represents the American openess, expansiveness. In many ways Midwestern Literature has that expansive quality.

The poetry out of this Midwest, what is it? I want to point out some of its characteristics, while at the same time admitting that you might find any given characteristic in the poets of the South, of the East, or of the West, but the combination of these particular characteristics tends to mark Midwestern poetry.

One of its first characteristics is a sense of isolation that we see in so many of the poems from the Midwest. In collections of Midwestern poetry such as *The Heartland*, edited by Lucen Stryk out of Illinois, you will see again and again, this theme of isolation, the individuals apart from one another. Now we have to admit that the theme of alienation is one of the modern themes of the western world. Not only in America, but in all of western Europe. Yet, as Jim Hearst once said,

> I think we see it in many of the Midwestern artists, because they've been ignored for so long. Not only by the east, but by the Midwest. People here are too busy, they don't take time to read literature, to enjoy the arts. They are involved in other things. You'd feel isolated, too, if you wrote and nobody read you except maybe half a dozen other poets.

Note one of Engle's poems called "Only The Moonlight." At the conclusion of it is this sense of the individual living and dying alone:

> "And when he died he screamed with his last breath. Being too terribly alone with death."

Another poem is called "Twenty Below." In the octave the speaker begins, "Twenty below I said and closed the door." In the sestet the reply to the octave is that we need a storm so cruel and cold that it will force us to admit our need of human warmth and touch. What comes out of this poem is this terrible human aloneness. You can see that need voiced in the poetry of so many Midwestern poets.

And yet, these are also the writers that have retained what I call a sense of place. Compare some of Wordsworth's poetry to that of the average modern American writer, and one of the first things you see is that most American writers do not demonstrate or exhibit a strong sense of a place, of being from some place. They could be in New York or Chicago, or San Francisco, or Los Angeles, or St. Louis. Poetry is so much about their inner world, that you never get the sense of being in or part of a place. By contrast, notice in Engel's "Ancestral Iowa" the details of place. What Engle is talking about are his forebearers, people who came out to Iowa in the nineteenth century: Jacob, Mike, and Tom, his old German ancestors who knew "the working of iron to worn hoof."

> From Eva, Alice, Rachel was I born.
> Makers of buckwheat pancakes and bear broth. . . .
> Suffered the prairie childbirth, bore their labor. . . .
> Here in an unreal world of myth and mind,
> What have I left of their great human will?
> The field of fact to plow, the corn to grind,
> My hand to learn to learn old lightness in new skill.

This is a fairly early poem (1941). Now, compare it to one called "Heartland," that Engle sent me last year. It has not even been published yet except in a private printing. Notice the strong sense of place and of people that comes through in this longer poem. It begins with imagining a view of America from the Apollo spacecraft, which makes it very much a poem of our time. From one hundred miles high the thousand miles long American Midwest is seen as a woman's body lying in the earth. Further in the poem Engle says,

> Out of that beautiful body I was born.
> Great grandfather, Peter Reinheimer broke
> Our piece of Iowa prairie. . . .
> Great grandmother gardened, baked, bore kids,
> slopped hogs, picked corn, fed Indians, seldom cried.
>
> Immigrant people, out of the old Europe,
> left the toy-making Black Forest,
> the Hessian Hills of the Rhine,
> hating the military madness of hate.

Note the sense of three, four, or more generations preceding him.

What sustains Engle of course is his intense awareness of being of a place, of the land and of a people, of not being some kind of biological accident that happens to be here for a few decades and then disappears. Another way of talking about it is continuity, something that stretches back beyond the individual with the implications of going forward beyond the individual. We live in an age in which we have all been conditioned to think of our selves as little atoms divorced from anything else, with a momentary flair of existence. Engle's sense of a much larger context is rare in modern writers.

So far I have pointed out to you the strong sense of isolation and the equally strong sense of place to be seen in Engle's poetry. A third characteristic is an intense awareness of the land. You will see it again and again in these Midwestern writers. When they talk about the city it is so often with a disturbed sense of being disconnected from where they ought to be. Look at Engle's poem "American Child, I" where we can see the love of and awareness of the land. It begins,

> Lucky the living child born in a land
> Bordered by rivers of enormous flow:
> Missouri talking through its throat of sand,
> Mississippi wide with ice and snow,
> A country confident that day or night,
> Planting, ploughing or at evening rest,
> It has a trust like childhood, free of fright,
> Having such powers to hold it east and west.

Engle's one novel is called *Always the Land.* And what comes through strongly there is also the sense of the land over and over again.

It is the Midwest and its land that we see in the poem entitled "America, 1941." It is a land of vast distances, with big open spaces, small towns, large open fields, and a single solitary voice of the poet singing that land again and again. Easterners don't understand the Midwest. Of course, you know, they so often confuse Ohio, Iowa, and Idaho. They are all the same to them, someplace out west in that desert. Note these lines from "America, 1941."

"Western muse, who by the curved prow over,
The salty water wandered from the edge
of hungering Europe to this country where
All through long June bees ride the ruddy clover,
Wild dogwood dangles from the Catskill ledge
And goldenrod is more a flower than the rose. . . .

I cannot ask my tongue to cheat the eye,
Naming alone the mounting meadowlark . . .
Muse of muskies lashing the Minnesota
Lake, of Alabama pine growing . . .
Gray with old water, golden Dakota.

What you have is Engle afoot with his vision ala Walt Whitman, as if he were at a great height viewing this vast space that is America. And this is very much a characteristic of the Midwestern voice. And Engle's poetry is so much a part of that voice. Engle once said,

> You know there are people who grow up, live, and die in the cities and they probably never put their feet on real ground, only on cement, asphalt that sort of thing. You need to have your feet rooted someplace.

A fourth characteristic of this twentieth century Midwestern poetry can be seen in Engle's poetry. It is a poetry that has accepted the twentieth century and rejected much of the old. But in a curious contradictory way it also maintains tradition. Several of the poems we have looked at are sonnets, particularly the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet, one of the most difficult to write in the English language. Interestingly, Paul Engle, out of the Midwest and so American, became a master of the Petrarchian sonnet and he has written them all of his life.

Look at a series of sonnets called "Greece and the Blood Root" published in Engle's first book *Worn Earth* (1932). On the one hand in terms of subjects it is so much American, Midwestern, particularly, in its rejection of much of the old world. As he says,

I have not dug for beauty in old Greece,
Scraping the mold of ages from the face
Of chiseled gods in some old burying place,
Troubling their quiet dreams, their eastern peace,

But look what he tells you he has done in the second of these three sonnets:

But I have found beauty in the west,
On prairies were the quail and the chipmunk breed
In plowed-up cornfields waiting for the seed.

And in last of the three sonnets:

I have found beauty in the dust of life
In men who work in grime of shop and field
I know the force that led them to a wife
I know the heart behind the dirty shirt–
A beauty where the bloodroot is revealed
And earthworms build a labyrinth in dirt.

These poems are a rejection of the old and traditional, as far as statement, but when you look at the form, it is a continuing of one of the most traditional forms that we can find in English language poetry.

At the end of the third sonnet is a fifth characteristic that we can see in Engle's poetry and that we see in so many of the American Midwest poems. There is no yearning for the good old days. There is no sentimentalizing from these poets, particularly Engle. They do not romanticize hard life on the farms and in the factories. Consider the poem called *No Clearance*. It is about the working man, but there is no romanticizing. It is about a very ordinary man who happens to get killed while working in a round house:

But this time he forgot, I guess, to crawl
Behind a car; we heard him shriek and fall.
His legs were crushed, his hands were just a smear. . . .

My wife is going to have another kid . . .
We still owe for the last. He screamed and died.

Nothing is sentimentalized or romanticized. The details are stark and brutal.

A sixth characteristic that is so much part of the American Midwest poetry we can see in the poem called *Prologue*. It is the use of the American vernacular, the spoken English used by the mass of Midwestern Americans. It is not a language marked by extremes. It is not a language that is highly rhetorical. Poets of the Midwest tend to craft their language so that it is relatively controlled, perhaps on a slightly higher emotional pitch than the spoken word. William Stafford once told me that he had to

begin his poems on a very low quiet note, subdued, mute almost, because he couldn't rise to a high pitch of intensity. If he were going to end on a rising note he didn't dare start out at the top of his voice. It is a talking voice. And this is true of much Midwestern poetry, it is poetry of understatement. Now, Paul Engle is not as subdued as many poets. But he is very much in that same tradition in his use of the vernacular. This is what Whitman said the American poets had to do in that famous preface to the *Leaves of Grass* in 1855: we have to use American English not British English.

When Engle says in "Prologue," "A chip on your shoulder . . . one tough baby, hard as nails, chin stuck out . . ." that is not fancy literary language, that is an American talking. I do not mean it is merely talk, but it gives this sense of the spoken word. In their use of language these Midwestern poets are so much a part of what William Carlos Williams called "The American Grain." This term applies to so many American poets starting with Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson, Robinson, and later Midwestern poets such as Bly, Stafford, Stryk, Hearst, and Paul Engle.

A seventh characteristic of these Midwestern poets reveals their tie to Emerson as well as to Whitman. Emerson said the poet is a moral force. He had great contempt for rhymesters or mere entertainers. That is why I would note that Engle dedicated poems to both Emerson and to Thoreau. Engle, like all major American poets, sees the poet as a moral force. His poem called "A Modern Romance" is in this vein. This is very much a moral satire. Engle, like Emerson, like Whitman, saw his duty clear, which was to tell the truth as he saw it, to see into the heart of things. He wrote this poem in 1959 when America was the top dog, big man on the street, and we had everything. We thought everybody had a job, and a house to live in, and we thumbed our nose at the whole world and even the universe. And so Engle writes about what happened to romance, what happened to life in America:

> Come live with me and be my wife.
> And we will live a packaged life.
> Where food, drink, fun, all things save pain.
> Come all wrapped in celophane. . . .
> I am the all American boy. . . .
> You are the all American girl. . . .

The poem is, of course, a moral satire of what he sees as a corruption of human life. He satirizes a world where advertizing tells us that you don't have to worry about being intelligent, honest, hard working, and fulfilling your obligations. It's a satire and it comes out of a moral position, and it's not merely entertainment.

A last characteristic of the good Midwestern poets is that they transcend their Midwesternness, they become universal poets. The poem called *Hands* was published in 1965 after Paul and his wife, Hualing Neigh, visited China. It was written by a man who knows what it is like to work with his hands, and appreciate it. He depicts a, "hand held, hand-created land," where "hands built the great wall–many thousands died," a land in which,

> A hundred, hundred, hundred million hands
> Together hold all China tight together.

Yet, this is not about just China, it is about being human, it is about the universal labor and sweat.

Consider another of Engle's earliest poems, "Old Men in the Sunset:"

> They clutch their dirty pipes and wait until
> The lingering sunset darkens from their eyes;
> Against the night, against the traffic cries,
> And thinks of home and sleep regretfully:
> No place on earth as lonely as the bed
> of old men staring at eternity,
> A breath between the living and the dead.

This is not just about being a man from the Midwest, it is about being human, about a condition that comes to us all if we live long enough. And so you face old age. Whether you are in China or Spain or England or Romania, it is there. Paul Engle, like all these other Midwestern poets, writes about the human condition, the human condition any place in the world.

I conclude with excerpts from Engle's poem, ***The Word and the Poet***. It is a good summation of what he is about. It begins,

> Verse is not written, it is bled
> out of the poet's abstract head.
> Words drip the poem on the page.
> Out of his grief, delight, and rage.

And it ends,

> The poems that they bore
> In blaze of day or dark of sleep
> Are ways by which they keep
> Their marvelous madness in a world gone sane.

And this is the poetry of Paul Engle, it is a poetry bled out of the poet's head. It is a poetry so much of the Midwest and yet it is also a poetry for all humanity.

University of Northern Iowa

THE U-LAND IN SIOUXLAND: A MINNESOTAN'S VIEW

JILL B. GIDMARK

There is more to Minnesota than just . . . world-famous landmarks and obvious beauty spots. Minnesota is not just a state with certain geographical features and boundaries—it is more a state of mind. . . . It's how we've lived and loved here, how we've suffered and lost, and suffered and won. It's where we were born, and how we were brought up, and how we were fulfilled as persons, on our farms, in our villages, in our cities.

—Frederick Manfred, 1953

"Are you conscious of "place" in your life and work? Of having your *place?*

Not any more than I am conscious of breathing air. But, just like with the lack of air, I sure am conscious of it when I lack place.

Do you, as an artist, need a place to sustain you?

Again, just as with the lack of air, in the beginning you'd better be tied to some placenta somewhere, at least for nine months. After that you can perhaps wander a little—though always with an eye as to where the original placenta is. And that's both a pun and a fact.

—Frederick Manfred, 1975

Fifteen years ago, at a meeting of the MMLA, Clarence Andrews of Michigan Technological University indicated in his presentation "The Midwest in Literature" that "the Midwest is dead—as an idea, as a place, and, implicitly, as a source of inspiration for authors . . . where are the Willa Cathers, the Carl Sandburgs, the Susan Glaspells of today?" he challenges (5).

Notably, and I hope unintentionally, Minnesota was deleted from Andrews' list of states that comprise "the Midwest" (1). But Frederick Manfred was mentioned as one of three "exploiters . . . of the Midwest scene [who] set up literary countries akin to Hardy's Wessex or Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha" (3). Andrews' role was, of course, the gadfly, to elicit examination by irritation. What may not have been said that decade and a half ago is a critical caveat to a complete and contemporary sensibility about the function and value of setting in Midwestern literature for a particular Midwestern author—place, especially Minnesota place, is alive and well in the writings of Manfred, and his sense of place is the vital sustenance of his work.

The rooming house at 1814 4th St. SE, where Manfred once lived, near the University of Minnesota's Williams Arena, has been replaced by a parking lot, even as shelves of notes, multiple drafts and galley proofs of his rumes and tales and novels remain housed at the University's archives a mile or so east, at 826 Berry Street. On March 3, 1949, the Minnesota Territorial Centennial Commission designated Feike Feikema as one of "the One Hundred Living Great of Minnesota." Three decades later, Donald Fraser, mayor of Minneapolis, proclaimed Friday, October 24, 1980, **Frederick Manfred Day** ("WHEREAS, Frederick Manfred put "Siouxland" on the World Map; and WHEREAS, Frederick Manfred, a classic story teller of the Midwest, expresses the true values and courage of country men"). And on July 9, 1988, Manfred was autographing copies of his latest book. *Prime Fathers,* at Odegaard Books in Calhoun Square in the Uptown district of Minneapolis.

And yet no honor or tribute to Manfred is quite like the land itself. Frank Waters remained silent for two days when he visited Manfred at his home of Blue Mound in Luverne, Minnesota, built on three-and-a-half billion-year-old Sioux quartzite, and then, finally, upon leaving, said: "Listen, Fred. You built your house on a sacred place. You'd better live *right* here. . . . [T]his is a sacred place, and don't offend it" ("Milton, Manfred, and McGrath," 24). Manfred (and writers like Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Vardis Fisher, and Robert Bly), says Westbrook, are "sacred writers who tend to feel a respect for nature rather than a romantic love for nature; or the respect, at least, is deeper than the love" (137). So it's no wonder that Manfred would characterize regionalism, or a regional writer, in terms of the resonance of a tuning fork. "[F]inally you ramble onto [place], and then your hum wakes up to it and it's got you. . . . only the people stay in a certain place who can make a go of it there, which means that the place is busy picking whoever is going to represent it . . . in a sense, place is really *choosing* people: 'You're going to be my voice eventually; I'm going to keep 2000 of you here, and among those, one of you will be a poet or sage or oracle, and I'll get said what I want to get said'" ("Milton, Manfred, and McGrath," 23).

Manfred tends to home in and stick to a place and to a people—psychologically, physically, and literarily—which have roots in his individual past (as portrayed by his somewhat autobiographical writings of a rather modern Midwest) or in his cosmic sensibilities (which come out in the other major strain of his writings, those of the American West of the nineteenth century).

His second novel, *Boy Almighty* (1945), movingly and graphically chronicles his two-year battle with tuberculosis at Glen Lake Sanatorium in Oak Terrace, Minnesota, near Minneapolis on Lake Minnetonka, in 1940-42. Manfred names his protagonist Eric Frey and the place Phoenix Sanatorium (or "the san" to the residents). Mary Lehar (for Maryanna Shorba) was another resident tubercular patient whom Manfred married after their discharge and to whom he dedicated *Boy Almighty.* In the ambulance on the way to the sanatorium, as Frey rounded Lake Calhoun, the water was "full of bared teeth" (5) and "the waves were caught with fierce white splashes" (5). The novel quickly becomes, by virtue of the extended convalescence, claustrophobic, set largely within the walls of the san, most often out of touch of the creative energy from the sun which he craves. Months and then years pass in the grey corridor before Frey has strength enough to vacation on the truck-garden farm of Mary's foster parents, beneath a "spread of apple and plum trees" (244) and under "the long hill ridged with a vineyard" (244). In the November dusk, amid leaf-sized snowflakes and train whistles, having at last won tenuous health at the end of the book, he has also scaled a lofty bluff near the san, exultant at the simultaneous elevation of place and self.

Ten years later, in 1956, appeared *Morning Red.* A lot had happened to the Minnesota author during those years following

his recovery. He had worked for a brief time for *Modern Medicine* in Minneapolis. In 1943 he had served as assistant campaign manager for Hubert Humphrey's unsuccessful bid for mayor of Minneapolis, and then had given up politics and received a University of Minnesota Writing Fellowship, which was renewed a second year. He had moved to Wrâlda, 6717 Auto Club Road in Bloomington, a southern suburb of Minneapolis, and had lived there for fifteen years, overlooking the Minnesota River. Impressed with Manfred's first novel, *The Golden Bowl* (1944), Sinclair Lewis had invited Manfred to his Duluth home for a weekend, and the ensuing friendship had led to Lewis' influencing Doubleday to publish *This Is the Year* in 1947, and ultimately to Manfred's giving the commemorative address for Lewis after his death in 1951. The World's Wanderer trilogy (*The Primitive* [1949], *The Brother* [1950], *The Giant* [1951] were the last publications of Manfred as Feike Feikema; the name change was official by 1952.

Morning Red, which Manfred has dubbed a "romance" (Wright, 110) and dedicated to William Faulkner, a "neighbor living down the valley a piece and also a son of the Father of Waters," is a bizarre counterpointed tale "of crime, political intrigue, and neuroses in the Twin Cities" (Flora, 203). The setting is Bloomington, although because Manfred did not like the name of Bloomington, he changed it to Brokenhoe. Manfred's changing the name might have had to do with his hope to distance Minnesotans from the political, psychological, and criminal sickness in the book. He believed that Bloomington was not Brokenhoe, but could become it if its citizens weren't watchful. A hand-drawn map by Manfred in the University of Minnesota archive collection includes details of avenues, hill ranges, rivers, railroads, and public buildings, attesting to Manfred's scrupulous placement of even the fictional components of the novel. On a highway department map of Minnesota inserted in Manfred's working notes, Manfred has indicated his "location" of Brokenhoe—five miles south of Mendota, east of Highway 13, between Blackhawk Lake and Thomas Lake.

One of the novel's forceful elements is the rapid scene changes—both brutality and charm are injected by specificity of place—the Pipestone Monument, Minnehaha Falls, Riverside Clinic and the Mall in the composite "Northland College," Old

Main and Little Theater from Macalester College. One of the characters in *Morning Red* has a near fatal fall off the same Washington Avenue bridge from which John Berryman plunged to his suicidal death in 1972. The "big wind" that lashed the Twin Cities in the early 1950's is presented more clearly than it could have been observed:

> . . . flickerlightenings wriggled wildly all over the black sky, coming from all horizons and going to all ends of the earth. No thunder. Only the eerie whistling of intra-thunderhead intercloud lightening. Below them, across the boulevard, beyond a row of evergreens in the meadow, Lake Nokomis lay like a meteor-pocked patch of moon. . . . a low moaning sound arose from the other side of Lake Nokomis, coming from beyond the green leafseas of the Minnehaha parkway district (104).
> . . . he saw the car soar up in a long smooth lifting flight . . . [and] had come to rest on Hiawatha Avenue just below Minnehaha Park, a good half mile from his green house on Lake Nokomis (106-107).

Manfred's poems of 1934-1965, three-quarters of them written in Minnesota, were collected in *Winter Count* (1966). Limited to a printing of 1000 coies, the poetry will never be as widely read as the novels, though the lilt in some of it is a meaningful echo or a foreshadowing of some Manfred novels. The Minnesota poems fall into three groups: those written in the sanatorium (1940-1942), in Blóomington (1948-1956), and in Luverne, Manfred's home since 1961. Ardent love poems to Maryanna and chilling meditations like "I Have Been Dipped in Death" recall *Boy Almighty.* "Four Voices in a Dream" is a gloss to both *Milk of Wolves* (1976) and *The Manly-Hearted Woman* (1976). The title poem that outlines Manfred's first eighteen years, "Winter Count," as well as "Mother" and "Father," anticipate the autobiographical *Green Earth* (1977), published eleven years later.

The content of the most successful poems suggest Frost in their natural simplicity and simple philosophy. It's the rock and the earth—the place—that Manfred resonates to, and we would be tone-deaf not to be moved by the hum:

> The grass was gray.
> When I kicked it
> I saw minute greens
> growing in the earth's

old fur, like pale yellow
porcupine quills just started.
Old frogs were croaking again.
Pools were mysterious
with winter's ambers.
A meadowlark wigged
a white white tail.
It hopped on a post,
sat a while,
shat once,
flitted on to an old
rotted stump that was seamed
with pale weed sprouts. ("Maryanna IV," ll. 18-34, April 1942)

On sunny days the colored rock
is as warm as a heated brick in bed.
A great glacier has ground it glass smooth.
It actually feels soft to the skin.
I have dreamed on it for hours
and afterwards never once felt sore or stiff.
I sometimes have the feeling
that I am lying on a great bone
from some super mastodon
freshly picked by eagles.
But mostly I feel that I am lying
on some fundamental rib of the earth. . . .
Sioux quartzite they call it.
Scarlet threads of fury.
I take much comfort
lying on my rock in the sun. . . .
I feel an old heat rising out of the rock.
It fires my young arteries and my young heart.
After a time I bound to my feet
and run all the way home.
("Boiling Rock," ll. 5-15, 25-28, 33-36, July 1963)

Some twenty years later, *Winter Count II* appeared in a limited edition of 300 copies, collected poems Manfred wrote between 1964-1985. Prominent themes are progeny and ancestry, aging, sexual love, and Nordic mythology. The themes are often expressed in images of the natural world, particularly the world in the surroundings of Manfred's Minnesota homes, Blue Mound and Roundwind, though there is an extended poetic narrative

recalling a flirtation in a Paris bookstore and two short searching poems composed in New York City. Most memorable is "Act Your Age," which shows a pensive Manfred wandering around the Hillside Cemetery near Doon, Minnesota, where his burial plot is located.

. . . high on the west bluffs
overlooking the Big Rock River.
("Act Your Age," ll. 68-69, March 1977)

. . . I walked over to the Feikema lot
stood looking down where Grampa and Gramma
lay stretched out bones bare of flesh,
brains fallen into special dust.
I wondered if I were to stir up that brain dust
with a finger
if some kind of emanation,
their old memories,
might not rise high enough
for me to sniff them
into my own memory.
("Act Your Age," ll. 48-58, March 1977)

In this slim volume, Manfred's reverence for place as source of inspiration and being is as clear as the four lines of exhortation in an earlier poem:

Make ears of your feet,
let the ground speak.
let the voices of the place
flow upward through your knees.
("Make Ears of Your Feet," ll. 1-4, March 1968)

Manfred's selection of a title for *Eden Prairie*, the novel he published in September 1968, is initially misleading. As Minneapolitans know, Eden Prairie names the suburb to the southwest of the Twin Cities, not the conjunction of Minnesota, South Dakota, and Iowa that is the novel's setting. A month after the book was published, Manfred said, "Whoever named Eden Prairie, Eden Prairie, didn't know much about prairie land. That town's not located on prairie!" (Johnson, 6) (In 1920, though, an archaeologist with the Minnesota Historical Society had this to say: "Eden Prairie township, settled in 1852, organized in 1858, had a fine natural prairie in its southern portion" [Upham, 221].)

Manfred liked the name Eden Prairie. In the archive collection, a summer 1965 article clipped from the Minneapolis *Tribune* revealing the origin of some Minnesota place names includes the following passage underlined by Manfred: "[Some] . . . names are poetic evocations. Eden Prairie was so dubbed in 1853 by Mrs. Elizabeth F. Ellet, a prominent visiting author." (*Winter Count*, incidentally, was printed at The Prairie Press in Eden Prairie.) Other places in the novel *Eden Prairie*, however, are renamed—Doon, Iowa, becomes Bonnie; Luverne, Minnesota, becomes Whitebone—but the Rock River meanders unabashedly as itself.

Preparation for the writing of *Eden Prairie* began for Manfred with drawing up a list of "Books to Read"; the list opens the workbook of the first draft of the novel. Of the sixty-one entries—mainly regional, most concerning Minnesota and Wisconsin—forty-three are checked off, but one—Folwell's four-volume *Minnesota History*—is ticked off four times. Workbook notations allude to it, e.g., "See Folwell, Vol. 3, for the locust plague of 1973-1977." His genuine affection for the place "bursts" in *Eden Prairie* at times "in unembarrassed rhetoric," and "some brief descriptive passages [have] the ring of a hymnal," says reviewer Leonard Neil.

> The last sidewalk at the edge of town dropped off into a cinder path, grayish red in green grass. The path wound through a patch of gray-tinged wolfberries. Gophers, erect beside their holes, whistled shrill warnings. Flashing blue swallows cleared the air of insects. A single heron took a heavy undulant route across the point, from the Little Rock River to the Big Rock River. . . . Below flowed the rippling Little Rock, curving and recurving slenderly down the valley. Light-green buffalo grass showed through the darker bluegrass. Islands of joint-grass told where old springs were working. . . . The grass was very thick and smelled like the hair of a collie puppy. (72-73)

Forrest Mickey Bird, in his unpublished dissertation entitled "Prolegomenon to Frederick Manfred," judges *Eden Prairie* (along with *Apples of Paradise* [1968] and *Arrow of Love* [1961]) as the three works that best "portray the heart of Siouxland, its geography, its people, and its laws. . . . The most enlightening and complete of these is . . . *Eden Prairie*" (33-34).

Central to a Minnesota perspective on Manfred's work is the foreword to *The Wind Blows Free* (1979). In it, he reminisces about his sudden realization, in 1937, about the vitality and viability of himself as a storyteller. He was a sports reporter for the Minneapolis *Journal* when his urge for companionship led him to accept an invitation to a party at the home of a friend on Prospect Hill (Tower Hill of Prospect Park) near the University. For Manfred, the party followed a sixteen-hour day at the *Journal*, putting the final edition of the Sunday paper to bed. Manfred wasn't sure he felt up to partying. Once, there, though, Jordan beer in hand, he was urged to tell of hitchhiking to Yellowstone three years earlier, a trip that Manfred said had released his soul. Recounting and embellishing adventures about hobo, snake, and old maid to an appreciative audience put him in a glow. He had found his voice and rejoiced to be able to tell a story in a way that would make people listen. At 2 a.m., at home after the party, and for the rest of the night, the next morning, and into that afternoon, Manfred typed fifty pages of manuscript which, finally, did not ape Steinbeck, Dos Passos, or Hemingway, but was the germination of his real voice and the beginning of what would become, seven attempts later, his first novel (*The Golden Bowl*, 1944).

If Minnesota is resposible for a good deal of the shaping and launching of that early voice, it also has much to do with his two latest publications, *Dinkytown* (1984) and *Prime Fathers* (1988). The party at which he found his voice is recalled in the seventeen-page monograph published in 1984 by Dinkytown Antiquarian Bookstore. At the urging of Larry Kingman, the bookstore proprietor, Manfred sat down over a twenty-five minute cup of coffee and cranked out *Dinkytown*, the anecdotal, local-color tribute to the most famous of the three business districts surrounding the University's Minneapolis campus. The original printing was for five hundred copies (twenty-six signed by the author and handcased), many purchased by Minnesota libraries, and still today copies are available at Dinkytown Antiquarian Bookstore. The essay includes reminiscence that is embarrassing—getting the camel hair skirt of a pretty coed caught in his zipper in the crowded Oak-Harriet streetcar while heading for his job downtown. There is humor—two of Manfred's roommates conspiring to visit their next-door girlfriends in an unconventional

way during the landlady's absence, by bridging the upstairs windowsills of the two adjacent houses with a two-by-ten plank. There is also gratification—Manfred observing Meridel LeSueur's writing class, then joining her for hamburgers and beer at the Stockholm Cafe on Washington Avenue and receiving her assessment of his first book: "Never take instruction on how to improve . . . from some other writer or from some self-appointed critic. . . . Learn to be your own best critic. . . . If you listen to others, you'll be thrown off your course" (9).

Manfred sequentially evokes his nine Dinkytown addresses, particularly 1814 4th Street Southeast (where Manfred and his wife and her mother moved in August 1943), where he wrote his first piece published nationally, "Report from Minnesota" (in the *New Republic*) about Hubert Humphrey. That winter, Robert Penn Warren, on reading "Report," invited Manfred to his house on Logan Avenue for conversation over hot-buttered rums. Warren was getting his final draft of *All the King's Men* together and was curious about differences between southern and northern politics, at the same time being mindful not to encroach on anything Manfred might want to use later in his own writing.

The little book *Dinkytown* has gossipy bits—Saul Bellow was "petulant" and "arrogant beyond his means"; Malcolm Cowley was hard of hearing and mixed things up; Allen Tate had *permissible* arrogance because he knew his stuff; poet James Wright was getting shock treatments against his will, and Manfred was instrumental in stopping them. Eric Sevareid, who worked with Manfred at the *Journal* and was also fired (though a year earlier, in 1938), "had class. . . . [I]n him we lost a great novelist when he decided to become a mere nightly commentator for CBS instead" (17).

The slight, nostalgic volume gives a sense of an important and attractive intellectual milieu. seething and alive with its own potential and insight and connections. Manfred doesn't divulge that Dinkytown is more fragmented and faster-paced today, less friendly and communal. Today he couldn't attend a movie at the Varsity Theater for any price (let alone the quarter he spent on a show in the Thirties) because, as the marquee indicates, the house is "Temporarily Closed," having knuckled under to competition from multi-screened complexes in the malls accessible to students with cars. But Manfred would still be able to park his

car in Dinkytown, have his malted at Bridgeman's, and drop in on Larry Dingman at the Antiquarian Bookstore. Even though the "hungry terribly ambitious young man" (17) of those days and pages is transformed now, the good memories that Manfred conjures up remain intact for us to enjoy.

Good memories also are a part of the retrospective collection of essays called *Prime Fathers*, which includes such gems of the Manfred canon as the informative "Report From Minnesota: Introducing Hubert H. Humphrey" and the very touching "In Memoriam Address: Sinclair Lewis, 1885-1951," The extemporaneous speech, "On Being a Western American Writer," delivered at Washington State University, is as polished and stunning as any of the reprinted material. The memoir is a collective tribute to the independent spirit of those artists and thinkers who are truly "prime fathers." "Modern life," says Manfred, "is honing even the roughest and toughest of us down to nice round smooth stones" (1). As an antidote, he suggests making heroes of the "ornery cusses" we still have around and urges us not, by rolling round ourselves, eventually to be ground to fine sand and lost in the sea. "Better to have rough corners, and sharp edges, and refuse to budge or roll, and glint in the sun, and even gather grey lichen, and so maybe, with luck, be considered a landmark" (2),

So Minnesotans Lewis, Humphrey, Manfred himself, and his Frisian/Iowan father Feike Feikes Feikema VI qualify as prime fathers, being "wretch and rat," but also "true child of God," working new words in place of dead words, doing something lasting for America, perpetuating a vision of place: "Wait a minute. This is important, this glimpse of a place and of a literature you have. . . . Frangible and fragile as it all may be, you've got to put her down" (137). Wallace Stegner's seminal essay on Manfred reinforces this perspective, an orientation sine qua non to understanding Manfred: "Few writers ever achieve so sure a sense of place, and of how human beings are shaped by it. . . . [H]e knows his country from the anthills up" (Stegner, xv).

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GOING SOUR IN THE HEARTLAND: DAVID J. MICHAEL'S *A BLOW TO THE HEAD*

JANE S. BAKERMAN

Determining the proper direction of his maturation journey is the first important challenge the young *Bildungsroman* hero faces. Whether he travels a goodly distance, as in William Faulkner's *The Reivers,* or traverses only a few short blocks, as in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* or Carson McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* the hero's selection of or his inability to select the proper direction foreshadows his ability or his inability to reach his true destination, a viable, relatively comfortable place in society.

Along the road to adulthood, the apprentice is tested repeatedly; his success or failure in handling these difficulties reveals (even as it forms) his character. Significantly, these trials always center on social interaction. Understanding of and pragmatic adjustment to society equates with maturity, the apprentice's perceived goal. He knows fully the importance of this process, and though he may not understand all its implications, he yearns to make choices which will earn him acceptance. It is the desire for acceptance which strengthens his endurance and motivates necessary adjustments in his hopes and ideals. In effect, he must learn to make society's expectations his own, and mentors encountered along his path influence his thinking.

Sometimes the apprentice falls prey to false mentors whose bad advice is dangerous; sometimes the mentors are genuinely helpful. Lucky is the young adventurer who, like Lucius Priest and Scout Finch, discovers a valid role model among the adults he encounters. For him, the maturation journey, while neither wholly safe nor wholly pleasant, is successful. By a combination of his own courage and his mentor's counsel (or example), the

young hero learns to be as effective as any other adult. He now understands that the society which has shaped and tested him requires of its members not only courage and endurance but also compromise and self-control.

The typical *Bildungsroman* hero takes every trial seriously; by so doing, he learns to evaluate both his own and others' behavior. That is, while his geographical journey allows society to judge and to shape him, his simultaneous inward journey forces him to judge himself and society. The young hero learns that whereas he may be rightfully proud of many of his decisions, he must also accept the cost of misbehavior: guilt. He discovers that guilt often becomes the motivation for still other actions. Foolish behavior in small matters results in relatively little guiltiness, but serious errors can stimulate long-lived anguish. Indeed, one crucial measurement of the apprentice's hard-won maturity is his ability to cope with guilt.

Experiencing guilt over small errors, the apprentice feels foolish but not wicked, and he is unlikely to make the same mistake again. Much more difficult, of course, is the effort to assuage deep guilt caused by wicked behavior. An honest mentor's sage advice can make all the difference in the apprentice's ability to confront these problems. If, as in *The Reivers*, a proper punishment is assessed and meted out, the protagonist resumes his journey or assumes his manhood chastened but informed and strengthened. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Jem Finch is punished unfairly; even so, his mentor's strength and reliability keep him steady—maturely informed and not bitter. Scout Finch (like Lucius Priest) signals her initiation by recounting her adventures. Quietly amused or rueful in tone, her account helps her achieve perspective upon and acceptance of her social role. Positive resolution in these novels, then, requires the active presence of a true mentor who believes in a society orderly enough that its rules can be learned, accepted, and obeyed.

When either or both of these factors—a decently healthful society and a worthy mentor—are absent, the *Bildungsroman* hero falls back upon a third means of assuaging guilt, a well-established method generally considered effective, even salvational. He confesses.

But if the society into which the young narrator-protagonist seeks admission is fatally flawed, not only is his journey painful,

but also, confession is useless, even demeaning. Lost in despair, he must, like the ancient mariner, tell and retell his story to the random passerby. No confessor exists; no one can set a penance; no effort can assuage his guilt. Sometimes, he cannot even escape into madness like Pecola Breedlove of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. He contemplates his plight endlessly, his sense of self draining constantly, drearily away.

In *A Blow to the Head*,[1] David J. Michael depicts a narrator who is compelled to report the misdeeds of a number of unattractive people, and he does so in detail and at great length. Included in his account are his own acts—some foolish, some cruel, one horrendous. Anthony "Pooch" Pansella speaks in a voice hollow with despair. In the hope of understanding something of what has happened to him Pooch tells his story, but from the outset, readers understand that the novel is very different from works such as *The Reivers* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Instead, *A Blow to the Head* more nearly resembles Carson McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

As in McCullers' book, Michael's novel holds out little hope for its narrator-protagonist who announces immediately that "there's not much to say. A lot to think about but little to say" (1). If there is not much to say but only a great deal to think about, then the worth of Pooch's story itself is called into question. If thinking and rethinking past events offers the narrator no hope, what, one wonders, is the value of the tale? The answer lies in Michael's treatment of his material. Pooch is both a fully drawn, realistic character *and* a fully viable symbol of the subculture in which he lives. According to this novel, huge Midwestern industrial cities were in great trouble long before the Rust Bowl economy set in. They were sickening from the failure of the American Dream.

Like his hometown, Pooch is also chronically ill, suffering from bone marrow anemia. Though he is quick to assert that the illness is *not* cancer, the disease limits his activity; he is doomed to be a supporter of or an onlooker among his classmates. This factor couples with his bent toward introspection to isolate him from his fellow students at down-at-the-heels St. Bernard's high school, themselves an odd and unpredictable lot. Pooch describes them as,

> different . . . or at least they were last year [Pooch Pansella's senior year]. Maybe we were a bum class. . . . Anyway we were out of it. We laughed just when you'd expect silence and we were quiet when every other kid in the city would've broken loose (2).

According to Pooch's report, studies are unimportant in life at St. Bernard's. The sense of futility which erodes the students' images of themselves and of their school absorbs everyone's interest. Outclassed in organized sports, dimly aware that their neighborhood, like the local parish itself, is decaying rapidly, the Bernard's students pin their hopes on salvaging a little pride with sports—any win, basketball or football, will do. And while they wait for what amounts to a small miracle, the kids' attitudes fester; they blame anything and everything except the real faults of their neighbors and themselves.

Correctly assuming that "To understand maybe you have to know the school and the neighborhood and the way people are" (2), Pooch sets about describing the situation which led to the murder of a Bernard's student by Bernard's students. He believes that neighborhood life was better,

> before they built the automobile factories along the river. When they came in the neighborhood took a nosedive. Factory blacks and hillbillies moved up from the South. It didn't do a thing for the parish because none of them are Catholic. Their kids all ended up at Western [high school] (2-3).

As this passage indicates, Pooch equates the good of the neighborhood with the good of the parish and, despite his essential innocence and decency, he reflects the corrosive racism and hypocrisy of his background much as Huck Finn does. But Pooch is a symbol of his environment, whereas Huck represents separation from a failed social system.

J. Roger Gaffrey, a new student, is different from the others. He may or may not be a mulatto; he may or may not be a good athlete; he may or may not be a worthwhile date. But because the Bernard's kids are so desperate for even the smallest success—and because they are quirky, as Pooch has explained, a frenzy seizes the school. It becomes extremely important to them that J. Roger, marked as "the other" by his clothes, his aloofness, his attitude, be persuaded to join a team. Pooch is enlisted by the school's ineffectual coach to recruit J. Roger for

the teams.In so doing, the coach established the disastrous direction of both boys' maturation journeys. All their choices are circumscribed by his.

J. Roger Gaffrey will not, as it turns out, play ball, and his refusal, coupled with his "otherness," infuriates the student body. Even his success at a school hop exacerbates the situation. A marvel on the dance floor, J. Roger remains otherwise aloof, and the girls feel rejected. Bluntly honest as always, Pooch says, "The guys couldn't match him and the girls couldn't make him" (174). And finally, a group of Bernard's kids—now a mob—attack J. Roger who is killed in the melee. Pooch, who "didn't want to graduate from Bernard's without one goddam friend" (214) joins the attackers. This hideous action is his only successful effort to be one of the gang.

About a year after the tragedy, Pooch tells us his story, making an attempt to come to terms with the terrible event . . . . in short, he makes his confession. The problem is that in Pooch's world, a world absent of caretaking love and kindness, there is no one to listen; it's very unlikely that pardon can be granted. The overwhelming sadness which permeates the boy's account indicates clearly that the roots of the problem lie in the larger community. Church, family, and society are bound to fail Pooch now as they have in the past. Confession without hope or belief, Michael suggests, is unredemptive, futile.

This story may, however, have value for the reader, not merely as a dirge for a social order in which caretaking love is replaced by shallow ambition, racism, and religious bigotry, but rather as a cautionary tale. Just possibly, similar mistakes can be avoided in similar situations. This thought, the openness and honesty of Pooch's recital, and the youngster's naive wisdom keep readers deeply involved. It's impossible not to care about his sad history, for, in David J. Michael's view, it's also the history of urban industrial America.

Relative newcomers to the city, the Pansellas have been badly damaged by urban life: "My parents got lost. There's something about the city itself. Like a fluorescent light. It shows up all the worst things" (52). Led—or, more accurately, dragged along—by Mrs. Pansella, Pooch, his sister, and his father are badgered into doing the "right" things at the "right time in order to acquire the belongings which would mark them as successful. Mrs. Pansella

also intends to win power in the parish, no matter that she is too busy to recognize her daughter's unhappiness, her husband's fatal illness, or her son's growing despair. From Pooch's perspective, Pansella family life was in ruins well before the story begins. He says, for example,

> All our holidays were pretty disastrous. I guess maybe because holidays should be love and the hate really shows then. Like heat hitting cold. Steam. Those dinners *steamed* (60).

The liturgy and theology of the church seem to mean little to the Pansellas. No member of the clergy figures importantly in the novel which means that Pooch lacks a decent mentor within his church as well as within his family and at school. Indeed, no adult of his acquaintance is capable of guiding him wisely. Anchorless in a complex and dangerous society which substitutes bigotry and prejudice for faith and good works, the best Pooch can do is declare a truce with organized religion:

> Christ was a great guy and I give him credit but this Christianity thing is like artists. You end up off your nut. . . . It was beautiful and everything but you'd go screwy trying to live by it like a whole lot of the older Catholics—the ones that have messed up this whole thing—who follow the laws like blind mice (36).

Though he finds little of value in his church, Pooch has arrived at a philosophy of life, a

> theory of circles and contradictions. . . . I always thought the things you believe are lies. And hate is the closest thing to love. And no matter where you start when you come all the way around you're nowhere. It's all spheres or circles or orbits. . . . I think that maybe someone finally figured out that Satan and God are the beginning and end of the same circle (96).

Innocent at the beginning of his maturation journey, as is traditional, Pooch remains uninstructed and grows cynical as he completes it. Whereas at one time he believed or at least hoped that "there was direction and progress . . . and a heaven above and all good things like a home and job and family that you could get by avoiding everything bad" (95), he is now certain that neither worthy goals nor worthy mentors exist, that living is a pretty hopeless business:

> ----What we've been taught is that life's a ladder with one step at a time. But that's math and there's no final number and no final rung and a lot of people don't even agree about the *direction* anymore. A lot of them look down or count backward. You've got your Make people counting 1-2-3 and your Break people counting 3-2-1. They're both moving and both blowing the snow. Sinking or swimming they're all ending up nowhere (95-6).

So profound is the impact of this lesson that Pooch chooses inaction as his means of coping with life's ambiguities and dangers. Spurning both the Makers and Breakers, he declares,

> I do as well with my own system. 1-1-1. Called floating.
>
> It's not easy floating. It's a lot simpler to kick like hell or even sink. But I'm thinking at least when I'm an old man and suddenly realize I'm neuter when I expected to be strong and wise I won't be surprised (96).

This bitterness is a far cry from the rather cheerful pragmatism with which successful *Bildungsroman* heroes accept the human condition and welcome active participation in the adult world.

No adult person offers young Pansella useful, redemptive advice; no peer cares much about him. Moreover, each of the institutions which should embrace and support him—his family, his school, and his church—fails, and though Pooch properly accepts responsibility for his own actions, even to the point where he may never be willing to act again, his stern analysis makes clear the shortcomings of the social structure in which he is trapped. A fatally flawed society produces no worthy mentors and thus dooms its youth to lives of cruel hypocrisy or permanent alienation.

Our last glimpse of Pooch is like our last glimpse of Mick Kelley in Carson McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter:* a youngster caught like a fly in amber. Though McCullers' book is far better known and rather more successful than David J. Michael's novel, his is at least as intricate and certainly worthy of attention. By incorporating direct social criticism into Pooch Pansella's story and by creating a youthful narrator who understands much of what went wrong but can imagine no remediation, Michael warns of the collapse of the American Dream.

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NOTE

1. David J. Michael. *A Blow to the Head.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970. All further references are to this edition and are indicated in the text.

EARLY AMERICAN LITERARY REALISM II: THE MIDWESTERN MATRIX

RONALD M. GROSH

Even good regional literary realism that reached publication in the 1870's and 1880's contained an uneven transitional, blending or blurring of regionalism and reactionary realism which did not generally produce a great, enduring fiction, but there were exceptions. As Lars Ahnebrink notes, Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871), Edgar Watson Howe's *The Story of A Country Town* (1883) and Joseph Kirkland's *Zury: The Meanest Man In Spring County* (1887), all thoroughly Midwest in character, possess "lasting merit and significance" (51-2). The writers, and Eggleston in particular, wrote stories "marred with moralizing, sentimentalism, a traditional villain and frequent caricatures . . . ," but in Ahnebrinks's terms they are "realists" and direct "forerunners of [Hamlin] Garland" (58).

Obviously, Midwestern writers experienced as full a measure of traumatic national events and circumstances as did all regions of the country. But what was there, though, about the Midwestern experience—what was particularly different from that of other regions of the country—that caused the impulse toward literary realism to take not only its most immediate root but also perhaps its deepest, its most enduring root?

Root strongly it did. Denying any imputation of "regional chauvinism," John Flannagan notes the Midwest's clear dominance of American literature through the Mid-twentieth century. Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and Sinclair Lewis, supplemented by the literary work of Sandburg, Lindsay, Masters, Cather, Fitzgerald, perhaps even Hemingway and Dos Passos, established just such a dominance, all of which began in the 1870's and 1880's. Not only did the Midwest supply some of

the earliest avowedly realistic novels from the pens of Howe, Eggleston, Kirkland, Garland, and others, but it supplied realistic writers for other regions—Mark Twain located in Hartford, Conn.; Howells, in Boston and New York; Garland finally settled in California (*Midwest* 81-9).

While they are admittedly not exclusive to the Midwestern scene or writers, certain interlocking generalizations can be made about the Midwestern roots (varied and complex as they are) of a literature that includes classic realism's detailed description of locale, psychological personality of character, and topic and event which are both common and probable (Kolb). First, the region itself, whether identified as the old five-state Northwest Territory or a twelve-state Middle-West, had been so recently settled, indeed was still very much being settled, that it lacked sufficient history for the easy mythologizing upon which native literary romance thrives. Speaking in 1834 on the future of Midwestern literature, Daniel Drake, Cincinnati physician, lecturer, and man of letters, "lamented the absence in the United States of certain romantic relics which might inspire emotion and sympathy; America had no ivy covered ruins" (Flannagan, "Soil" 208). Nathaniel Hawthorne would soon be mining New England's history for its potential romance, but his task would have been more difficult on the recently-settled Midwestern border. In Carl Van Doren's words, "It was also on the frontier . . . that realism took its earliest definite stand. Perhaps some bareness in the life of the Middle West, lacking both the longer memories of the Atlantic States and the splendid golden expectations of California, discouraged romance there and encouraged that bent toward naturalism which extends unbroken from Edward Eggleston" (118-9). As a result of this vacuum of regional past, Midwestern writers evidence what might be called a sense of "immediate history," by nature anti-romantic or at least less compatible with it, even in their "historical" fiction dealing, as it usually does, with the contemporaneous or the immediately previous generation. Eggleston, Howe, Kirkland, David R. Locke, and others all betray this awareness in much of their fiction and have to work hard in creating settings which provide a sense of "history" that will help interpret their narratives. And the continuing publishing of elderly living Midwestern pioneers' diaries and memoirs (Kirkland's mother's Michigan volumes, for example) as well as

the biographies and travel literature of visitors to the region served only to reinforce a point of view focused on the more tangible and contemporaneous rather than a mythic past.

Not only did the Midwest's greater lack of romance-prone history tend to encourage greater realism of narrative, but so also did even the geography of the region. The Midwest tends to lack the exotic. In Thomas T. McAvoy's terms, it

> has no Blue Ridge Mountains or Rocky Mountains, no Golden California or Florida coasts. The literary glorifications of life on the prairie or in the plains cities serve rather to emphasize the lack of unique physical and natural phenomena about which a great folk literature would have arisen in other regions of the world. There are indeed . . . fertile valleys . . . but there is little of the picturesque about them. . . . The Midwestern countryside, like its inhabitants, is middle-class—neither naturally beautiful nor technically stupendous (61-2).

But a literature cannot thrive by default, on a subject matter or setting it lacks, so it had to turn its attention somewhere. After it detailed its description of place, emergent Midwest realism began to study psychology of personality in tandem with its locale, the plain and realistic details of vast and unexotic geography. Edward Eggleston in particular,

> . . . having read Taine's *Art in the Netherlands* . . . undertook to portray the life of southern Indiana in the faithful, undoctrinaire spirit of a Dutch painter and wrote *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871). Refusing to follow the violent and yet easy road of the dime novelists, he confined himself to a plain tale of plain men and women, choosing for his scene a backwoods district where true Hoosiers flourished at their most typical, rather than any of the more cultivated Indiana communities. His plot exists almost solely for the sake of the manners described, the backwoods-sentiments and dialects, labors and amusement (Van Doren 118-9).

More than a few references in the novels of Howe, Kirkland, Locke, Eggleston, Garland, and others suggest an overt recognition of the relationship between the geographical environment and the personalities in their works. Perhaps the most accomplished of these earlier realists, Eggleston himself expressed retrospectively this awareness, saying,

> If I were a dispassionate critic, and were to judge my own novels as the writings of another, I should have to say that what distinguished them from other works of fiction is the prominence which they give to social conditions; that the individual characters are here treated to a greater degree than elsewhere as parts of a study of a society—as in some sense the logical results of the environment (Stovall 375).

In addition to the relative lack of historical material for romantic mythmaking and to the restraints imposed by a generally mundane or non-exotic geography-environment, a third catalyst attracting Midwestern regionalists to realism was their unusually striking commitment to their role as writers of history. Better educated and at most second- or third-generation Midwestern natives, these writers manifest a consciousness of living on the cutting edge of history-in-the-making, and they vow that their narratives are factual. Encouraged in part by the public's apparent appetite for published descriptive literature of the region, they do see themselves, in fact, as historians with an historian's attendant obligations. They usually survey at most only what they know best, the preceding twenty or thirty years, the immediately previous generation, and exhibit a pride in the fullness of their characters, warts and all, in the wholeness of their culture, roughhewn and provincial though it be. Locke narrates the life of New Canton in *A Paper City* (1879) after assuring his audience in the novel's Introduction that it is "one of the thousands of these 'cities'" in a district where exist "a great many New Cantons," whose back alleys "differed in no respect from the back alleys of other Western villages." His novel, he claims, "has the merit, if no other, of being entirely free from exaggeration." Joseph Kirkland's "Preface" to *Zury: The Meanest Man in Spring County* (1887) describes his tale as "an attempt to reproduce, on American soil an unflinching realism. . . ." Before he opens *The Story of a Country Town*, Howe expresses concern about his function as an "acceptable historian." Not merely anti-romantic, Eggleston delineated the positive ethic of factual reporting for his realism, leaving most American realists self-avowedly in his debt. In his own word, his fiction differed from that of many of his contemporaries' in his shattering of "the unreal world to which Cooper's lively imagination had given birth" (Ahnebrink). Later surrendering the writing of fiction for that of actual history, Eggleston

maintained in the "Preface" to *The Circuit Rider* (1874) that the novelist should "tell the truth . . . [for] no man is worthy to be called a novelist who does not endeavor with his whole soul to produce the higher form of history, by writing truly of men as they are, and dispassionately of those forms of life that come within his scope." So accurately reflective of his culture is Eggleston's analysis of it that, as Van Doren points out, his fiction complements his unfinished history masterpiece (120). To what degree specific contemporaneous histories of Midwestern regions influenced their fiction and to what degree the previous, concurrent, or later roles these novelists had in journalism might have nurtured their realistic style have yet to be explored fully by literary historians.

A fourth, and one of the most crucial, stimuli to early Midwestern realism was the intensity with which the Midwesterner discovered that his dreams were not shatterproof. The pioneering homesteader, sometimes dispossessed not once but thrice by mortgages of eleven and twelve percent and loans of twenty-five to fifty percent, symbolized the failure of the experience Robert Glen Deamer calls "westering." For "the American dream of building a new, better, freer life in a virgin land" where "the founding of a home is potentially, ideally a sacral act . . . is *the* defining act of American westering" (152). Although the South, too, was living with shattered dreams and facing the necessity to re-order its self-concept, the Midwest's loss of innocence was seemingly one closer to the core of what it had hitherto meant to be an American. The Jeffersonian agrarian dream for the Old Northwest territory, that the farmer's rural community lifestyle was the American ideal, was yielding in the 1870's as the railroads, cities, financiers, manufacturing and technological innovation, and other influences on culture extended themselves into rural districts. The republican symbol of the freehold farmer in a pure democracy was being betrayed by cultural and economic realities in a manner and to a degree more vivid in the more sparsely-settled rural regions and environment. Locke's novels *A Paper City* and *The Demagogue* (1891) suggest that the Midwest could not escape corruption and manipulation by the eastern political and economic establishments. As James Marshall has documented, a homestead countermyth gradually took form in Midwestern literature, first in popular songs of

stoic laughter and satire, perhaps beginning to appear in novels as early as 1873 in Eggleston's *The Mystery of Metropolisville* and 1887 in Kirkland's *Zury* (303-29). The plight of the farmer in the hands of the land speculator, combined with the loss of innocence associated with the unrealized promise of the western garden, left Midwestern writers little inclination or material for romantic myth-making. Kirkland's Zury may prosper materially to a rare degree, but his success comes at the expense of those around him who are less fortunate.

To a lack of myth-prone history and exotic geography, to a commitment to regional history, and to the shattered economic dreams that led to a homestead countermyth must be added a fifth impetus that drove Midwestern writers, this time more consciously, toward literary realism—the direct influence of European models. As Ralph Leslie Rusk has demonstrated, journalism and book publishing in the Midwest had achieved a surprisingly voluminous status by the mid-1830's; even at that early date, "The British writers who aroused the greatest enthusiasm in the West were . . . the contemporary poets and novelists" (II 9). To underestimate the literary contact of Midwestern writers with the works and influence of English and continental realists would be a mistake. Though Howe, Kirkland, Eggleston, Locke, and others were from among largely self-taught, experimental realists who usually came to fiction late from careers in teaching, preaching, or journalism, the newspapers, eastern periodicals, and printed and translated fiction were clearly available to them. If anything, these educated authors may well have responded, if only even slightly paranoid about the level or quality of their regional culture, with a more aggressive and more wholehearted reception of European realism than that of their eastern seaboard literary counterparts. Whether someone like Kirkland is at all paranoid and trying to avoid the stigma of frontier provincialism is not clear, but the literary influence of European realism is. In his "Preface" to his 1887 *Zury: A Novel of Western Life* he writes, "If a critic shall say, — 'This novel is a palpable imitation of Thomas Hardy's "Far From the Maddening Crowd"; an attempt to reproduce on American soil, the unflinching realism of the picture given by that remarkable work, of English low life down in actual contact with the soil itself,' — Then the writer will be satisfied. He will know that he has hit his mark, or at least come

near enough to it to make his aim evident." Though he speaks of Kirkland's limited acquaintance with prose fiction, John Flannagan does acknowledge the author's exposure to Tolstoy as well as Hardy (v). European literary realism had struck a responsive chord in the Midwestern experience.

As Kirkland's statement also suggests, what is distinctly Midwestern about his novel, at least, owes something to a deliberate effort to *be* distinctively Midwestern as well as to a conscious effort to avoid being anything other than Midwestern. Consistent with the goals of literary realism as well as literary regionalism, western publishers had long complained that Eastern and English writers had failed in their attempts to portray western culture. As one writer expressed it in 1833, "It is our humble hope that views may be presented, which will induce the writers of western fiction to confine their range more within western boundaries, and to feel, that while the body of western literature is fashioned from native materials, its spirit should be an inspiration of western genius" (Rusk 272-3). Kirkland's statement also suggests that his realism owes somewhat less than often thought to the influence of his mother's three Michigan volumes of biographical fiction and somewhat more to internationally cosmopolitan literary influences.

To whatever degree Midwestern realists were influenced by trans-Atlantic realists, these major Midwest regional writers, at least, could not be correctly described as culturally isolated. Locke and Eggleston both practiced journalism; Locke had even edited one of the large New York newspapers for a number of years while publishing the widely influential Toledo *Blade* and writing his novels. Both Howe's family and Locke himself had travelled in Europe. Kirkland also visited England, and he held a position with Putnam Publishing House in New York before the Civil War and his military service. And the influence of European realists such as Hardy may help explain the visible thread of precocious naturalism as early as the 1870's in American regional narratives leading from Eggleston through Kirkland to Garland and beyond while classic American realism was only just flowering in Twain, James, and Howells.

Reasons for literary realism's particularly deep roots in the literature of the Midwest are complex and interlocking but perhaps worth examining if for no other reason than that realism

rapidly became the norm of American literary experience. The Midwest of the 1870's and 1880's possessed a self-conscious sense of the significance of its own history and place in a manner that was perhaps more compatible with European literary realism than was true of other American regions. Unable to rely upon a reservoir of historical grist, for reasons different, perhaps, from those of Europe, it was forced to concentrate on the here-and-now of material existence. Bleak experience of shattered economic dreams mandated that the Midwestern novelist reject an idealistic view of reality. Loyal to their region yet aware of its aesthetic and cultural limitations, they cathartically sought meaning for the failure of the Midwest garden to bloom and the economic misery that many of them had experienced as youths. Reacting to distorted fictional views of life in the West, its authors expressed a desire and labored to tell their story more truly than had been done by, for example, a Cooper. Sensitive to the stereotype of rural culture, they also sought to announce to the East and beyond that they were literate and more cosmopolitan than previously thought, though distinctly Western-American. Given the rise of American literary realism as a broad movement, in some ways the Midwestern regionalists' experiences forced them to face cultural realities earlier and more perceptively—realities that other artists would discover later. These early Midwestern realists were simply ahead of their time.

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