MIDAMERICA X

The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Edited by

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PREFACE

When *MidAmerica I* was published in early 1974, it appeared, as I wrote then, not only as "the result of hard work by editors, writers, and countless others," but "because of hope and enthusiasm that outweighs either logical evidence or financial support." Nevertheless, in less than a decade that hard work, hope, and enthusiasm have produced an annual publication recognized by *Choice* as "one of the major region-focused periodicals, an extremely important, seminal forum for historical and critical opinion." The same qualities that, in less than half a century, transformed a wilderness into the American heartland have, it appears, lost neither validity nor function as we approach the two hundredth anniversary of the ordinance that gave the region its heritage of freedom and orderly progress in an open society.

The role of *MidAmerica* and that of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature was defined in that first issue as "encouraging and supporting the study of Midwestern literature in whatever directions the interests of the members may take," and that role continues as the yearbook begins its second decade. Its past record, examined by Roger Bresnahan in his essay "*MidAmerica:* A Ten-Year Retrospective," is an impressive testimonial to the dedication and determination of a vigorous membership, and the future of the journal, like those of the Society and its members, seems productive and secure. I am deeply grateful to those who have made *MidAmerica* and its accomplishment possible, as I am to those who continue to support it.

Problems, however, remain, but none of them is insurmountable, as the past makes clear. With the continued support of a dedicated membership, *MidAmerica* will continue to define and explicate the Midwestern experience in its literature, past, present, and not yet written.

DAVID D. ANDERSON

November, 1983

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MIDAMERICA: A TEN-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

ROGER J. BRESNAHAN

Harlan Hatcher's *Creating the Modern American Novel* (1955) paid more attention to Midwestern writers than had any previous study of American literature. More than half the writers surveyed in the volume either hailed from the region, like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, or evoked the region in many of their works, like Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson. Unlike those who preferred to trace the greatness of American writing to a New England Renaissance, Hatcher dated the American novel's maturity to Sinclair Lewis, who had received the Nobel Prize in 1930. Indeed, Hatcher's own writing—as critic, novelist, and popular historian—is deeply imbued with a consciousness of Midwestern culture and his own Midwestern background.[1] A decade after Hatcher's declaration that America had come of age in literature with Midwestern realism, John T. Flanagan issued his extensive anthology of Midwestern writing.[2] Walter Havighurst, whom Paul Engel called "the area's finest interpreter," has explored the history and culture of the Midwest in his novels and in such interpretive histories as *Long Ships Passing* (1942), *The Heartland* (1962), and *River to the West* (1970).[3]

While interpreters like Hatcher, Flanagan, and Havighurst have developed a context for understanding Midwestern writing, the tasks of elaborating the context, establishing the canon, and discovering rich veins of inquiry can only be a collective discourse undertaken by a large number of readers and scholars. In part, the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature has been the venue for this continuing exploration. In its annual meeting and in publications like the *SSML Newsletter,* published three times a year since 1971, the *Midwestern Miscellany,* which began in

1974 to publish "essays on various topics for various occasions," and in the Society's annual, *MidAmerica,* also begun in 1974, the diversity and complexity of Midwestern writing has been explored. Particularly in *MidAmerica* have larger issues been explored. Among these, three have emerged which seem central: the intellectual character of Midwestern writing, the question of urban-rural discontinuity, and the notion of the Midwest as heartland, frontier, and mainstream.

David D. Anderson's article, "Notes Toward a Definition of the Mind of the Midwest" *(MidAmerica III),* set the tone for the examination of Midwestern intellectual history in the observation that no serious attempt had yet been made to understand and define the Midwestern past in its entirety, largely because the region does not easily lend itself to simple comprehension under a "single, massive metaphor." Its cultural diversity has been subsumed by the national culture so that its unique sources have tended to be obscured. Anderson shows that modern Midwestern authors like Sherwood Anderson, Louis Bromfield, and Ernest Hemingway have developed the myth of the region in their works, that Frank Lloyd Wright's dominance of American architecture owes much to his perception of the Midwestern landscape, and that Ezra Pound and magazines like *Poetry* and the *Little Review* have injected elements of the Midwestern ethos into modern poetry.

Anderson ascribes the region's cultural, political, and economic dominance to the ideals incorporated in the Northwest Ordinance. In its provision for "a rational, orderly process of transition . . . from a wilderness to a civilized society" and its "clear statement of the rational political philosophy" which was intended to direct settlement and define the role of the individual within the polity, the Ordinance of 1787 represented a much clearer understanding of the body politic than had prevailed at the time of the American Revolution. Fundamental values which are now considered givens in the national life and coveted ideals in much of the rest of the world—a belief in orderly progress, in individual prosperity, and in human dignity—are values whose origins can be traced to the Northwest Ordinance. In addition, the Midwestern experience with migration has, according to Anderson, contributed to the

general American belief in movement, "rooted in reality and elevated to the realm of myth." He shows that "transition, change, and mixture" govern such diverse classics as Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth,* Bromfield's *The Green Bay Tree,* Dreiser's *Sister Carrie,* Anderson's *Poor White,* Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, Algren's *Man With a Golden Arm,* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.*

To the dominant qualities of the Midwestern mind, Anderson adds other factors: "the central image of Lincoln, the role of the tinkerer, the paradox that enables the mainstreams of modern conservatism and liberalism to flow in parallel courses through the region . . . ." Rejecting such oversimplifications as Carl Van Doren's view that Midwestern writing represented no more than a 'revolt from the village,' as well as "the stereotyped definition erected out of straw and spit by the editors of the *New Yorker,* the *New York Review of Books,* and other provincial journals," Anderson shows that the reality of the Midwestern mind is far more diverse and complex, consisting "of variety, of unpredictability, of paradox, of a rejection of orthodoxy."

Difficult as such a topic is to grasp, Anderson's "Notes Toward a Definition of the Mind of the Midwest" seems to lurk in the shadows of most of the subsequent articles which have appeared in MidAmerica, though its direct descendants are few. Madonna C. Kolbenschlag's essay on "Edward Eggleston and the Evangelical Consciousness" *(MidAmerica II),* Bernard Engel's article on "Muscular Innocence in American Poetry" *(MidAmerica X),* Ronald Primeau's treatment of Emerson in the writings of Edgar Lee Masters *(MidAmerica V)* and Robert Narveson's exploration of common ground in Masters and William James *(MidAmerica X),* and Glen Deamer's study of the westering experience in Indiana *(MidAmerica VIII)* all deal with the character of the Midwestern mind in conspicuous, though generally singular, manifestations. Likewise, the symposium on Midwestern writers and the Nobel Prize (Anderson, Bresnahan, Marilyn J. Atlas, *MidAmerica VIII*) grapples with the characteristics of the Midwestern mind as it is manifested in the writings of three of the region's most celebrated writers—Lewis, Hemingway, and Bellow. The grand design of James Jones's trilogy is explored by Ellen Serlen Uffen who finds that *From Here to Eternity* and its successors

find a life-rejuvenating force in the struggle represented by war, while in the same issue Douglas Noverr explores the effect of war on Thomas Boyd's Midwestern heroes *(MidAmerica X).*

Urban-rural discontinuity is a theme which has at times arisen from an essential misreading, as with Van Doren's fascination with a so-called "revolt from the village." Nevertheless, the varying notions which might be associated with villages, towns, cities, and farms have been discussed in *MidAmerica.* The inaugural issue contained two short, though suggestive, articles on this topic—Blair Whitney's "Vachel Lindsay: The Midwest as Utopia" and Paul Ferlazzo's "The Urban-Rural Vision of Carl Sandburg." The following issue took up the theme again with Park Dixon Goist's article, "Community and Self in the Midwestern Town: Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf (MidAmerica II).* Later issues have come at the topic from the perspectives of genres, places, authors, and individual works. The 1977 *MidAmerica* proved particularly fertile ground for this sort of exploration. That issue contained an article on early Cincinnati journalism by David D. Anderson, an exploration of nineteenth century Midwestern travel literature by Douglas A. Noverr, articles on Chicago writing by Kenny J. Williams and Gerald Thorson, and an inquiry into the revolt-from-the-village theme by Barry Gross *(MidAmerica IV).* Gross seeks to put to rest that mistaken notion which "has become so ingrained in our literary and cultural thinking that . . . we organize courses around it, we group writers under it, we explain an entire generation by it." Gross is convincing in his assertion that American literary history is regional and that the regions "for those that are not native sons" are "foreign countries." This witty and urbane essay ends with the observation that "the city and the small town, the farm and the village, are regions of the mind as well as regions on a map." Arguing for the amazing diversity of Midwestern literature, Gross offers the reader this bit of sage advice: "Our native ground is someone else's alien territory and we must be wary, native and traveller alike, of inferring too quickly, interpreting too hastily, judging too rapidly.

The all-too-simple notion of the revolt from village put aside, later issues of *MidAmerica* have both chronicled the diversity of Midwestern writing and further explored questions of urban-rural discontinuities. Robert Narveson's essay on *Spoon River Anthology (MidAmerica VII)* shows that the values inculcated by the Northwest Ordinance, as David D. Anderson had elucidated them in his essay on the Midwestern mind, continued to be important ideals in American and Midwestern small towns. Masters' intent was no less than to create an epic about the urbanization of modern America. Narveson shows that Masters' knowledge of both the city and the town, as well as his combination of Jeffersonian agrarianism and Progressive pragmatism, results in a work which is "a faithful recollection of its era, recording hopes and fears, successes and failures, confidence and bewilderment, of a time which an historical cataclysm was bringing to an end."

Like Narveson's essay on *Spoon River Anthology,* which records the distress Masters felt when he reflected that modern life would likely destroy the traditional values of the region, David D. Anderson's exploratory essay on "The Midwestern Town in Midwestern Fiction" *(MidAmerica VI)* looks back to the Northwest Ordinance as the documentary and philosophical underpinning of the region:

> The Northwest Ordinance promised, in other words, a new relationship between the individual and his peers and an equally new relationship between him and his government. It promised, too, an orderly, rational society, with the rule and power of law to assist him. But it made demands, too: the act of migration across mountains and down or up rivers demanded a good deal of hard work by which the dream might become real and happiness achieved. It provided, in other words, the opportunity; seizing it was for the individual to accomplish.

This promise became, according to Anderson, an "article of faith" which sent Lincoln to the White House. It has ultimately become what is now so casually referred to as the American dream. David Anderson shows how Midwestern writers worked out the promise in their own fictive towns — Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, to be sure, but also lesser-known writers like Herbert Croy, Booth Tarkington, and Brand Whitlock. The ideals of the Northwest Ordinance culminated in the works of these authors with the notion of the town as a place of "individual and collective responsibility and of the society open to those who meet set standards of virtue and talent."

David D. Anderson finds the fundamental Midwestern ideals "a fusion of New England Puritanism and Upper South Jeffersonianism," as might be expected from the origins of the early settlers of the region. In the mythical towns elaborated in the fictions of Midwestern writers, Anderson finds both an evriron-mental reality and a metaphoric dimension. Far from fleeing the town of Winesburg, as the exponents of the revolt-from-the-village theme believe, George takes his town with him to Chicago as "a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood." David Anderson concludes his suggestive essay with the observation that the Midwestern town as reflected in Midwestern writing is "one more manifestation of the age-old human search, American search, Midwestern search for an ill-defined, vaguely perceived but convincing ideal . . . . in the continually unfolding myth of America." It is an ideal which Ellen Serlen Uffen convincingly traces in her article on the American dream from Fitzgerald to Herbert Gold *(MidAmerica IV).* The idealism and opportunism which Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby bring to the East from their Midwestern origins is reflected in Gold's characters, as well—in Sam Gold of *Fathers* who began his quest in Cleveland and in Burr Fuller of *The Optimist* who was born in Detroit but considered the nation his playground. Uffen shows that Gold's characters, though their situations are urban, are informed by the same impulses that David D. Anderson had identified in the Northwest Ordinance and in the fictive Midwestern towns—the dream of America as paradise. Similarly, Sandburg recognized no discontinuity between the urban and rural settings of his own fictive Midwest. Ferlazzo's essay on Sandburg demonstrates that *Chicago Poems* (1916) and *Cornhuskers* (1918) can exist alongside one another without apparent contradiction. Fiction, however, can and often does mirror reality. In "The Boys' Stories of Howells, Darrow, and Anderson" *(MidAmerica X)* David D. Anderson shows that the phenomenon of Midwestern boys' fiction was coterminous with the "growth, maturity, and decline of the Midwestern town."

Thomas J. Schlereth's review-essay on Billington's *Frederick Jackson Turner (MidAmerica II)* is especially instructive for what it tells us of Billington's compulsion to lionize Turner. Schlereth comments that it should not have been necessary to refurbish

Turner's image as a leading American historian, that the fact of Turner's pervasive influence, particularly on subsequent perceptions of the Midwest, should speak for itself. To Turner, the notion of a pioneer democracy was the quintessential American political doctrine. That notion, so fruitfully explored by David D. Anderson in his continuing reflections on the cultural significance of the Northwest Ordinance, has enabled us to view the Midwest variously as frontier, heartland, and mainstream.

A perceptive essay by David D. Anderson in the second issue of *MidAmerica* speaks of "the image of Lincoln that remains at the heart of the American experience" and its portrayal by that "group of writers, significantly or coincidentally Midwestern, who called themselves realists." He shows that William Dean Howells, Brand Whitlock, and Sherwood Anderson, in their separate portrayals of Lincoln, have contributed to the Lincoln myth. In Howells, Lincoln is a "self-made frontier natural aristocrat," in Whitlock a "crusading progressive humanist," and in Sherwood Anderson a "tortured romantic seeker" who symbolized both the self-sufficient frontier democracy and "the revolutionary changes that characterized the transformation of the Midwest from an agricultural to an industrial democracy." Despite their self-styled tag as realists and their general insistence on portraying things rather than symbols, the evolving Lincoln-myth became for Howells, Whitlock, and Anderson part of the "ultimate unwritten definition of America." For them, as for Moody and Masters, "the image of Lincoln . . . reveals . . . an increasingly complex, rapidly changing American ideal."

Schlereth's review of the Turner biography asserts that both Hofstader and Billington have argued that Turner was "dedicated to proving that the Midwest played an essential role in the emergence of modern America." Both in the 'frontier hypothesis' and in the lesser known 'sectional hypothesis' Turner focused on the Midwest as it existed before the close of the frontier, before "industrialization and urbanization would begin to nationalize the sections and dilute their regional peculiarities." Billington suggests a line of inquiry which might profitably be developed, namely Hamlin Garland's treatment of the middle border and its significance for the frontier and sectional hypotheses, together with Garland's rejection of the "crumbling idols" of Eastern cul-

tural hegemony and his focus on the cultural and human resources of the Mississippi Valley. Indeed, James Marshall shows that Garland, together with other prairie realists like Eggleston, Kirkland, and Donnelly, provide an antidote to the romantic potion concocted by the Lincoln-myth makers *(MidAmerica X)*. Marshall argues for the importance of the countermyth fed by the homesteaders' experience of an inadequate land policy, a formulation which necessarily runs counter to the ideals of the Northwest Ordinance.

These two seemingly divergent streams, representing the ideals and the realities of frontier settlement, are brought together in Herbert Eugene Bolton's 'borderlands thesis' which develops the Turner hypothesis and reconciles the realities and the ideals of frontier settlement by showing that the lands of the middle border—the areas which lie between settled communities and the moving frontier—are closest to the revolutionary mentality. Following Garland and Bolton, it is important to view the moving frontier not as the line of settlement, but rather a back and forth movement as cultural patterns become settled and unsettled with new migration. Bolton's integrating vision has not been sufficiently explored by scholars of American literature in *MidAmerica* or anywhere else. William D. Elliott, however, approaches the issue of the borderlands from another perspective in his article, "Poets of the Moving Frontier" *(MidAmerica III)*, which treats twentieth-century Midwestern and North County poetry in its "search for ideal beauty as a defense against the harsh realities of frontier and settlement life" and at the same time as a revolt "against the values of middle class town life." Writing from the very heart of the North Country at Bemidji State University, Elliott gives us an essay rich in detail about frontier borderlands that continue to exist today, both in reality and in the metaphors of contemporary poetry.

Frontier or borderland, the Midwest portrayed in literature exhibits characteristics of both. Robert A. Martin's essay on primitiveness in Cather's "Neighbor Rosicky" and Anderson's "Death in the Wood" *(MidAmerica III)* provides another alternative to the simplistic notions of Midwestern writing which have at various times been espoused by Van Doren, H. L. Mencken, and Alfred Kazin. Cather's preference for life lived in contact with

the natural environment parallels Anderson's rejection, both in his own life and in his works, of the industrial civilization which then threatened to corrupt the yeoman values of town life. Martin shows that both stories share thematic and structural similarities. Rosicky exemplifies the ideal of cultural primitivism in his harmony with nature, while Mrs. Grimes in Anderson's story is "a pathetic victim of her environment." Yet Anderson's story serves to remind the narrator, and thus the reader, of his own humanity and his role as a feeder of other living things.

What makes Rosicky satisfied with his life on the farm and the narrator of "Death in the Woods" aware of the beauty of Mrs. Grimes's life is the overwhelming force of the environment. Walter Prescott Webb's work on the Great Plains was informed by an acute awareness of the effect of the physical environment on human culture. Of the Great Plains as his predominant field of injuiry, Webb acknowledged he had been fortunate in choosing "an environment . . . whose force was so compelling as to influence profoundly whatever touched it."[4] As with Bolton's borderlands thesis, the ideas of Walter Prescott Webb have largely escaped consideration by scholars of American literature. The Midwestern environment has made it the American heartland for its writers. We have already alluded to David D. Anderson's perception of the Northwest Ordinance as the documentary and philosophical underpinning of the region. The equality of every person in the new territory was a doctrine mandated by the undeveloped nature and economic potential of the region. Douglas A. Noverr has shown that this egalitarian spirit was apparent to Margaret Fuller when she toured the upper Midwest in the summer of 1843. Noverr's "Midwestern Travel Literature of the Nineteenth Century" *(MidAmerica IV)* focuses on two mid-century narratives, Fuller's and Charles Lanman's highly romanticized account of his 1845 excursion through Lake Superior. Noverr places these accounts within the context of other contemporary travel books which "in their own way, helped to solidify an emerging American nationalism by connecting Easterners to the Midwest regions and enabling them to see that the next stage of the spiralling or cyclic history of democratic institutions was the emerging Northwest Territory." Both Lanman and Fuller, one writing as a "romantic chronicler of the Midwest" and the other seeking an

antidote to Eastern intellectualizing as well as a confirmation of her transcendentalist beliefs, "described a wilderness nature that had a powerful impact on the romantic imagination, developing a distinct sense of the lakes region landscape with its unique sense of space and power to affect the mind."

The hold which the Midwestern landscape has had on the imagination is not limited to the wilderness of the upper Great Lakes. The lower Midwest has been powerfully recreated in Ross Lockridge's archetypal historical novel, *Raintree County* (1948). A generation earlier Sherwood Anderson evoked both the placid countryside and the grim cities of the industrial heartland in *Mid-American Chants* (1918). Philip Greasley's essay on these poems, "Myth and the Midwestern Landscape" *(MidAmerica VI)*, demonstrates that Anderson sought to affirm the adherence of the rural heartland to "fixed values, personal and national identity, and closeness to the divine order. . . ." At first the city seems the antithesis of such values, but Greasely shows that Anderson's poetry "is able to integrate images of traditional American landscapes with those of the twentieth century city and show the possibilities for positive new values and modes of living." Leland Krauth's comparative study of the poetry of Anderson and that of James Wright attempts to trace no direct influence but rather focuses on "congruences of idea and attitude" within the Midwestern ethos *(MidAmerica X)*. Krauth shows that although Anderson found Midwesteners of his day had little taste for poetry, the last three decades have indeed seen a rich harvest of poetry in the region, a fact which is further attested to by the popularity of the Midwestern Poetry Festival held in conjunction with the annual meeting each May of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.

Attempting to avoid the platitudes and "convenient abstractions" which he felt generally accompany our search for the truth of the past, Ross Lockridge depicts an imaginary Indiana town by investing its life in the experience of *Raintree County*'s narrator. As Joel M. Jones indicates in his essay, "The Presence of the Past in the Heartland" *(MidAmerica IV)*, "Lockridge manages to gain control over a large amount of the historical reality of his region and the nation—and . . . succeeds in narrowing, if not entirely closing, the space that often separates the general reader from

the multileveled reality of the American past." In an earlier article on *Raintree County*, Gerald Nemanic *(MidAmerica II)* tells us that Lockridge carefully reconstructed "the artifacts, tenor, and style of life in nineteenth century Indiana" in order to discover "the principles of American development, the foundation of American character." Nemanic and Jones differ somewhat in their final appraisals of the novel, but both see its ambiguity as a metaphor of the heartland and, ultimately, of American culture. Lockridge, like other Midwestern realists, explores the heartland through common human experience, merging in his characters personal, regional, and national history.

One enduring metaphor of common human experience in the Midwest has been that of grass and grassroots, as Emma S. Thornton and Pauline Adams demonstrate in their essay, "Grass / Grassroots—American Metaphor / American Cliche" *(MidAmerica VI)*. Thornton and Adams acknowledge that through repeated trampling the metaphor has been trivialized. In this case, however, they make a special pleading, for "paradoxically, platitudes have a grassroots function." The fact that this metaphor, even when reduced to a cliche, functions to "embed the cadences of the familiar" is suggestive of the heartland values that Sherwood Anderson and Willa Cather found in the rural landscape, values which, as Greasley reminds us, Anderson gropingly sought to establish in his city-scape.

The Chicago Renaissance reaffirmed the possibility of goodness and the function of hope in the city. Not just Sherwood Anderson, but also Floyd Dell, George Cram Cooke, Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Susan Glaspell, Margaret Anderson, Vachel Lindsay — they helped catapult Midwestern writing into the American mainstream. In his article on the Chicago Renaissance *(MidAmerica V)*, David D. Anderson observes that it was "mainly an ingathering of the young from the Midwestern towns that radiate from Chicago . . . and just as parcel post had made Chicago the marketing center of the region and the railroads had made it the terminal of the East and the departure point for the West, these young people . . . were convinced that they, in secret isolation in the towns from which they had come, had discovered truth and themselves, and they had come to Chicago to celebrate their discovery." The writers of the Chicago

Renaissance injected into the American mainstream several elements that are still constants of its artistic vision: the microcosmic notion of the small town, a rediscovered sense of language, the search for personal liberty and the resulting image of the liberated woman, a populist radicalism that seeks to humanize the forces of industrial progress, and "a sense of the past that is almost mystic in its dimensions, constructed of values and of people . . . a sense of change and of movement, but at the same time a sense of permanence. . . ." In short, "they created a new mythical interlude in the history of the nation and its literature." In her survey of Chicago humorists *(MidAmerica X),* Kenny J. Williams has shown that the city of the big shoulders is also the land of the tall tale. Williams surveys an astounding number of Chicago humorists leading up to turn-of-the-century figures like Eugene Field, Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, and Ring Lardner, and finally to Mike Royko whose Slats Grobnik—like Dunne's Mr. Dooley and Charles Harris' Carl Pretzel—reveals the underlying cynicism which has always been a constant of Chicago humor and of much Chicago writing, as well.

Philip Greasley's essay on the role of the little magazines in fostering a distinctively American poetic idiom *(MidAmerica V)* shows that the mission of *Reedy's Mirror, Poetry,* and the *Little Review* was to "present life consistent with that of the Midwest, the heartland of twentieth century industrial America." They had to "mirror the shift from East Coast salons to Midwestern farms and factories, from the pristine optimism of the early nineteenth century to the increasingly troubled twentieth century." In encouraging younger poets and keeping their names before the reading public, the little magazines effected the transition from genteel romanticism to a "poetry which deals with common American life and uses the oral speech patterns and vocabulary of the American masses." Greasely faults the little magazines for giving mere lip-service to Whitman while they failed to thoroughly investigate Whitman's poetic technique or recognize that "the integration of the American vernacular" was his most lasting contribution. Nevertheless, it is clear that the poets whose work appeared in the little magazines formed the mainstream poetic voice in America. In taking on the burden of the mainstream, the writers of the Chicago Renaissance lost some of their peculiar regional identity—what used to be called disparagingly "local color"—and thus, as David D. Anderson has remarked, "they have pointed out a direction and given much substance to writers of our own day." Citing acknowledgements by both Bellow and Saroyan of their artistic debts to Sherwood Anderson, David D. Anderson concludes his essay on the Chicago Renaissance *(MidAmerica V)* with the observation that *Chicago Poems, Spoon River Anthology,* and *Winesburg, Ohio* have been "not only the source of a vigorous literary influence, but . . . substantial and permanent additions to our collective literary heritage."

As one surveys the publications of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, one cannot help but be struck both by the diversity of topics covered and, perhaps more so, by the coherence and consistency which, taken together over more than a decade, they exhibit.[5] The lead article in the initial issue of *MidAmerica* fittingly sought to define the undertaking. David D. Anderson's "The Dimensions of the Midwest," explores the notion of heartland as it appeared to Lincoln, Garland, and Turner, as well as to such later writers as Sherwood Anderson, Brand Whitlock, and Louis Bromfield. Citing the 1960 Notre Dame symposium on Midwestern culture, which prematurely mourned the region's passing as it celebrated its greatness,[6] Anderson pointed to the vitality of the Society and to the sustained popular interest in the culture of the region as he hazarded the prediction that "the great diverse valley that occupies the nation's heartland has had a peculiar significance of its own, an identity that continues to exert its significance and its continuation, perhaps even its permanence as part of the total American experience." As might be expected, this early attempt at definition in the inaugural volume of a yearbook devoted to Midwestern literature has had a continuing influence on the delineation of the Midwestern literary experience. Subsequent issues of the Society's publications have continued to adumbrate the larger concerns which the study of the region suggests and to explore peculiar themes in individual works. Reading these publications broadens one's awareness of the dimensions of the Midwest, physical and metaphorical, as it deepens one's perceptions of themes treated by Midwestern authors. The current issue of *MidAmerica* continues to flesh out some of the perennial issues as well as to offer close readings of

individual works. David D. Anderson's essay on the boys' stories of Howells, Darrow, and Anderson elucidates the relationship of such stories to the Midwestern town. Welford Dunaway Taylor, whose knowledge of the intricacies of Sherwood Anderson's biography is legendary, particularly for the Virginia years, explains how the woodcut which adorns the dust-jacket and frontispiece of *Perhaps Women* came to be. Several articles treat a wide range of chroniclers of Midwestern life: James Marshall on the prairie realism of Garland, Eggleston, Kirkland, and Donnelly; Bernard Engel's study of "muscular innocence" in turn-of-the-century poerty; Lawrence Dawson's focus on poets of frontier Michigan; Kenny Williams on the evolution of Chicago humor and Paul Somers on Mike Royko. Largely, this issue continues to explore individual works of Midwestern writers. Douglas A. Noverr's article on Thomas Boyd and Ellen Serlen Uffen's on James Jones's trilogy contain complementary insights concerning the fictional value of war. Robert J. Kindrick allows us to read Dahlberg's autobiography alongside his now repudiated autobiographical novel published thirty-five years earlier and thus obtain radically opposed perspectives of Kansas City.

The study of Midwestern culture may be characterized much as Harlan Hatcher concluded his study of the Western Reserve: ". . . a high and unparalleled adventure projected by one generation and continued by the next. . . . In the light of our experiences and of our increasing maturity, this achievement seems, despite its shortcomings, a priceless heritage."[7] But Hatcher regretted that "we have not often paused to examine the road over which we have come." In the work of David D. Anderson, Walter Havighurst, and Hatcher himself, as in the pages of *MidAmerica* and the other publications of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, that road has been and continues to be more closely examined.

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NOTES

1. Harlan Henthorne Hatcher helped popularize Midwestern history in such works as *The Buckeye Country* (1940), *The Great Lakes* (1944), *Lake Erie* (1945), and *The Western Reserve* (1949), as well as in his novels: *Tunnel Hill* (1931), *Patterns of Wolfpen* (1934), and *Central Standard Time* (1937). Born in 1898 and raised on the banks of the Ohio "in a house from whose upper rooms you could look out upon its willow fringed banks all day long" (*The Western Reserve*, p. 104), Hatcher taught English at Ohio State for many years, eventually serving as dean and vice-president there, before becoming president of the University of Michigan. The graduate library at Michigan bears his name.

2. John T. Flanagan, ed., *America Is West: An Anthology of Middlewestern Life and Literature* (1945). Other significant anthologies include: Jack Conroy, ed., *Midland Humor: A Harvest of Fun and Folklore* (1947); John T. Frederick, ed., *Out of the Midwest: A Collection of Present-Day Writing* (1944) and *Stories from "The Midland"* (1924); Walter Havighurst, ed., *Land of the Long Horizons* (1960) and *The Great Lakes Reader* (1966); Wright Morris, ed., *Mississippi River Reader* (1962); Lucien Stryck, ed., *Heartland: Poets of the Midwest* (1967) and *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest* (1975); and Lowry C. Wimberly, ed., *Mid-Country: Writings from the Heart of America* (1945).

3. Paul Engel, "The Heartland," *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 2, 1962, p. 36. Havighurst published five novels: *Pier 17* (1935), *The Quiet Shore* (1937), *The Winds of Spring* (1940), *No Homeward Course* (1941), and *Signature of Time* (1949). He coauthored three more with Marion Boyd Havighurst: *High Prairie* (1944), *Song of the Pines* (1949), and *Climb a Lofty Ladder* (1952). Interpretive works, besides those cited in the text, include *Upper Mississippi: A Wilderness Saga* (1937, rev. 1944), *George Rogers Clark: Soldier in the West* (1952), and *Three Flags at the Straits: The Forts of Mackinac* (1966).

4. Walter Prescott Webb, "History as High Adventure" (Presidential Address, American Historical Association, 1958), *American Historical Review* 64:2 (1959), 273.

5. *MidAmerica* has been called "an extremely important, seminal forum for historical and critical opinion." *Choice* XX (1983), 950.

6. Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., ed., *The Midwest: Myth or Reality?* (1961).

7. *The Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio* (1949, rev. 1966), p. 308.

CAPTAIN HENRY WHITING: A POET IN MICHIGAN TERRITORY

LAWRENCE DAWSON

Captain Henry Whiting, born in Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1788, came to Detroit in 1816 as an aide to General Alexander Macomb. He later became quartermaster, in which post he was responsible for administering the contracts for road-building and for distributing payments of annuities to Indians under the treaties concluded by Governor Cass in the Territory during the 1820's and 1830's. For many years, Whiting made his home in Detroit, and he was prominent in its development as a social and cultural center. He served in the Mexican War during 1846-1847 under General Zachary Taylor as chief quartermaster and was promoted to brigadier general for gallant and meritorious conduct in the Battle of Buena Vista. Returning from a tour of duty in Texas, Whiting died at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1851. He was eventually buried in Detroit at Elmwood Cemetery.

Whiting was an unusual embodiment of the often mentioned, but less often found, three-fold vocation as officer, scholar, and gentleman. It is with his contributions as a literary man that I am concerned, and in this paper I will explore, particularly, his work as a poet. I think there is some reason for considering him Michigan's first poet.

Whiting's literary work is seldom referred to, and no focused attention has been directed toward it.[1] He was not the only writer from his family: his sister, twelve years younger than he, was Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz (1800-1856), the author of plays, short stories and many novels that were extremely popular during the 1850's. Henry Whiting's earliest literary works were poems,

the first one being published in the *Detroit Gazette* in 1817, when he was twenty-nine. During the next few years, his knowledge and skill as a speaker grew, resulting in the publication in pamphlet form of several of his addresses. Beginning in 1822, fifteen of his review-articles appeared in the *North American Review*, often containing intriguing insights into such varied topics as science, travel literature, military affairs, engineering, internal improvements, Indian affairs, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's *Algic Researches* (which Schoolcraft dedicated to Whiting), and Zachary Taylor. During these years, Whiting wrote two significant Indian poems. He also contributed two articles to the *American Journal of Science*, a biography of Zebulon Pike to Spark's *Library of American Biography*, and edited the selected *Revolutionary Orders of General Washington*.

His first poems were, appropriately for a military man, patriotic tributes—elegiac commemorations of men and events from the recent war with the British—later termed the War of 1812. Many of Whiting's works were published anonymously. The first poem specifically assigned to him derived from Perry's victory at the Battle of Lake Erie. The battle took place on September 10, 1813. Two days afterward, according to reports a century later, the remains of three American and three British officers were solemnly buried, alternately, side by side in a common grave a short distance from the shore at Put-in-Bay, on South Bass Island.[2] At some later time, a monument of cannon balls was "erected as a modest tribute of patriotism by the people of Put-in-Bay,"[3] and that was all that marked the spot, until the ceremonies dedicating the Perry's Victory Memorial, September 4 through 11, 1913, during which the remains were disinterred, placed in a catafalque, and deposited in the crypt of the Memorial.[4]

But there appears to be a discrepancy in the factuality of this account, as presented in the documents of the memorial celebration. In October, 1817, Captain Whiting and a party of officers from Detroit sailed to Put-in-Bay, disinterred the remains of one of the Americans, Marine Lieutenant John Brooks, and returned them to Detroit, where they were buried on the *glacis* of Fort Shelby.[5] Whiting's poem, which he composed and read for this occasion, presents a vivid historical picture of the scene at Put-

in-Bay and movingly expresses the feeling of patriotism which their action called up:

> Too long on lonely Isle neglected,
> Mark'd by no stone, thy dust has slept,
> By humble turf alone protected,
> O'er which rude Time each year has swept.
>
> Ere many summers there had revelled,
> Decking thy grave with wild flowers fair,
> The tumid earth, depress'd and levell'd,
> Had left no index vestige there.
>
> Still had the wave, around that dashes—
> Scene of thy fate—the story told,
> And 'gainst the Isle that held thy ashes,
> In seeming fondness ceaseless roll'd.
>
> But now with kindred heroes lying,
> Thou shalt repose on martial ground,
> Thy country's banner o'er thee flying,
> Her castles and her camps around.
>
> And friendship there shall leave its token,
> And beauty there in tears may melt.
> For still the charm may rest unbroken
> So many tender hearts have felt.
>
> Then rest, lamented youth; in honor
> Erie shall still preserve thy name;
> For those who fell 'neath Perry's banner,
> Must still survive in Perry's fame.[6]

Writing in 1831, Whiting recalled a visit he had made in 1817, shortly before his expedition to recover Brooks's body; his details confirm the appearance which the poem gives of the improvised grave site:

> Not far from the beach, a number of little tumuli were pointed out to us as the graves of those who Fell in Perry's fight. They had then been buried about four years, and already the slight inequalities of the surface, which alone marked the spot of their interment, were disappearing. . . .

His companion on that occasion also expressed an observation prophetic of the memorial to be constructed a century later:

> Our traveller mused long, and animadverted much on this neglect of the gallant dead, and said that if he made a map for his work, he would call the "Middle Sister" *Perry's Isle,* and also recommend that a rostral monument be erected upon it.[7]

It is reasonable to assume that this visit of Whiting's germinated the expedition which returned Brooks's body to Detroit. And though the monument was finally erected at Put-in-Bay, rather than on the Middle Sister Island, the architecture included the columnar feature which Whiting's acquaintance envisioned.

"Too long on lonely Isle neglected" was the first poem known to have been written by Henry Whiting. Another one, which appeared even earlier, also seems clearly to have been his. The *Gazette* editor, John Pitt Sheldon, was a literary-minded man who thought highly of Whiting's literary ability, noting his muse to be "unassuming, chaste and classic."[8] In the second number of his new paper, he had printed another patriotic poem, opening with the lines,

> Shall western waters never bear
> The notes of liberty along?[9]

In six six-line stanzas, it reviews the triumphant actions of the War of 1812 in the western rivers and lakes as efforts in behalf of national freedom.

Sheldon explains that the "exquisite lines are the productions of an Army officer at this post . . . . composed for the fourth of July last"—unfortunately just a few days before the first number of the *Gazette.* His remarks evidently apply to Whiting, in the absence of other literary officers at the station.

To illustrate this poem, the final three stanzas contain an unusual touch of environmentalistic prophecy as a sidelight to their principal aim of celebrating the youthful nation's military victories; this kind of sophistication is found elsewhere in poems by Whiting. The poem creates a metaphor of the entire Great Lakes and their connecting rivers which sweep from the pioneering but liberty-ensuring west, eastward down the long waterway. After noting Perry's victory and referring to other battles along its shores, the narrator arrives at Canada's Fort Erie:

First, Erie's walls arrest its flight—
Then Chippewa's field and classic stream,
Niagara then—that bloody fight
Beneath the moon's pale beam!
The "Falls" may lose their hight sublime,
But scenes like these shall live with time.

In after ages, when this wonder
Shall be in story only known,
To gentle murmers sunk its thunder
No clouds and rainbow flown,
When Erie's Lake shall smoothly flow
Into Ontario's bed below;

Still with immortal honours crown'd
Shall be these glories of the age—
Like ancient Marathon be found
Fresh in th' historic page;
And o'er each heroe's trophed tomb
Perrenial laurels still shall bloom.[10]

Introducing this poem, Sheldon establishes himself as a person with a strong sense of the need for a literary recording of the western region's young days:

> Splendid military achievements have in all nations, furnished the fairest theme of eulogy for the poets, from the "blind bard" of Greece, to the present day. But it is my deliberate opinion, that many of the events of our recent war in skill & enterprize, undaunted valour and heroic self-devotion, may vie with the most brilliant scenes recorded in ancient history.

And Sheldon further affirms his point:

> National opinion, is national strength. Independent therefore of the gratitude which we owe to those who hazard, and to those who sacrifice their lives for their country, the plainest dictates of policy would lead us to perpetuate in scenic representations, in popular songs, and in every other mode, which gives strength and energy to public opinion, the rememberance of those gallant actions, which in the former war acquired, and in the latter secured our liberty and independence.
>
> I trust they will ever "live in remembrance and grow green in song."

Holding these convictions, Sheldon identified Whiting as possessing the necessary literary gifts, and encouraged several further contributions for the *Gazette*.

The third poem is, once more, not certainly, but probably, by Whiting. It is an example precisely of what Sheldon described. Again an untitled poem, it begins,

Spirits of Ye, who, erstwhile slain,
So long have strew'd the battle-plain
With bleaching bones, to sun and storm expos'd
Alike reproachful of the foe
Whose arm relentless laid thee now,
And friends who thus have left thy grave unclos'd.[11]

The work goes on to narrate the massacre of the River Raisin:

O, 'twas a dark portentous night
That frown'd upon this bloody fight,
And better ne'er had broke the day
That shone upon the ending fray,
When white man's steel, in murderous strife,
Join'd with the redmen's axe and knife;
When o'er th' unconquer'd and the flying,
The kneeling, wounded, and the dying,
A war of massacre was wag'd,
And with unsated fury rag'd;
Till scarce a man remain'd to tell
How butchers fought or victims fell.
Think ye! who there triumphant rose
From slaughter of surrender'd foes,
Who struck down captives that implored,
And answered mercy with the sword;
Think ye that time will e'er efface
The vestiges that mark the place,
Or that historic truth will fail
To gather and record the tale?

The poem then responds that the earth itself will retain the horror, even though the blood is washed away:

What though the snows, distained with red,
Showing the dying warrior's bed,
Melted away: and with them bore
The fading traces of the gore;

Think ye the soil that caught the stain,
Will lose its memory of the slain?

And the poem concludes that, as long as visitors to the scene are capable of thoughtful reflection, the site will retain its shameful record:

Long as disastrous field shall cause
The pilgrim in his round to pause,
And, as he sums the waste of life,
To mourn o'er scenes of human strife,
So long shall Procter's crimson name
Be given to execrable fame,
And Raisin's troubled waters glide
A dark traditionary tide,
Still rolling down from age to age
The tale of Anglo-savage rage.

These three poems represent Whiting's first published literary efforts. His fourth publication, printed as a pamphlet by Sheldon and Reed booksellers in 1818, was *A Masonic Address* that Whiting delivered on St. John the Evangelist's Day, December 27th. That was followed by an excerpt from Whiting's lengthy poem, *The Emigrant,* which Sheldon ran in the *Gazette* on April 16, 1819, and which was introduced by the announcement that Sheldon and Reed had published the 27-page poem, "including 5 pages of notes . . . printed on very fine paper with neat type."[12]

The Emigrant is the first poetic work separately published in Michigan Territory—in a sense, then, making Whiting Michigan's first poet. The work is also the first of numerous poems extolling the natural features of the region that were intended to recruit easterners to settle the Territory, showing that it did not deserve the reputation it had acquired from various false reports about it.[13] The emigrant of the poem is a young farmer who has come with his wife to Michigan Territory and quickly established himself in a land that is richly productive, of incomparable scenic appeal, and none but beneficent climate: the five pages of notes document evidence supporting these descriptions.

A portion of Sheldon's *Gazette* extract will convey, as he put it, "a just idea of the stile in which it is written, and at the same time supercede the necessity of any commendation from us":

Ne'er did Italian twilight sky
More soothe the mind or charm the eye.
Thus morn and night successive came,
And weeks and months roll'd on the same.*
Though all untrain'd in Fancy's school,
And reckless how to feel by rule,
The rustic pair had hearts to please,
And tun'd to relish scenes like these;
And oft as leisure hours occur'd,
Or when they sought the vagrant herd,
Their rural walks would lengthen far,
Till warn'd to turn by evening star;
And when they saw the waning year,
Crown'd with their abundance, disappear,
Their humble hearts, in grateful love,
Tracing its origin above,
Submissive bow'd—to Heaven addressing
A fervent prayer for every blessing.

*The uncommon beauty and serenity of the Michigan autumn, and the mildness of its winter, have often been the subject of remark. By a diary of the weather, kept by a gentleman in Detroit in the summer and fall of 1816, from the 24th of July to the end of October, making eighty-nine days, it appears that 57 were fair, 12 cloudy and 20 showers or rain. [Whiting's note.][14]

About three years after *The Emigrant,* Sheldon published in the *Gazette* an excerpt from Whiting's long poem, *Ontwa: The Son of the Forest.* He reported of it, "This is one of the finest specimens of narrative poetry which has yet appeared on the western shores of the Atlantic. The performance is purely and deservedly American."[15] The story concerns a legendary battle between the Eries and the Iroquois, and has as a sub-plot the love between the hero, Ontwa, an Erie Indian, and Oneyda, the daughter of the antagonist, the Iroquois chief, Saranac.

The work is important for several reasons. It predates the first Indian poems of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, and thus has a claim, which thus far seems not to have been recognized, upon the attention of students of the development of literature about American Indians and, eventually, the Hiawatha story. Schoolcraft had included brief reports of three Indian legends in his 1821 *Narrative Journal,* but they were not efforts of his own literary creation;

he saw them as he described the third one, a "fanciful story" illustrating "the fertility of invention and powers of imagination possessed by some of the savage tribes."[16] *Ontwa* differs from these by being a lengthy, sustained literary production. Furthermore, Schoolcraft himself acknowledges Whiting's influence upon his later Indian writings, both in his dedicating *The Algic Researches* to then Lieutenant Colonel Henry Whiting and in its introduction, where he says, "My attention was first arrested by the fact of the existence of such tales among the Odjibwa nation inhabiting the region about Lake Superior in 1822," the year of Ontwa's publication.[17]

Ontwa is important, also, for taking its information directly from the Indians, themselves. Sheldon's *Gazette* comments make particular reference to this point:

> It is, indeed, an honor to any community, to enjoy the title, upon just grounds, to the origin of a performance as creditable to literature as this. But that honor is considerably enhanced in the present instance, at least so far as regards the author, by a reference to the circumstances under which Ontwa was written. The Author declares it to have been principally composed "in the huts of savages."[18]

The direct contact with Indians was at least partly the work of Lewis Cass, who supplied the "illustrations" for the poem and who must have advised Whiting during his writing. Cass later criticized James Fenimore Cooper's renderings of Indian life for their failure of authenticity:

> . . . it is a source of regret that he did not cross the Allegany, instead of the Atlantic, and survey the red man in the forests and prairies, which yet remain to him. If he would collect his materials from nature, instead of the shadowy representations he has studied, he might give to the world a series of works, as popular and interesting as any that adorn the literature of the day.[19]

A year earlier, Cass had named *Ontwa* as providing the only truly accurate representation of Indian life which had thus far been given in literature, by anyone. His own comments will show again his insistence upon first-hand observation and experience of Indians, to bring authenticity into their literary portrayal. The

excerpt which he utilized will also serve to illustrate Whiting's style in the poem. Cass wrote:

> Of all who have attempted to embody in song the "living manners" of the Indians, the anonymous author of *Ontwa* has been most successful. His characters, and traditions, and descriptions, have the spirit and bearing of life, and the whole work is not less true to nature than to poetry.
>
> 'A hundred warriors now advance,
> All dressed and painted for the dance,
> And sounding club and hollow skin
> A slow and measured time begin;
> With rigid limb and sliding foot
> And murmurs low, the time to suit,
> Forever varying with the sound
> The circling band moves round and round.
> Now slowly rise the swelling notes,
> When every crest more lively floats,
> Now toss'd on high with gesture proud,
> Then lowly 'mid the circle bow'd;
> While clanging arms grow louder still,
> And every voice becomes more shrill,
> Till fierce and strong the clamor grows,
> And the wild war whoop bids it close.
> Then starts Shuuktonga forth, whose band
> Came far from Huron's storm beat strand,
> And thus recounts his battle feats,
> While his dark club the measure beats.'[20]

Other critics agreed with Cass's appraisal of the poem; shortly afterward, *Ontwa* was excerpted in two anthologies prepared to illustrate our literature in its early, distinctively American form: the first was *The Columbia Lyre*, published for European readers in Glasgow in 1828, and the second was Samuel Kettell's *Specimens of American Poetry*, Boston, 1829.

Nine years after the publication of *Ontwa*, Whiting's second Indian poem, *Sannillac*, was published in Boston, in 1831. A few years earlier, Whiting had become acquainted with Schoolcraft through Cass's introduction, and in Sannillac Whiting acknowledges notes by both men. Presumably he recognized Schoolcraft's greater familiarity with Indian life, now, for *Sannillac* appears to be Whiting's last treatment of it as a poetic subject.

Set on Mackinac Island two centuries before any white man arrived there, the poem relates the love of the Wyndot Indians, the maiden Wona and the warrior Sannillac. In order for them to marry, Wona's father, the blind old chief Strendoo, requires Sannillac to return with a scalp from the Wyndots' ancient enemies, the Mingoes, or Iroquois. Sannilac does so, and in the course of the story the ages-old battles between the two tribes are given in ceremonial speeches. Whiting states the purpose of *Sannillac* to be "not so much to fill up the outline of aboriginal history, as to exhibit manners and customs, which are generally characteristic of the scene of the forest."[21]

Between the two books, *Ontwa* and *Sannillac,* two other separately printed poems by Whiting appeared. In 1830, *The Age of Steam* was printed by the Detroit Journal in pamphlet form. It is a playful, satirical history read by Whiting on the occasion of the dedication of the steamboat, *Henry Clay,* in Detroit. Entering the lighthearted spirit of the celebration, Whiting opens with a series of puns:

> The world's first age with *gold* began,
> But soon it down to *silver* ran,
> Depreciating, like some stock,
> Whose credit has received a shock.
> Those golden days were days of *guilt,*
> When gilded palaces were built. . . .

The poem goes discursively on, reviewing the wondrous changes wrought by steam power along the Great Lakes; it offers vignettes of the past and present of Detroit, where, speaking of Spring Wells,

> . . . much of Brock and hist'ry tells,
> Where Hull first caught that ague fit,
> Which made his heart go pat-a-pit.
> *There,* is Le Breton's, whose pale beer
> Fills every tumbler far and near,
> Whiskey from out the land expelling,
> (Which now, like Monroe bills, is selling,)
> Doing as much for good sobriety,
> As e'en the Temperance Society.

It then concludes with encomiums for Michigan's thriving backcountry, and a closing salutation to everybody,

> Then, long live Michigan! and Jackson too!
> And may he push our roads all through.

The final line presumably alludes to Whiting's service in taking bids for the construction of roads in the Territory.

Also in 1830, the *Journal* published Whiting's *A Retrospect; or, The Ages of Michigan,* combined with Schoolcraft's *The Rise of the West* into a single publication. *A Retrospect* begins by noting that Detroit and Philadelphia were begun on "savage shores" by pioneers about the same time, though the latter soon left her

> connate sister far behind,
> Doom'd in a waste of lakes and woods to hide,
> Quite out of sight and even out of mind,
> Through many a year within a rude stockade confined.

In thirty-two Spenserian stanzas, the poem reviews the history of the region, giving a rather detailed account of Pontiac's Conspiracy, touching briefly on events during and after the Revolutionary War, providing an amusing portrait of A. B. Woodward—"the learned Plotter" and "great Projector"—, describing the dark days after Hull's surrender, followed by the joy of Perry's victory in the War of 1812, and closing with a picture of an optimistic, peaceful future, in which is now found an interior swiftly developing villages and a thriving population, where Congress has improved the administration of the laws throughout the Territory, and where a bountiful Uncle Sam has built a too roomy jail and a spacious state house "of classic air." The poem closes with the wish that Michigan will soon become an added link, to "eke out the nation's chain" and a vigorous mercantile force:

> May the broad wave she seems to part in twain,
> Be whiten'd with the saild her merchants spread.
> May all her hills and valleys' wave with grain;
> And steam-mills rise to turn it into bread.
> And may each added year an added blessing shed.

Three pages of notes follow, which sometimes add interesting factual or personal comment. An example of the latter is the professional army officer's view of the site of the former Fort Shelby: "These ramparts, which were raised by citizens, were destroyed by similar hands. In 1827, they were reversed into the ditches

whence they rose, forming a fine site for the houses which are fast superseding the demolished curtains and bastions. As the Fort was a monument of national disgrace, it is not to be regretted that it has been razed from the view."

Finally, two shorter poems, also anonymous, make at least some claim to authorship by Whiting. The first is an elegy, "To the Memory of James L. Cole, Esquire,"[22] a talented, highly regarded young poet who appears to have been befriended by Whiting; Cole returned to his home in Canadaigua, New York, to die of tuberculosis in 1823. The other poem, appearing in 1827, has a strong kinship with *The Age of Steam.* It is, as Sheldon terms it, a "Jeu d'Espirit"—, which plays upon the names of soldiers stationed at Fort Saginaw.[23] Although many of the selections that I have presented are elegiac, Whiting was also humorous and enjoyed reflecting upon the uses of language, from time to time.

Henry Whiting's poetry, because of its anonymous, fugitive, occasional nature, is, of course, not a major contribution to our national literature. Still, its significance merits recognition. It helps to confirm the existence of a lively literary element in Michigan Territory that was active on America's western frontier a little ahead, chronologically at least, of Cooper; it was genuine literary pioneering. Although the New England background with its sense of literary mission, represented by Henry Whiting, his older associate, Lewis Cass, and his younger one, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, has been noted by others, it might well reward further sustained examination. And, lastly, a fourth name should be added to these three. The editor of the *Detroit Gazette,* Michigan's first successful newspaper, had a special role in establishing the literary character of the Territory: as a behind-the-scenes prompter of Whiting's verse; as one who understood and gave early articulation to the Midwestern regional mission which the young nation should have; and as one who by printing, advertising, and disseminating these early literary productions, we see the influential, very significant presence of the relatively unknown John Pitt Sheldon.

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NOTES

1. William L. Jenks, "Henry Whiting," *Michigan History Magazine,* XVI(Spring 1932), 175-182, is the only article about Whiting. There are references to him in *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* and in Allibone, and obituary notices in *The International Magazine* and *Detroit Daily Advertiser.*
2. *The Pérry's Victory Centenary.* Report of the Perry Victory Centennial Committee, State of New York. Compiler, George D. Emerson. Albany: Lyon, 1916, pp. 184, 261. A photograph of the painting of the "Burial Scene," by Chevalier, is included in "Lest We Forget," *Oliver Hazard Perry.* The War of 1812. The Battle of Lake Erie. The Centennial Celebration. Cleveland, 1912, facing page 3.
3. Webster P. Huntington. *The Perry's Victory Memorial.* Akron, 1917, p. 94.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 92.
5. *Detroit Gazette,* October 31, 1817, p. 2.
6. *Detroit Gazette,* November 7, 1817, p. 2.
7. "A Visit to the Cave in Put-in-Bay Island," in *The Souvenir of the Lakes.* Detroit: Geo. L. Whitney, 1831, pp. 13-17; quotes from p. 15.
8. *Detroit Gazette,*/November 7, 1817, p. 2.
9. *Detroit Gazette,* August 1, 1817, p. 2.
10. Irregular spellings preserved.
11. November 27, 1818, p. 3.
12. P. 3.
13. A review of this and other false reports is F. Clever Bald's "Some Myths about Michigan," *Michigan History,* 29(Jan-Dec 1945), 595-609.
14. *Detroit Gazette,* April 16, 1819, p. 3. Schoolcraft, in his *Narrative Journal,* refers to the Notes to this poem as furnishing scientific evidence of the mild climate of Detroit: cf. footnote 16, p. 72.
15. *Detroit Gazette,* February 15, 1822, p. 3.
16. *Narrative Journal of Travels from Detroit Northwest through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820.* Albany: Hosford, 1821, p. 406.
17. Schoolcraft, *The Algic Researches, comprising Inquiries respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians.* Vol. I. New York: Harper, p. 37.
18. *Detroit Gazette,* February 15, 1822, p. 3.
19. Lewis Cass, "Heckewelder on American Indians," *North American Review,* 26(April 1828), 373-374. Cass means by the "shadowy representations" the distortions given by John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder in his three works: *A Narrative of the Mission among the Deleware and Mohegan Indians.* Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, 1820; a "memoir" included in *A Message on the Christian Indians.* December 10, 1822. Senate Document No. 3, Washington: Senate, 1823; and *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States.* Philadelphia: A. Small, 1818.
20. Lewis Cass, review of *Indian Treaties, and Laws and Regulations relating to Indian Affairs. . . .* Department of War: Washington, 1826, in *North American Review,* 24(April 1827), 374.
21. *Sannillac: A Poem.* Boston: Carter & Babcock, 1831, p. iii.
22. *Detroit Gazette,* March 14, 1823, p. 2.
23. *Detroit Gazette,* May 1, 1827, p. 3.

MUSCULAR INNOCENCE IN THE MIDWESTERN WORK ETHIC

BERNARD F. ENGEL

A characteristic of much verse of the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century is a trumpet call of that militantly robust romanticism that may conveniently be termed strenuosity. This was the era of popular adoption of the slogan "survival of the fittest," of the "muscular Christianity" that sought to combine the sound body with the resoundingly moral, of the robber baron and the railroad scandal, of the darkly gilded age and the Light Brigade. The day of the United States had dawned on the Pacific, and it was high noon for that empire on which it would have been impertinent for the sun to set. Mention of strenuosity immediately brings to mind Kipling, whose prose and verse were much admired in the U.S. But the quality appears in Browning's rugged, often harsh diction and syntax, in Tennyson's suggestion in "Maud" that social evils may be remedied by war, in the posturing declamations of Swinburne, in Whitman's hope for a transcendental passage to more than India, in Twain's pragmatic search for a passage to wealth by means of shrewd investment, and in the optimistic moralism of 1001 Midwestern versifiers. It is the sovereign cord in that multicomplex tapestry explored in Walter Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind,* tying together the stout threads Houghton labels Optimism, Earnestness, Enthusiasm, and Hero Worship. It is so pervasive that Longfellow in "The Saga of King Olaf" has Thor declare:

> Force rules the world still,
> Has ruled it, shall rule it;
> Meekness is weakness,
> Strength is triumphant!

Its ultimate source is traced by C. S. Peirce in an 1878 article to " the rude idea of a cause" that began in the early seventeenth century and came, Peirce says, to give "birth to modern science," to direct "the course of modern thought" and rule over "modern social development."[1] Ronald Martin points out that the notion of a "universe of force" is "purely conceptual," that it is a metaphysical concept that is "nonempirical" and, despite appearances, has "no special relationship to reality."[2] He adds: "The term force is essentially figurative . . . and in its functions of explaining relationships underlying experience it carries . . . implications of mechanistic and inevitable causality." Among the consequences of belief in force that Martin observes is the supposition of Spencer that "in a metaphysical framework, in the balance with higher abstract good, social injustice and individual insignificance are temporary, lesser evils"—the argument Frank Norris, for example, resorts to in *The Octopus.* But other writers found the philosophical pattern "at odds with their more immediate perceptions, emotions, and ideals," and therefore experienced an "anguish" at the contradiction.

Merged with the moralism that replaced older, sterner Christian doctrine, belief in force seemed to call for a strenuosity that honors all that it holds to possess healthy vigor, scorns all that it estimates to be too effete for the heroic self. One man's righteous vigor is, of course, another man's puling febrility. No matter: the "mind" of the era, in the Midwest as elsewhere, is, like Whitman's, possessed of multitudes and superior to contradiction and mere vindication. Confronting the industrial revolution, it espouses one version or another of the work ethic. This ethic is firmly middle class, a view of the worker's obligations as seen not necessarily by the factory owner—a citizen more given to accumulation than to elucidation—but by the white collar worker who is at least one rung higher than the factory hand on the socioeconomic ladder. From this moderately lofty vantage point, the worker appears now to be the sturdy son of toil, a new embodiment of the Romantic ego, and now to be the pitiful victim, a suitable object for acts of benevolence.

Both aspects appear in the narrative the age loves: in the stories of Dickens and Bret Harte, the unfortunate, primitive, or hardbitten have, if not always hearts of gold, at least an admirable

degree of the spirit of self-sacrifice, and a supposedly natural honesty and sense of honor, despite their amusing disregard of drawing room niceties. The middle class reader can indulge in the fantasy that the catch-as-catch-can existence is equivalent to the happy-go-lucky, that the poverty-stricken life he has escaped is somehow more picturesque than his own routine, an indulgence that he would not allow himself if it seriously challenged genteel values. The reader "means well," but is too class-bound to take seriously his own talk of human equality: that the colonel's lady and Molly O'Grady are, indeed, "sisters under the skin" he takes as Kipling intended it to be—a rollicking tweak at the Pinnochio nose of convention, not a serious assertion of human truth.

The continuing emphasis on benevolence, on the duty of the better off to care for the less fortunate, is, after all, only a step toward democracy. It requires neighborly kindness, but certainly not acceptance into one's own familial class. This emphasis shows in the use of prose and verse of the term "the people." Though the label is used by Whitman and earlier writers to mean the general public, by the time of Sandburg and Sherwood Anderson it comes to mean the working class. This class eventually is seen as virtually divine;[3] by 1900, some writers appear to be falling over themselves to claim membership in it.[4] (This perhaps innocent falsity is still with us: witness the puffery on book jackets, a species of self-promotion every bit as truthful as the oldtime politician's allegation that he was born in a log cabin.) But through the early and middle decades, the middle class reader continues to regard himself as the kindly superior. He is not notably democratic, is suspicious of reformers, and is horrified by speculation about collective action. Nor is he moved by the stern oldtime Christian insistence that charity is a moral duty. A thorough sentimentalist, he acts at the promptings of the overflowing heart.

In their failure to see the working man and woman as individuals, users of the term "the people" support industrial society's practice of ignoring the personhood of those who do its labor. With modifications, the pattern reappears in the work of realists and naturalists to the present day: the tough guy—including the now "liberated" female—is fundamentally better than the allegedly complacent bourgeois. Hemingway may transcend the mode,

as in his presentation of the emptiness of the old man in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." But most of his drinkers, hunters, and bullfight fans, and their ten thousand imitations in print and on both the large and the small screens, are tired, skeptical, "sophisticated" descendants of Dickens's afflicted toilers and Harte's jaunty outcasts.

Though it purports to challenge the middle class, such writing provides only a delightful sense of derring-do, avoiding the clawed dangers of radical challenge. Sentimental, pretentious rather than profound, its effect is not to subvert but to support the genteel tradition. As Twain sent Huck out to the territory, but continued himself to lead, or to attempt to lead, the comfortable life of the financially successful (and what real alternative existed?) so the usual writer of the age liked to dabble in the adventurous, perhaps to shed the tear of sympathy over the pathetic condition of the worker, but remained himself or herself a participant in the mainstream. Kipling's soldiers, Conan Doyle's detective, and Jack London's wolves of the Klondike and the sea, and his parlor socialism: all show the widespread desire for exciting relief, for a recess from instructed routine—as long as one knows that when the bell calls he can return to his assigned seat.

Though glimmerings of Wordsworth's search for the pensive mood appear, the more popular model for American versifiers is Byron's pursuit of heightened sensation. The American is too "moral" to imitate Byron's amorous life and stories, but admires his willingness to exceed the conventional. Strenuosity is also in some aspects a brutalized version of Emerson's self-reliance. This is apparent in the Anglo-Saxon racism of the last half of the century. Theodore Roosevelt's understanding of the settlement of North America as a vast "race expansion" of "the Germanic peoples" (*The Winning of the West*, 1889-96) is an example of the vulgar bases some in the late decades turn to for support of the idea of democratic man. Writing just before the arrival of the great tides of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Roosevelt is sure that the America of his day is "less heterogeneous . . . than we were at the outbreak of the Revolution" because, he says, the newcomers have been from the same "race-strains" as the founders of the nation. But the nativist movement of the mid-century, and the "Anglo-Saxon" emphases of commentators even

more racist than T.R., show a fear of diversity that is perhaps to be expected in a society wherein religious belief has lost vitality, the individual desperately seeks approval of peers, and popular science supports theories of blood and race.

One main source of the strenuous mood is social development. By the 1840s both the British and the Americans had built reasonably successful democracies with sizable middle classes, including many workers and farmers, living better than those with comparable standing elsewhere. This taste of material progress awakened an appetite for more, as did the continuing humanitarianism inherited by the sentimental mode that dominated popular arts and philosophies. This domination continued then, as it does today, perhaps because sentimentalism in flattering the citizen who would do good necessarily explores something of the thoughts and feelings of the common people who are to be the objects of the doing.

But the enormous material consequences of building the political and industrial empires that led to unwonted prosperity also shunted aside the ideal of a humane utopia. Social ideals were distorted, even perverted, in the Mexican War, the now too-often forgotten Indian Wars, and the Spanish-American War. Democratic equalitarianism was suppressed in the heedless expansion of the industrial economy with the accompanying exploitation of the public by politicians and businessmen. In both of the largest English-speaking countries, the voluminous flow of funereal verse is in part an indication that the ordinary poet and reader was conscious of loss, of failure to achieve not only utopian goals but even minimal ease and security for labor. Yet strenuosity may also be seen as an effort to revitalize, to recall society to the behaviors thought necessary to achievement of ideals. It is, in short, a complex quality, its windings fecund, torturous, not always consistent with one another.

Strenuosity is expressed in the verse associated with the work ethic, the several wars, and the gradual recognition of the ordinary man and woman. Glorification of work perhaps had its origin, as Max Weber famously declares, in the insistence in early Protestantism that one is called to serve God in his daily labor. In early America, Cotton Mather argues that "well doing" includes working both to spread the word of God and to remedy "the

miseries of the world," even that this remedying is "a sufficient reward to itself" (though he assumes that the hand of God will be in such effort). Only a generation later, Benjamin Franklin, though still nodding to the religious, emphasizes the secular values of work. Focus on the secular with only polite acknowledgement of the divine becomes so typical in the nineteenth century that David J. Cherrington has suggested in *The Work Ethic* (1980) the term "character ethic"; though a Christian duty to work hard and well is still implied, emphasis by the late decades is upon a moral obligation to work, principal values being timeliness, productivity, honesty, diligence, prudence, and frugality. These are said to be necessary not as means to gaining entrance to Heaven, but as components of strong moral character.

Few in either England or America would have gone as far as Thomas Carlyle, who in *Past and Present* (1843) called for a "noble Chivalry of Work," a "beautiful" ethic in which the commoner gladly would give up his life if necessary to follow the visionary will of the captain of industry. In America, the pragmatic view was already appearing. Emerson asserts in "The American Scholar" (1837) that work is a means to knowledge, to self-understanding, to confirmation of wisdom: only so much does one know, he argues, as he has lived, has experienced in action as well as in mind. Emerson anticipates the early twentieth century's view of work as being not a personal virtue, nor a form of worship, but, as Cherrington puts it, an "instrumental value," a means of "furthering national productivity, organizational effectiveness, personal happiness . . . improved health, and service to society." Such values are seen in, for example, Richard C. Cabot's popular *What Men Live By* (1914), which insists that "Idleness is corrosive" because it turns one inward, with the result that "Thought, that should run out in path-finding, path-making labor, circle round and round within the mind, till it is dizzy"; by work, Cabot says, "you straighten out such cramped and twisted energies." Though Cabot rejects the "inward," his emphasis on the effect of labor on the self is a step toward the "personality ethic" of Dale Carnegie and the hosts of popular psychologists who have restated his message for Tom Wolfe's "Me" decades.

Within this pattern of evolution, the specific development in the nineteenth century is from celebration of the paternal rela-

tionship between worker and owner to insistence in the later years that the growth of industry requires change in understanding: since the owner is no longer father to a family of workers, the worker in turn is no longer a child. Spokesmen for the worker did not miss another analogy: as the Abolition movement has helped bring freedom for the chattel slave, so a comparable effort must seek to give the wage slave some right to self-direction, to such autonomy as may be feasible within the workplace.

The reader looking back with the grand perspective of one a century removed from the times will see in Midwestern verse a body of work that declares loudly the chip-on-the-shoulder confidence of a nation glorying in its grasp of a continent and its production of endless material goods. The verse hails the development of the factory system as a result of progress in national and economic virtue and in personal morality. But poetry is made up of individual poems. Though the grand perspective will see only the gloss of affirmation, the close up view will find plentiful doubt; if the verse never becomes cynical or politically radical, it does become increasingly skeptical and reformist. Even in the poems of the pre-industrial decades, there is a tone of reassurance, an urging that arises from recognition that wage labor breeds miseries. It is the worker's duty to adapt to the system: the solution to his problem is to work harder, a tactic that will bring him recognition and success, or, failing that, will at least earn reward in the hereafter. Even Whittier, the most outspoken Abolitionist among poets, pontifically warns workers against listening to "demagogues" who would separate the interests of "Gain" and "Ease" from those of labor: in "The Problem," he concludes that though the rich should not begrudge the necessities to the worker—not even to the victim of "self-wrought misery"—

> . . . Solution there is none
> Save in the Golden Rule of Christ alone.

Like Yank in the opening scenes of O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape," the worker is to glory in his ability to prevail against whatever burdens the system imposes. Yet this traditionalist position does not attempt to picture working for wages as an ideal goal, does not fail to recognize that such labor often yields only a starved existence.

The success literature that floods the printshops of the late decades urges the middle class too to use hard work as the means to "get ahead"—an expression that reveals the competitive individualism of the work ethic and conceals the accompanying feeling that what happens to those who are gotten ahead of does not matter. Together with the hyperpatriotism of wartime verse and the glorification of the sturdily virtuous average American in pseudo-oral and dialect verse, the poetry honoring industrial success contributes to the boisterous nationalism that becomes the swaggering jingoism of the 1890s. But it also represents an attempt to reconcile democratic recognition of the individual with the economic urgencies of the industrial age. That this recognition often serves the interest of the owner and the boss, that it is a step in the development of the consumer society, that it accepts industry as the master cultural force—these facts do not entirely belie the point that the adaptations also make industry become in several ways the servant of the public. For that large number, including millions of workers, who benefit from the labor of the sweatshop immigrant, the cash-pressed farmer, and the brutalized "hand" of mill and factory, the system works well.

In the Midwest as elsewhere, the first poems about the worker carry on the tradition, at least as old as Genesis, that sees the thorns and thistles of labor as built into post-Edenic existence, not destroyable by human reason. The poet can sympathize with the worker, console him for his hard lot, but, like Whittier, supposes the only path to betterment to be the virtuous toil that may make it possible for a few to escape from the working class. Recognition of hardship but acceptance of the system appear in such poems as "The Seamstress," by M. Louisa Chitwood of Ohio,[5] dwelling on the pathos of the title figure's toil and death; and "The Post-Boy's Song," by Frances Fuller Barritt of Ohio (b. 1826), a set of jingling reflections on how the boy though fearful continues to ride through the night, bringing perhaps further woe to "the desolate" but brightness to "the glad of heart."

Though rather more original minded than most of his contemporaries, William Davis Gallagher of Ohio (1808-1894) shares the assumption that labor is to be forever burdensome. Gallagher's "The Artisan" recognizes that "countless wrongs and cruelties" have been inflicted on the worker, but asserts that he must

rely on fortitude, must endure his lot. Despite their titles, Gallagher's "Radicalos," "The Better Day," and "A Hymn of the Day that Is Dawning" similarly recognize that peasants and workers have toiled brutally but urge restraint in hope of a more joyous day. Benjamin Parker of Indiana (1833-1911) hopes for a society of equality and justice where "The whir of spindles," the telegraph, and "the builders" will "make the country smile" and "Train nature up to uses best for man." Meanwhile, Parker muses, the laborer lives in a home of bare walls, sleeps on a "meagre couch of straw," and toils on the mansion of one who has become rich by means of "lying impudence and brazen cheek."

Of course it is not the duty of the poet to suggest means of social change: a first step toward remedying a situation may be to awaken consciousness of its evils. And the urging that workers accept their lot may have been the only argument available for many in the generation that was witnessing the industrial revolution and the closing of the frontier. But the failure to envision anything other than continued grinding toil until some unspecified change in the farthest of futures lends point to the mockery of the IWW song "There'll be pie in the sky by and by . . ." Gallagher and Parker express the middle class views of the literate public, the men and women who can perceive the wrongs of the worker but cannot see a practical way to betterment.

One reason for this blindness is continued identification of work as necessary to moral development. Frances Dana Gage of Ohio (1808-1884), an Abolitionist and speaker for women's rights, says in "The Sounds of Industry" that the banging of factory hammers is good to hear—not, as the jaded modern adult may suppose, because it precedes the coming of rock music, but because it speaks for the "earnestness of life." William Dana Emerson of Ohio (1813-1891) in "Blind Workers" salutes middle class endeavors that lead to further national development: as the coral unknowingly builds its structures, so the merchant, doctor, and lawyer create "Mansions for a coming people, / Noble-hearted, true and brave." According to Celia M. Burr of Ohio (b. 1825?) everyone should work. The efforts of the weak are needed as well as those of the strong; in "Labor," Burr even recommends work as solace for the widow. Another of the few instances of attempt at consolation by recommending work is in

"The Past," by Susan W. Jewett of Ohio (1840-1871). Jewett urges that instead of weeping over the dead, one keep strength to face the future. The reward of effort is illustrated by Lois B. Adams of Michigan (b. 1817), who in "Hoeing Corn" tells of a young farmer winning by hard work both an inheritance and the hand of his lady love.

As the morality of benevolence led writers to sympathize with the toiling, so the morality of work led them to glory in the new economy and to affirm its values. Or, one might put it, if they anticipate the sturdy but defeated "thing" of Edwin Markham's "The Man with the Hoe" (1899), they also anticipate the strenuous Christ of Pound's "The Ballad of the Goodly Fere" (1912). Mary E. Fee Shannon of Ohio (1824-1855), Abby Allen Curtiss of Wisconsin (b. 1820), and Sidney Dyer of Indiana (1814-1898) all recommend working with a will, with a pride that is contemptuous of weakness. In "Never Stop to Look Behind You," Shannon urges that the worker not let his abilities "Ignobly sink . . . In the slough of idleness!" Curtiss comes close to identifying one's employer with God as, in "Work with a Will," she declares that "Labor itself is happiness won!" because "God is the Master urging thee on." Dyer in "Hit the Nail on the Head" declares sternly that the world is not a place for drones, that one must choose a goal and work toward it.

The best known, perhaps most insistent, of all Midwestern poets of the industrial ethic was Sarah T. Bolton of Indiana (1814-1893). Always militant against error, Bolton in "Call the Roll" urges the reader to war. A principal error is failure to keep busy. In "Awake to Effort," Bolton declares that one should not sing of "Idle days," that the poet should write of "What duties have our idle hands neglected? / What useful lessons have we learned and taught?" Her admiration for strength appears in "The Iron Horse," a set of verses that evokes something of the raw power of the locomotive "Shaking the earth with his clanging heels." (As a representative of the new technology, the locomotive was also admired in verse by Kipling and Whitman; in prose, Thoreau scouted the American fascination with the railroad, and Frank Norris made the train the hooting, murderous "Force" of the opening chapter of *The Octopus*. Emily Dickinson shrewdly gave worship of power the horse laugh by equinely satirizing the

locomotive in "I like to see it lap the miles." Whether he chose to emphasize the loco or the motive, everyone had to take a position). Bolton was not permanently bemused by the energetic. In later decades she lined up with reformers. In the tradition of the humanitarian, she called for justice and pity; but she also recognized need for structural change. In "Ye Sons of Toil" she urges artists to do their bit to bring the day when no one will own the soil, no one will "cringe" before a boss, "Nor big drones batten on the soil / Hard labor won." In that glorious day, no mothers, sisters, or wives will toil "like shackled slaves," no children work "with cold, blue hands, distorted spines and swollen glands, / Amonst the factory's wheels and bands." Bolton disapproved of some who sought change by violence, but she also criticized at least the most extreme of society's punishments of them: in "The Doomed Anarchists," referring to those sentenced to death for instigating the Haymarket Riots of 1886, she writes that Christian principle argues for subjecting the convicted to life imprisonment but does not justify executing them—"Load them with shackles, but let them live."

Bolton had the popular touch. W. C. Larrabee in his essay "Poets of the West" perhaps was only repaying her for her poem honoring a member of his family, "In Memory of Emma Rosabelle Larrabee," when he quoted her verse description of the battle of Monterey as "hardly inferior to Byron's masterly description of the battle of Waterloo."[6] But the average reader seems also to have been impressed by her work. She used the theme of the need to keep going despite difficulty, relying wholly on one's own effort, as the basis for one of the most famous of all Midwestern poems of the century, "Paddle Your Own Canoe." Long reprinted in schoolbooks used throughout the country, this rhymed sermon has seven stanzas of short lines that are easily committed to memory, an important advantage in the days of "learning by heart." The first stanza shows the skillful weaving together of slogans the public then (and, one fears, now) would accept as profound:

> Voyager upon life's sea
> To yourself be true,
> And where'er your lot may be,
> Paddle your own canoe.

> Never, though the winds may rave,
> Falter nor look back:
> But upon the darkest wave
> Leave a shining track.

In an age which did not question an even better known poem's injunction that one should leave footprints on the sands of time, it was not expected that readers would be captious about the direction that their legacy be a track upon an ocean wave.

For the most part, the era rejected criticism of its dream of a Utopia to be brought by technology. Perhaps because of its services to their endeavors, many writers praised the publishing industry and the printing press. Now powered by steam, the printing press had made possible the century's wide distribution of books, magazines, and newspapers; the machine, indeed, had become synonomous with the industry. William H. Bushnells of Illinois (b. 1823) in "A Song for the Press" looks to divine origins, tracing the beginning of print to the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, and declaring that the last "star" to fade when creation ends will be "the God-model'd Printing Press!" Coates Kinney of Ohio (1826-1904)—best known as author of the widely popular poem "Rain on the Roof"—gives grandeur to the human, stiffening the spines of the industrious in such verse as "Oh! Right On!" by declaring that Americans are "Born to act, and deeds to do," and in "Heroes of the Pen" praising those writers who come "the savage soul with thought to tame, / And with love and reason sway." George W. Cutter of Indiana (1801?-1865) in "The Song of Steam"—once a popular lyric—has steam itself boast of its use to "forge the steel" and "Hammer the ore" of industry; one exemplification of steam's good works is the printing press, the tool of the industry that in "The Press" Cutter praises as the "Torch of hope."

Inventions are for many much more than devices for comfort or convenience: they are to lead the march to a better world. Catherine A. Warfield of Ohio (1817-1877)—a novelist who first published verse (with Eleanor Lee) as one of the "two sisters of the West"—sees in "The Atlantic Telegraph" a device that can "conquer time" and "cancel space," a thought that leads her to muse on the possibility that the undersea cable passes through lost cities and sunken galleons. Isaac H. Julian of Indiana (1823-c.

1900) in "The True Pacific Line" links technology with the patriotic and the moralistic: the railroad will bind the country together, he says, and the result will be the even "greater treasure," the establishment of "A race of high-souled men." Completion of the transcontinental railroad and the Atlantic cable outshine the triumph of the North in the Civil War, in the view of Oscar W. Wisner of Michigan, author of *Halls of Peace: A Poem* (1868). Political as well as technological developments are glorious to J. Madison Bell of Michigan (1826-1902), an Abolitionist who published *A Poem, Entitled the Triumph of Liberty* (1870) "on the occasion of the grand celebration of the final ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment." Bell sees the "march of events" in the 1860s as having been "peculiarly romantic." He praises John Brown, Lincoln, and the blacks who fought for the Union, and admires the U.S. for its size, commerce, "glorious" courts and military—and the telegraph.

By the late decades, the "Anglo-Saxon" racism that was prominent in England and America was linked with moralism and technology. W. H. Bakewell of Michigan (b. 1817), author of *Vision of Faith in the Dream of Time*, predicts the downfall of political bosses, of judges and aldermen, and their replacement by "the people's choicest"—presumably morally perfect volunteers. Bakewell hails the coming of a man "well fashioned for the reign of work," a member of a "grander, nobler race" to be created by combining "Gaullic (sic), Anglo and Normanic" with "Saxon and Teutonic." Use of steam and electricity, and "telephonic sound," will spread liberty.

For all these writers, the man (only rarely the woman) of strenuosity is what Harvey Rice of Ohio (1800-1891) in *Mount Vernon, and Other Poems* (1860) honors as "The Moral Hero." Rice's Carlylean paragon sets the pattern for everyone because of an "iron will" that has led to the settlement of America, the founding of schools, and, of course, prosperity and progress. The will, progress, delight in technology and in the growth of the nation, racism: the work ethic is inextricably part of this cluster of ideas and notions. Many of them are cod liver oil to today's taster, but they were all sugarplums to the nineteenth century palate.

The poetic literature of the first two thirds of the century too often voices the glories of the baronial robber instead of the rights

of the robbed. Three developments were necessary to teach Americans that sympathy and pity for the worker are not sufficient instruments for bringing justice into the working world. The nation had to live through the darkening of the roseate American dream, a darkening brought on partly by the bloodletting of the Civil War and the bullying imperialism of the Indian and Spanish-American Wars. It had also to experience the extension of the dream to the working man and woman, an extension begun by, among others, the practitioners of benevolence, and furthered by the esthetically inglorious but socially useful writing of John Hay and other authors of dialect verse; by such newspaper poets as Will Careleton, Eugene Field, and Carl Sandburg; by popular rhetoricians like Vachel Lindsay; and by indignant observers like Hamlin Garland, William Dean Howells, and Edgar Lee Masters.

And, though everyone understood that the industrial revolution somehow has metaphysical dimensions, this understanding remained dim until the thoughtful developed a set of concepts for comprehending the change (for example, the term "capitalism," in the sense of "the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few," first appears in print only in 1886[7]). Recognition of need for rethinking awaited the accumulation of evidence of industrialism's maleficent ways in politics and with the middle as well as the working classes, evidence that became abundant only after the Civil War. Like their fellow Americans, Midwestern versifiers see themselves as enlightened citizens of a moral republic devoted to civilization and justice. Economic reality could not at first burn through the thick haze of political and moral self-congratulation.

Awareness of a clash in values was incipient in the continuing benevolent regard for the workingperson that accompanied admiration for technological progress. But not even the best of writers could immediately comprehend the new age. Henry Adams's lifelong search for understanding, indeed, came to the conclusion that the "forces" at work could not be understood. The thoughtful American who doubts yet hopes is exemplified by Mark Twain, that onetime Missourian and frequent dabbler in verse. In having Huck light out for the territory, Twain seems to suggest that there is little possibility for the freedom-loving in middle class life. Yet Twain himself continued to grab at opportunities for

wealth. In *A Connecticut Yankee* (1889) he seems to be half aware of the dangers of the technology he admires, but is excused from facing up to the problem by having his protagonist locate the experience in a dream, waking up just after the bringing of soap, arms factories, and lucifer matches to medieval England has achieved only the troubling resolution of slaughtering the upper classes by means of the Gatling gun. As Henry Nash Smith grandly puts it, Twain's novel fails in its attempt to make "the American Adam representing an older agrarian or pre-agrarian order . . . into a prometheus creating and administering an economic system comparable in complexity to the actual economic system of post-Civil War America."[8] Twain's Hank Morgan is an inadequate vehicle for depicting industrial capitalism; moreover, like all other American literary figures, Twain knew too little about the connection between machine technology and the ways of life it imposes.

"Reconciling" science and literature remains, of course, an unaccomplished task. Wordsworth in the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* predicts that the writer will be "ready to follow the steps of the Man of Science . . . carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself"; but he cautions that this readiness will come only if "these things shall be familiar to us . . . manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings." In the 1870s, Midwestern poets and other American writers would begin to recognize that there was somehow less enjoyment and more suffering in American life than they had supposed, and they would see that the change was somehow connected with industrialism. But neither Twain, nor such later confronters of science as Ohio's Hart Crane, could follow the steps of the scientist. Through the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, Midwestern poets attempted to comprehend their life in the light of a system of values, a "mind," that enabled them only to admire the machine as a representative of "force" and to pity individual victims of its workings. Hindsight suggests that anyone who put two and two together should have come up with four. But perhaps only the asinine rely on the cheeky arithmetic of hindsight.

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NOTES

1. Ronald E. Martin, *American Literature and the Universe of Force* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), quotes Peirce on its title page.
2. P. xiv.
3. Cp. Maxine Leroy, *Histoire des Idées sociales en France,* 5th ed., III (Paris: Librairie Gallinard, 1954), 197. Leroy speaks of Victor Hugo as proclaiming "The people made divine . . . the end of hell, of an unjust society . . ."
4. On the claims of some writers to membership in the working class, see Christopher P. Wilson, "American Naturalism and the Problem of Sincerity," *American Literature* 54 (December 1982), 511-27.
5. I have not yet found birth and death dates for Chitwood and a few others.
6. *Rosabower* (Cincinnati: 1855), pp. 194-209.
7. *Mark Twain's Fable of Progress* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964), p. 8.
8. P. 104. See also James C. Duram, *Mark Twain and the Middle Ages,* Wichita State University Bulletin 88 (August 1971); and Louis J. Budd, *Mark Twain: Social Philosopher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

A HOMESTEAD COUNTERMYTH AND THE PRAIRIE REALISTS

JAMES MARSHALL

A pattern of resistance as well as familiar celebration of an heroic but illusory myth which Henry Nash Smith has described as the garden of the west, originating in the eighteenth century, is apparent in folk songs of nineteenth century settlement.[1] Little, if any, serious attention has been given to such songs of disillusion as "Starving To Death On A Government Claim." This song is frontier dark comedy from the land of "the bedbug, grasshopper, and flea," a stoic laughter aimed at satiric correction of public land policy.[2] The government failed to correct speculation and usury, or to warn prospective homesteaders of such suicidal risks as heavily forested land and areas subject to drought.[3]

The homestead protest appears to have been spontaneous; organized agrarian concern did not begin until the Farmers Alliance formed the People's Party, or Populists, in the 1880's. A group of songs and satires beginning as early as the 1840's represents a homestead attitude, an ethos, intended to dispel the mists of romance from the attractive model of the west which originated in late eighteenth-century American social theory with St. John de Crevecouer and others[4] and which continued as a myth mistaken for reality into the late nineteenth century. Frederick Jackson Turner's idealism is the obvious example. Smith overlooks the importance of such a seemingly minor resistance as folk songs of protest; however, as this essay points out, a theme of disillusionment in homestead culture becomes a countermyth of resistance to an economic and ethical chaos created largely by inadequately regulated land speculation.[5] Critics have neglected the study of folk art as the source of prairie

realism—specifically, a theme of dispossession that enters directly into novels by such American realists from Midwestern frontier settlements as Edward Eggleston, Joseph Kirkland, Hamlin Garland, and the unclassifiable Ignatius Donnelly.

The end of this essay is to suggest the importance of a countermyth in shaping the liberal imagination that emerged gradually, I suggest, from the relevant novels of these Midwestern writers. The genesis of the countermyth, naturally, is in the homesteaders' experience of inadequate land policy. In addition to marginal farm land, high mortgages caused by excessive land speculation also caused serious distress among homesteaders and later farming communities. Omar Morse's unpublished "Autobiography," the narrative of a homesteader three times dispossessed by high mortgages in Wisconsin and Minnesota between 1847 and 1886, illustrates the idealism of a central New York State farm hand, his suffering, and stoic acceptance, with complaint, of his losses. His emigrant's optimism is expressed in terms that represent the homesteaders' optimism, his discouragement in ironies that reflect his experience. The essay first analyzes Morse's changing perspective.

A brief analysis of pertinent songs illuminates the origin of the settlers' protest in their experience of economic conditions comparable to and worse than those felt by the Morse family. The satiric perspective toward the new west (now the Midwest) evident in the voice of the homestead illuminates, in turn, the source and intent of a social theme disguised as history in Edward Eggleston's *The Mystery of Metropolisville* (1873) and Joseph Kirkland's *Zury; The Meanest Man in Spring County* (1887), Ignatius Donnelly's *The Golden Bottle* (1892) and Hamlin Garland's *Main Travelled Roads* (1891). These writers, born in Midwestern frontier settlements (with the exception of Donnelly), preserve the spirit of a homestead countermyth, if I may use the term, in an attack on past speculation then still as contemporary as that in Mark Twain's and Charles Dudley Warner's *The Gilded Age; A Tale of Today* published in 1873, the year of Eggleston's "Mystery" in Metropolisville, Minnesota.

All of these writers, significantly, describe the virgin prairie in metaphors that imply the ideal garden of American civilization which progress will achieve while satirically attacking the deplor-

able evil of land speculation, in the past and by indirection in the "gilded age". Critical neglect of their fusion of history and art overlooks the intent of these prairie realists. Hamlin Garland's social realism is widely familiar, but no critics recognize his sources in a frontier theme which was probably revived by the Farmers Alliance while he was a member. His specific reference to such songs of protest as "The Arkansas Traveler" suggests his continuation of the homestead countermyth in the art of his first and best work, *Main-Travelled Roads*. This essay concludes with analysis of Garland's countermyth in "Up The Cooly," his most powerful narrative. As William Dean Howells observed, Garland had captured the savage class war of haves and have nots that represented the present state of American society. He did not need to observe that it had evolved from a less than equalitarian frontier.[6] Clearly, a utopian mist was lifted if not entirely dissipated in fiction of the Midwest with origins in the frontier culture of the 1840's.

Let us first review Omar Morse's experience as a homesteader in the Old Northwest. An aspirant's dream of independence in the West sent young Omar to Fond Du Lac County, Wisconsin, in 1847 from his home in Oswego County, New York, in an effort to escape his economic destiny as a farm hand. The older Morse recalls his first sight of an open prairie west of the "mudhole" village of Fond Due Lac in the quasi-religious metaphors of his homestead culture: "I emerged from the timber and grubs and found myself on—as I thought—the most beautiful spot on God's green earth. The prairie grass was about 4 inches high and the whole face of the country had the appearance of an everlasting grainfield." (Morse, 1847) His "everlasting grainfield" in context reflects the mythological paradise of the West extant in nineteenth-century American thought. Smith, as I have indicated, calls this the myth of the garden of the west.[7]

That Morse associates this land with an equalitarian American freedom essential to the myth is evident in the incident that precipitated his departure from New York to Wisconsin. He recalls having to give notice to Mr. Harry Backus of Bridgeport, New York, because he felt Backus was treating him with less respect than a slave. "I told him I had my papers to show that I was a free man and never had been sold into bondage and no

man less than sixteen feet between the eyes could make a slave of me. This of course led to a difference of opinion." (Morse, 1847)

Ten years later, dispossessed and with a family of three, Morse records passing through Rochester, Minnesota, on his way to another homestead. Like other homesteaders, he could be a conscious satirist. He derides the two cabin village whose developers believed would become an inland seaport. (The Zumbro River on which Rochester is located is a minor tributary of the Mississippi which flows thirty-five miles to the east.) He was to lose two additional homesteads in Dodge and Goodhue counties in Minnesota to forced sales under the pressure of imminent mortgage foreclosures. After his last homestead dwindled from eighty acres, much of it woodland, to twenty through a forced sale, he became a field hand, implementing his income when he could as a journeyman plasterer, stone mason, and laborer.

Because his opportunity for an income independent of others' employment seems to have been limited, he illuminates a homestead irony (of the gardener's idealism) by entrapment in the actual economy of the homestead community.[8] In Morse's dispossessions we find an example of lost homesteads from which the folk artist constructed his satirical protest. Paul Gates' *Landlords and Tenants On The Prairie Frontier*, a study of land speculation during frontier settlement in the Midwest, suggests that such an experience was not uncommon.[9] But the voice of the homesteader has not been heard.

For purposes of brevity, two songs will illuminate the homestead response to dispossession and other kinds of deprivation which some emigrants suffered needlessly. "Mary's Little Lot" and "Starving To Death On A Government Claim" pinpoint the area of government responsibility in mitigating needless suffering. "Mary's Little Lot" is a satire of landlordism contained in a homesteader who discovers that the best way to wealth (that is, independence)) on the land was to rent to tenants and to sell land for a fat profit, when the price was right. The last verse supplies the realistic advice to follow Mary's example and "hog some land/ and hold it for the rise."[10]

Tenancy and speculative profit taking, as settlers knew, were antithetical to the spirit of free land, and thus undermined the

ideal of the garden. For Jefferson, as for nineteenth century reformers like Henry George and Horace Greeley, there was a special virtue in agriculture. Such songs imply the undermining of natural virtue as well as an obviously unpatriotic materialism. Here the dual techniques of an inverted garden of the West (an ethical desert, so to speak) and the evil land speculator, *the* mephistophelian destroyer of the unspoiled mythical land, are obvious.

Songs of starvation and other kinds of deprivation are not common in folk song collections; they may have been distrusted by conservative collectors and forgotten in the passing of generations. Thus those which are in collections must reflect homestead sentiment and illustrate common techniques; these, in general, are methods of the satirist. The folk artist of "Starving To Death," although not one of Mary's fleeced lambs on her tenant farms, laments the hapless (and bachelor's) fate of his protagonist on the arid plains—a symbolic cultural desert—of the "bedbug, the grasshopper, and flea," his sole companions.[11] The isolated man has yet to be dispossessed by mortgage and loans, but his creator intends a warning to future settlers through the obverse of the garden myth in a satirist's inversion. Hunger, if not starvation, will be his lot. For the homestead realist, like his later literary heirs, such irony held moral value in its revelation of truth. The folk artist also used the satirist's comedic exaggeration, the lampoon, and the silence and/or understatement of elipsis and indirection. But he was unable to contain his anger in depiction of the destroyer of the garden, the land speculator. Here he tends to isolate evil in crude and obvious stereotypes, historically an expressive if not naive artistic flaw.

Of Edward Eggleston's several frontier novels, *The Mystery of Metropolisville* is the clearest instance of a homestead countermyth with its ambiguous fraud, a land speculator, a quasi-mythical virgin prairie on the edge of near disaster, and an emerging political liberalism of the sort later to explode in the Farmers Alliance and People's Party. Set in the Minnesota of the speculative 1850's and published in 1873, Eggleston's satire intends comment on that era as well; indeed, he seems to suggest a continuity of past and present behind his disguise as historian. The plot centers in Mr. Plausaby's village, a paper city that begins to take root,

appears ready to blossom, then like the unhealthy plant it is disappears almost overnight because of a few aware citizens in the vicinity. Eggleston cleanses the weedless garden of this foul plant, concluding with an image of a now unsettled prairie to keep its promise alive. However, Mr. Plausaby is the type of land speculator who does not disappear.[12]

Eggleston's sophistication of the homestead countermyth crystalizes in his best character, Plausaby. He may be the literary type in literature of later business men; clearly he anticipates Sinclair Lewis' George F. Babbitt, the bland, morally evasive realtor of Zenith. More subtle in fleecing settlers than Mary ("Mary's Little Lot") but not Johnson Hooper's Captain Simon Suggs, Plausaby's insidious plausability, as it were, transforms early satire to prairie realism. Although Eggleston is unable to create an American synthesis of derivative styles—Dickensian social comedy, western local color, and frontier humour mixed into a stock romance—he finds a narrative focus in his comedic villain, a land speculator. In this satiric mode, somewhat like the darker comedy of the best songs of protest, his demythologizing of the popular western garden approaches a challenge of its further value.

Eggleston did not wish to appear unpatriotic. He conceals his criticism in the history of Minnesota in the 1850's as if it had no relevance to 1873, the year of its publication and of Twain's and Warner's *The Gilded Age*, which lampooned present speculation. Eggleston's concern with his public mask as mere historian suggests his satirist's interest in the present as well; his desire to hide it signals his intent. A Preface moralizes the lesson of Metropolisville: "[it] died, as so many others died, of the crash which was the inevitable sequal and retribution of speculation madness,"[13] a theme that resembles Twain's "speculation fever." Eggleston slips his mask aside momentarily in this comment on the "history and art" of his novel,[14] a hint that its universality should indeed comment on the present. Moreover, he has preserved the spirit of early satire in an authentic setting and situation through the incredible manipulations of Plausaby who will not, he all but states, for all the heavy handed justice meted out, vanish with Metropolisville into the barbarous, admonitory past which he is anxious to show as the past safely past. Eggleston

appears to be the first novelist to use native (and Midwestern) homestead satire.

In *Zury; The Meanest Man In Spring County* (1887), Zury, Kirkland's giant of redoubtable masculine force and business acumen, is not, as Smith believes, an accretion of frontier tales told to Kirkland by a former employee of his original.[15] He is, more significantly, the psychologically driven personality who represents American success. He was traumatized by an incident which gives an early indication of Kirkland's use of homestead satire, and illuminates his deepening perception of the individual in society, a perception which serious literature requires in transforming folk art to its more complex verbal structures. When the Prouders first came to Spring County, Illinois, in the mid-1830's, Zury was an affectionate person, deeply affectionate in his relations with a sickly younger sister, and already showing an unusual but uneducated intelligence. But the family has little cash for doctors or medicine; mortgage loans at speculator's rates were imperative for their survival. On her death, he vows a silent revenge—he will master the frontier economics that destroyed his sister; and does, becoming the richest (and meanest) man in the county through his mortgage and loan business and land speculation, and his farm. Nothing, not even Anne Sparrow, a New England schoolmistress (the symbolic genteel East) converts the barbarous Zury from his materialistic desires; his psychic wound is too deep. He learned in an early loss of innocence that money alone was the key to the independence which the garden of the west promised, not the virtuous labor of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer,[16] the model hero who beat his ploughshare into a sword and sword to ploughshare as he went west.

Like the significant land owners in "The Arkansas Traveler" songs, an implied homestead protest against grim socioeconomic conditions,[17] Zury illustrates the unrealized promise of the garden. Kirkland sophisticates the homestead figure of the ignorant land owner in his characterization, probing the mind as well as society. Like Anne's compulsive fear of the dark, an obvious neurosis, Zury's unrelenting drive is equally neurotic. Kirkland may have absorbed Oliver Wendell Holmes' psychology in *Elsie Venner*, but saw—through his use of homestead satire—a close relation of the frontier economic climate to Zury's furious obsession (possibly guilt), a pattern in naturalistic novels. Like the gila monster and desert rat, Zury is the successful adaptation to the cultural desert of fertile Spring County. Kirkland, the son of Caroline Kirkland, the early Michigan realist, recognized that the fertile land, the myth, implied comment on the ethical values of settlement in the tradition of the folk satirist, but he wove social theme into narrative action by suggesting in Zury's loss of innocence the degradation of the frontier, barbarities that he knew continued in 1887, the "gilded age" in which his book was published, since articles he published earlier attacking speculation were woven into the fabric of his novel.[18]

The "Autobiography of Omar Morse" suggests that he never gave up the cherished ideal of a homestead, his personal garden of the west, in spite of (or because of) an overwhelming social reality. Hamlin Garland's "Up The Cooly [not as often spelled, coulée]," perhaps the finest story on the homestead theme in Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), deepens the homestead protest in earlier novels of the prairie by revealing the tragic fate of the farmer whose labor has served the homestead ideal at the sacrifice of happiness like Morse. Garland doubtlessly profited from Kirkland's letter of advice instructing him in the realist's "art to conceal art," the technique of unifying social theme with narrative.[19] This achievement was in part his ability to fuse techniques from the folk satirist's "bag of tricks" (as I have mentioned, the inverted garden, the victimized protagonist, and the threat of the land speculator and mortgage) with memories flooding his imagination from youthful experience.

The story begins in a pastoral vision, that of the affluent Howard, on return to his Wisconsin home: the land and its people seem a bountiful garden of the west. Grant, Howard's brother, discloses the reality; his exhausting labor had failed to provide more than mere subsistance after mortgage payments, indeed, he and his family and mother were forced to move because he had lost the family homestead (and their collective labor) to the homestead destroyer, the "everlasting mortgage" (Morse's term). Garland does not exactly invert the garden of homestead aspirations; he tilts at it like a doomed prairie Quixote, disclosing the chaotic windmill realities. Howard, complacent, a successful New York actor and director, fails to recognize Grant's desperation

until he is told, grimly and reluctantly, by the bitter Grant. Remorseful at his failure, his Darwinian metaphor suggests Garland's intended shock of belated recognition. "What was it worth anyhow—success? struggle, strife, trampling on someone else. His play crowding out some other fellow's hope. The hawk eats the partridge, the partridge eats the flies and bugs, the bugs eat each other, and the hawk, when he in turn is shot by man."[20]

Such an inverted garden, here as elsewhere in this story, may have stimulated Howells' remark about "Up The Cooly." He felt Garland's conflict of the complacent and bitter brother revealed the truth of America's "vaunted conditions" (Howells' phrase): ". . . the upper dog and the under dog are everywhere, and the under dog nowhere likes it."[21] Howard writes a New York friend that if the world were in his hands he would "crush it like a puff-ball" so fleeting is the happiness of those on the main-travelled road (the western road of life where the farmers' lack of education and money remains deprivative).[22]

A final scene deepens the protest of tragedy. Howard again offers to help, tears of remorse at his failure in his eyes, but it is too late. Grant knows that he can not now receive the education needed to leave his farm; his life has been sacrificed to an ideal (which he does not understand though the reader will) like a veteran soldier. But the fertile land, as in *Zury,* remains economically unrewarding to the ordinary man's aspirations as in "Under The Lion's Paw," "The Return of A Private," perhaps "A Branch Road" (in *Main-Travelled Roads*) and in the excessive proletarianism, bleeding social message, of *Jason Edwards; The Average Man.*[23]

By 1892 Ignatius Donnelly felt secure enough in his self-appointed role as messiah of the Populists to write a novel which used the homestead countermyth as a springboard for its central utopian plan of world reform. From the time of the conservative Grange to the politically articulate Farmers Alliance and Populists was nearly a half century. In this period older homesteaders could communicate their economic problems to the next generation, many of whom were still clearing land to survive the periodic raids of the sheriff and tax collector. (Sufficient planted acreage and pastures were a direct necessity by then since the homestead survival farm had become outmoded with the advent of railroads and one-crop specialization.)

Primarily for this reason, Donnelly's *The Golden Bottle: The Story of Ephraim Bednezet* in this year uses the theme of dispossession by an unpaid mortgage as the spring of narrative action. Ephraim and his aging parents are about to lose the home for which they have labored over half a lifetime. This simple melodrama provides the beginning of an utopian fantasy, Ephraim's dream in which he redistributes the wealth of the world after becoming President of the United States and later of Europe. Helpless in the face of circumstance, he has no remedy for saving the old homestead his parents began when Kansas was yet a territory. A Dickensian allegorical angel appears to Ephraim in a dream with the answer to his prayer, a magic bottle of alchemist's elixer that transmutes base metal into gold. An overnight success, Ephraim becomes the philanthropist of Butler County, Kansas; he proposes a two per cent loan for all heavily mortgaged farmers. Haynes, the editor of the local paper, protests that politically influential business men intend to charge him with insanity and will succeed, as they have with others, in committing him to the state asylum. No sane person, Haynes points out, would charge less than twelve per cent interest and most prefer around fifty per cent.

Donnelly's facts have the accuracy of knowledge at first hand. The disillusioned ex-proprietor of a one-home village, Nininger (it was another Brook Farm or Fruitlands; intellectually a success, economically disastrous), he had been campaigning unsuccessfully for governor in outlying near-frontier communities in Minnesota, his chosen home. In *The Golden Bottle* the indirect protest of the earlier prairie realists became the socioeconomic message that Frank Norris later believed was the responsibility of the novelist, and, not surprisingly, became the instrument of political resistance in the Midwest. Homestead protest had begun to hold new life in a popular kind of fiction.[24]

The anguished Ephraim, suffering dispossession, states Donnelly's theme explicitly. "The mortgage, that dreadful, rapacious monster, that dragon of modern civilization, must be paid off."[25] The rhetoric echoes Alliance political speech-making, especially that of Donnelly on the stump (he was a state Senator and wrote

this novel in a few months while campaigning for Governor in Minnesota, his home.) The frontier loan shark, a figure surely known to Donnelly from his familiarity with pioneer communities in the state while campaigning, was depicted in these terms, a monster whose depravity expressed homestead hatred. In the songs like "Mary's Little Lot," the figure is usually "off stage," in political cartoons and speeches, a figure bloated with evil or one as skinflint and ignorant as the land owner in "The Arkansas Traveler" who starves Sanford Barnes until, wiser, he decides to travel on—and to continue to travel like alienated contemporary dissidents.[26]

Donnelly's familiarity with frontier sentiment and its major theme as well as the Alliance platform had obviously informed this novel of protest, loud with Populist message. Donnelly's work may be described as a transformation of early satire into fictive protest, a change that relates it, on one hand, to the prairie realist's disguised anguish and, on the other, to Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1903) with its protest against dispossession and starvation in United States and the world. In addition, Donnelly's journals show his deep humanist's conviction that circumstance forced individuals into conduct otherwise impossible for them to consider. "Sin is simply a question of pressure," he writes. "Remove the pressure and you reform the world."[27] (An attempt he made in this novel.) In effect, Donnelly, like Ben Franklin, recognizes money as the crucial factor in conditioning an individual's life. "Put the soul of Aristotle in a dog and what could he do but run around with his nose on the ground hunting for something to eat."[28] Donnelly follows the American philanthropist's belief that vice is a matter of social conditioning, not innate human capacities.

For Ephraim, relief monies for the distressed urban and rural poor can be achieved through income tax and redistributed in two per cent loans on the basis of need. This will encourage families to pay debts, improve their homes, to acquire educations, and if feasible to expand their farms into larger, more productive fields. A similar journal entry illuminates Ephraim's principle of social change. Donnelly's allegory here is reminiscent of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. "Life is a waiting room where the seats are finely cushioned and the rest are bare boards. Those enjoying the upholstered sofas naturally want to keep them—

those on the bare boards would like the comfortable seats. The remedy is not to abolish the cushions but to cushion all the seats."[29] Donnelly's is the American plan. He does not want to share the wealth but to "prime the pump"; those with uncomfortable bottoms would acquire the cushion needed, as it were, through equitable opportunities. The son of comfortable, middle-class Irish immigrants in Philadelphia, he became an American idealist, although one whose thought was riddled with perverse contradictions. *Caesar's Column*, an earlier novel, centers on the machinations of Prince Capano to take over American government; his anti-Semitism emerges in Capano, a Jewish stereotype, who also intends to seduce the pure heroine, George Washington's granddaughter.

The Golden Bottle, therefore, is a demonstrable example of a cultural theme in a novel intended to gain popular sympathy for the Alliance cause. In addition, Donnelly propounds such contemporary themes as feminism, equal opportunity (he was buoyant with the admission of Negroes into the Alliance), world democracy, the redistribution of wealth by income tax, and similar modern aspirations. "Civilization is the increased and steadily increasing power of spirit over matter," he wrote in his journal "In the remote future man will control all the forces of the planet."[30] An eclectic thinker, and at times a perverse one, he incorporated a variety of intellectual fashions in an amalgam that often revealed its origins. As a result, the homestead countermyth is obvious; it becomes the "unweeded garden" of protest for this ambitious reformer, offering an interesting historical example of an indigenous theme rewoven into the novel of social purpose.

"The world is a garden of beauty filled with the stench of injustice," he writes in his journal.[31] This statement best summarizes his inclusion of a major frontier theme now made accessible to a wider audience through the sometimes strident political rhetoric of populism. Such evangelistic zeal as Donnelly's, however, forms the seed bed of finer literature, Faulkner's Yoknapatowpha novels, for example, which focus a tragic irony on both sides of this Jeffersonian coin, its homestead obverse the most visible.

Grant Woods' "American Gothic" may be the most popular twentieth-century realization of a nineteenth-century prairie

realism. Like the early satirists, his purpose is both protest and social realism, a kind of necessary sanity aimed at a clarification of American society. The withering of hope and ideality in a world of spartan austerity is less final in these works. In Garland's "Up The Cooly," the human struggle against inhuman circumstances made by the protagonist of the homestead myth implies the tragic vision of the human spirit inherent in earlier folk materials. If Grant, his farmer, protests that "a man that's satisfied to live as we do is a fool" in the context of reference to "The Arkansas Traveler" he states universal human and tragic ennoblement in a near hopeless struggle. Like Faulkner's Dilsey, they endure. Garland's Howard in this story objectifies the perspective of the prairie realist, as I have defined them, when he paraphrases Millet, the French painter's, comment on one of his works ". . . a stony-hearted spot of ground, a back-broken man trying to raise himself upright for a moment to breathe. The tragedy is surrounded by glories—that is no invention of mine."[32] By "glories," of course, Millet refers to natural beauty and the soul of mankind which serfdom had oppressed for centuries. Garland sees this tragedy repeated.

Is the unresolved debate on Huck Finn's escape from "sivilization" not also shadowed by this cultural theme of dispossession? A western adventure, as Twain recognized, was a mythical adventure by 1882, the date of the novel, one that should serve Huck, still young, free, a man of good conscience and alone; but the realism of the West—the culturally dispossed shore Twain satirized through Tom and Huck's adventures—is as inescapable as the prairie that Kirkland and Garland especially recognize as uncivilized. Their tragic vision has its cultural if not historical focus in Huck's disappearance into the romance of myth which is not a continued realistic adventure.

In this context Huck thus acquires a symbolic value perhaps not intended by Twain: he is the dispossessed person who represents a series of cultural dispossessions that began with Indian nations and continued with native white homesteaders, their black counterparts, and westering immigrants. This complex social tragedy is the American heritage of the frontier which shows the value of minor realists who discovered an indigenous theme in echoes from frontier culture and translated it into forms accessible

to John Steinbeck and other modern writers. That is the reason prairie realism seems as contemporary as Joyce Carol Oates' last novel.[33] This complex potential redeems the work of minor realists from the obscurity of literary history.

NOTES

1. *Virgin Land; The American West As Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 123-124, 185-188.
2. See also my "The Unheard Voice; The Autobiography of a Dispossessed Homesteader and a 'Gilded Age' Theme of Dispossession," *The Old Northwest; a Journal of History and Culture* (Winter, 1981), 3-17.
3. Smith, p. 173.
4. Smith, pp. 15-18, 126-132, and Ch. XII.
5. Paul Gates, *Landlords and Tenants On the Prairie Frontier: Studies in American Land Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973, pp. 51-59, 63-71, 146-147.
6. "Introduction," *Main-Travelled Roads* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899), p. 5. The Border Edition used for Howells' comment. He writes that Garland's "Up The Cooly," made him aware that America's "vaunted conditions" are in fact no different from those elsewhere. Of the story he says, "It is a tremendious situation, and it is the allegory of the whole world's civilization: the upper dog and the under dog are everywhere; and the under dog no where likes it."
7. Smith, pp. 123-124, 181-183, 185-188. Smith also points out another name common among early writers, the garden of the world.
8. The unpublished Morse narrative has been loaned for scholarly purposes by a grandaughter, Mrs. Evelyn Morse Peterson of Sterling, Illinois. It appears as a section of my book in progress, *Land Fever*, and has been protected by copyright. Inquiries from publishers and publishers' readers gratefully and instantly recognized.
9. Gates, see especially pp. 63-71.
10. B. A. Botkin, *A Treasury of American Folksongs* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944), p. 239.
11. John and Alan Lomax, eds., *Folk Songs, U.S.A.: The 111 Best American Ballads* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1947), p. 239.
12. *The Mystery of Metropolisville* (New York: Orange Judd and Company, 1873). This was selected among Eggleston's other works since it was the clearest example of his use of protest materials. See also Smith, p. 233-235.
13. Eggleston, p. 11-12.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.
15. Smith, p. 243.
16. *Zury; The Meanest Man In Spring County* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1887).
17. See John Greenway, *American Songs of Protest* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1953), p. 212. Greenway comments that "the independent farmer is not inarticulate about hard times; he has written a few songs of discontent

during his long years of tilling a soil that was not always amenable. The better songs turn the lash of his anger against the inanimate land and the people ignorant enough to farm it." Less ignorant fool than successful entrepreneur, Zury retains a "Yankee" integrity by sticking to his word which, if often unsympathetic in hard times, is never dishonest; it is simply the bargain struck in a harsh society.

18. Clyde E. Henson, *Joseph Kirkland* (New York: Twayne Publishing Co., 1962), p. 50. Henson finds Kirkland's early articles published in the *Prairie Chicken*, a newspaper organized by the Kirkland children, have been reworked into Spring County settings. Their inclusion suggests his purpose is critical attack on the present through past offenses against innocent settlers.
19. Unpublished letter of Joseph Kirkland to Hamlin Garland (July 30, 1887). Originals of all Kirkland's letters to Garland on deposit at the Univ. of California Library in Los Angeles. Copies held in Special Collections, Newberry Library, Chicago. Quotation as from the latter.
20. *Main-Travelled Roads* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899), p. 97.
21. "Introduction," *op. cit.*, p. 5.
22. Garland, p. 5.
23. *Jason Edwards; The Average Man* (Boston: Arena Publishing, 1892). See my article, *op. cit.*, for comment extending that of Donald Pizer in *Hamlin Garland's Early Work and Career* (Berkely: Univ. of California Press. 1960).
24. *The Golden Bottle: The Story of Ephraim Bednezet* (New York and St. Paul: D. D. Merrill and Co., 1892).
25. *Ibid.*, reference unknown.
26. See my "The Unheard Voice: A Dispossessed Homesteader's Autobiography And A 'Gilded Age' Theme of Dispossession," *The Old Northwest; A Journal of Culture and History* (Winter, 1981), pp. for an expanded study of an early protest theme.
27. Theodore Nydahl, ed., "The Diaries of Ignatius Donnelly." Unpublished dissertation, Univ. of Minnesota, 1941, vol. V., entry of 1892.
28. "Diaries," vol. V, entry of 1892.
29. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 28.
30. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 32.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 58.
32. *Main-Travelled Roads*, p. 96. Garland found Millet's thought by reading Whitman whom he saw as a fellow realist like William Dean Howells.
33. Omar Morse's unique autobiography has not been dealt with extensively since it will appear in *Land Fever*.

FROM MEMORY TO MEANING: THE BOYS' STORIES OF WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, CLARENCE DARROW, AND SHERWOOD ANDERSON

David D. Anderson

With the end of the Civil War, the accelerating transformation of the nation from a rural to an urban society, and the rapidly increasing flight of young people from the farms and towns to seek success and fulfillment in the cities, a literary sub-movement began, the works of which were too erratic, too difficult to categorize, and too varied in authorship to call a literary phenomenon, a genre, a form, or a movement. However, that sub-movement—if you will—was to flourish for half a century that was marked at almost regular intervals by works by major and respectable minor male writers, and then it disappeared, perhaps the victim of time too far past, an experience no longer shared, or a memory no longer carried by young men out of the countryside to haunt the literary or other successes that the cities had made possible for them but that the towns had made inevitable.

Perhaps because of the variety of works involved and the numbers of writers who turned, usually belatedly, to contribute to it, because of an inherent ambiguity in the works individually and in the sub-movement as a whole, and because they are too easily if carelessly confused with other superficially similar works, the sub-movement has neither been named nor studied in detail, although both are more than half a century overdue. The sub-movement is made up of the boys' stories, autobiographical stories of pre-adolescent boyhood, often and too easily but unfortunately confused with the stories for boys, usually sub-literary fiction written during the same period. Boys' stories—as opposed to stories for boys—began to appear in 1870 with Thomas Bailey

Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy*, a fictionalized memoir of his youth in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, written from his editorial perspective in Boston decades later; they were brought to a high level of art by a prominent resident of Hartford, Connecticut, first in 1876 and again in 1885, and then were written by such a varied group as William Dean Howells, Henry James, Hamlin Garland, William Allen White, Stephen Crane, Booth Tarkington, Theodore Dreiser, and Sherwood Anderson. By the Depression of the 1930's, for reasons I won't speculate on, they had virtually disappeared as a literary form.

Without professing either to "study" this sub-movement, to give it a name no more arbitrary than other literary terms, or to comment on possible psychological implications of the works in it, I think it important to note the purpose that these works, ranging in setting from New England to the Mississippi Valley and in time from the 1840s to the years just before World War I, have in common. Each is an attempt to explore and to define, factually and yet often imaginatively as well, the experiences of the immediately pre-adolescent human male. These works share, too, an inherent ambiguity, and an authorial uncertainty, and consequently each can be approached in a variety of ways: as ostensible fact, ostensible fiction, romance, realism, autobiography, cultural history, and psychological experience, apart from their varying merits as literary art.

Of the wide range of boys' stores written in that half-century, three of them that I shall discuss share a peculiar affinity as they provide, in sequence, simultaneously, a regional and national vision as the frontier village becomes the Midwestern town and then fades in importance and a critical vision as fidelity to experience becomes socially critical and then gives form and direction to the myth of America's past. These three works, each by a man who had been born in one of the three generations that saw Ohio transformed from old Northwestern frontier to orderly, prosperous Midwest and who had come out of the town to attain a substantial measure of national prominence and success, are William Dean Howells's *A Boy's Town*, published in 1890, Clarence Darrow's *Farmington*, published in 1904, and Sherwood Anderson's *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*, published in 1926.

Each of these boys' stories was written at a critical point in the author's middle life: Howells, when, at 53, already approaching his designation as Dean of American Letters, he was about to leave his beloved Cambridge for New York and the editorship of *Cosmopolitan*; Darrow, at 47, when he was under strong pressure from his liberal consituency to leave his criminal-social law career and declare as a candidate in the Chicago mayorality race; and Anderson, at 50, at the point when he decided to forsake the literary worlds of Chicago, New York, and New Orleans for the life of a country journalist in the Virginia hills. Of the moves, Howells's and Anderson's were permanent, but Darrow's was, wisely, not made; and of the three works, only Anderson was not exploring new subject matter, although Howells had dealt with part of it in "My Year in a Log Cabin," a magazine publication, in 1887, and all three were to turn to it again, Howells in *New Leaf Mills* (1911) and *Years of My Youth* (1916), Darrow in the autobiography *The Story of My Life* (1932, rev. 1934), and Anderson in such great short fiction as "Death in the Woods," a theme he had explored in *Tar* and published in final form in the collection of the same name in 1933, in *Home Town* (1940), and in the posthumously edited and published *Memoirs* (1942, 1969).

The psychological significance of each man's major use of the material at that point in his life makes interesting speculation and material for the psychobiographer; however, the cultural and literary dimension of the works, each, in turn, an exploration of a different phase of the nineteenth century Midwestern past and an illustration of the evolution of American literary purpose and conviction in a society that had become urban, industrial, and material, will provide the focus of this essay.

By 1890 Howells had left Martin's Ferry, Ohio, where he had been born on March 1, 1837, and Hamilton, Ohio, where he spent his boyhood, far behind him, and through conscious, dedicated determination, he had become a successful editor and novelist. His boyhood had ended abruptly when, at twelve, his Swedenborgen-abolitionalist-editor-publisher father moved the family to Dayton to continue a never-quite-successful, and, in Dayton, a failing newspaper career when he became owner-publisher-editor of the Dayton *Transcript*. Previous such ventures, especially in Hamilton, where Howells and his brother Joe had already begun

to set type, had also ended in failure as William Cooper Howells became increasingly alienated from his Southern Ohio neighbors who shared neither his faith nor his politics.

The Howells family spent eighteen months of near-poverty in Dayton, supported largely by the boys' typesetting work, even at one time on a German-language paper, and then a year in the log cabin at Eureka Mills. There the father dreamed of a never-realized Utopian community, but the family endured instead a winter in Columbus during which William Dean Howells published his first verses, "The Cat Fight" and "The Emigrant's Last Meal in the House," in the *Ohio State Journal* and "The First Blue Violet," in *The Ohio Farmer*. In 1852 the family moved to the Western Reserve, to Ashtabula and Jefferson, Ohio, where William Cooper's abolitionism found favor on the *Sentinal* and young Will set type, read, and continued to write.

At eighteen, moving again to Columbus, Will wrote a column, "A Letter from Columbus," for the *Daily Cincinnati Gazette* and served for a short time as that paper's city editor. Then, at twenty-one, after a brief breakdown, he became city editor of the *Ohio State Journal*, for which he wrote material that was increasingly literary. In 1860, with J. J. Piatt, he published *Poems of Two Friends*, and a Columbus publisher contracted for his campaign biography, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*. If the latter did not make Lincoln President, as Howells insisted nearly two decades later that it had, that volume took Howells from Ohio to Europe, ended his literary apprenticeship, and reshaped American fiction for the rest of the century.

This, in brief, was the Ohio background that Howells remembered as he turned to the re-examination of his youth at the apex of his literary career. All during the years that saw the publication of *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), he had tried out new pens by writing "William Dean Howells, Hamilton, Butler County, Ohio", and he repeatedly asserted to friends "I am a Buckeye." Finally he was ready to return to Ohio, in memory if not in fancy or fact. In choosing to return in memory to Hamilton, where he had spent the ten years of his conscious boyhood, he returned to an Ohio no longer identifiably frontier and not yet Midwestern but something of both, to a time and place when he and his world

were beginning to feel a national as well as a personal thrust toward responsibility and maturity.

By 1890 Howells's literary philosophy was fixed if not yet clearly articulated; in *Criticism and Fiction*, published the following year, he wrote that "fidelity to experience and probability of motive are essential conditions of a great imaginative literature," and in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, published in 1890, his realistic ethic took on a new critical dimension. But *A Boy's Town* was to be not imaginative but real, not critical realism but reality, not for the readership of *Harper's Young People*, in which much if it appeared, that they might know what had been, but for the middle-aged man that Howells had become, so that he might remember his youth with the "delight" and perhaps "usefulness" that he insisted literature must provide.

Howells's *A Boy's Town* is set in the decade of the 1840s, and both the boy and his town are nameless, the former known only as "my boy" and the latter "my" or "the Boy's Town." Perhaps because it was written and published as a "story for boys" rather than a boy's story, as were so many of the type, perhaps because it followed *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, both the product of one who had already gained the reputation of a great humorist rather than a great realist, perhaps because it was seen as simple autobiography or sentimental reminiscence or as a lapse in his realistic ethic or his critical realism, Howells's *A Boy's Town* has invariably been neglected or ignored by critics and biographers, except, in tribute to Howells's magnificent memory for detail, as a source of biographical information.

The result has been the overlooking of two dimensions of Howells's work. The first is his recreation, realistically but warmly, of the Ohio frontier town as it became identifiably Midwestern, a generation removed from the frontier and the Old Northwest, both of which had, by 1840, moved beyond the Mississippi and to the Upper Great Lakes. Secondly, in *A Boy's Town*, completed while the echoes of the Haymarket explosion still rang in his ears, as his daughter Winifred sank into invalidism, and with his comfortable life in Cambridge being uprooted, Howells turned to a time and place marked by what he remembered as stability and a sense of personal security, in which

> The town was small and the boys there were hemmed in by their inexperience and ignorance; but the simple home was large with vistas that stretched to the ends of the earth, and it was serenely bright with a father's reason and warm with a mother's love.

But Howells's town was not merely the extension of the home, as he suggests here, nor was the life of the boy in the town interesting and exciting because of his limited horizons, "hemmed in by . . . ignorance and inexperience." The book is, instead, the first of his explorations of, and perhaps a tentative, experimental use of, the material he had left behind him in Ohio thirty years before but that he never had forgotten. These same experiences and observations, transmuted into art, were to result in the fine Ohio-set fiction of his last years, *New Leaf Mills* (1913) and *The Leatherwood God* (1916) as well as *Years of My Youth* (1916), his partial autobiography. *A Boy's Town* is also the first work in which, in his concern for the native American Midwestern reality, he was breaking the ground that Dreiser, Anderson, Lewis, Cather, and the other members of the two generations of major writers—American writers, Midwestern writers—who followed Howells were to explore.

In what is, in effect, his *Walden*, Howells, like Thoreau, employs a useful arbitrary structure, but Howells's is tied to the boy's life in the town; therefore, he begins with "Earliest Experiences," the dim memories of real, imagined, or overheard experiences of a three-year-old, and ends with "Last Days," when the boy, already a skilled typesetter at twelve, nears adolescence, and he with his family moves to a city. But it was not to "the city"—Cincinnati, the city of the boy's experience; it was to the nameless small city of Dayton, only forty miles and two days away by canal boat, but a decade away from the boy's rapidly-approaching adolescence.

The organization of the book results in a series of essays in the social history of a pre-adolescent boy in post-frontier Ohio. Against the background of conflict between anti-slavery Whigs, of which the boy's editor-father was one, and Jacksonian Democrats, and of the complex evangelical religious structure, ranging from Quaker to Swedenborgian, from primitive Methodist to mysterious Catholic, the boy's life is played out in relationship to

the home, the river (the Miami), the canal (the Miami and Erie) and the woods and streams, with brief, pointed excursions to the town's social institutions: the schools, public and subscription, the court house, the print shop. In the background, too, are the awesome social conflicts of the age: the movement of the Ohio Wyandots to the West, the perennial debates over slavery, and the hard-drinking heritage of the frontier, together with its rabid political tradition.

But each of these bits of social background is hazy in the boy's memory, as are the inevitable tragedies of such a time and place: the occasional drowning, the deaths by fire or mysterious disease, the boy's own bouts with cholera and homesickness. The reality of the book is the boy's life in the town as remembered, sharp in the details of those activities that mattered to the boy and that remained significant to the man, the novelist, and the reticent realist. For, as Howells commented later, in a review of *The Education of Henry Adams*, the autobiographer is free to reveal as much or as little of his life to his readers as he cares; "the reader is not his confessor," he says, and *The Boy's Town* is certainly not the product of the confessional or the psychiatrist's couch. The writer will, Howells commented in *Years of My Youth*, exercise that "instinct of self-preservation [which will] safeguard him from showing himself quite as he was."

The Boy's Town is consequently, both fact and fiction; it is true to many of the facts of the boy's life in the town in the 1840s and to many of the facts of life of the Howells family in Hamilton in that decade; it is a graphic, detailed account of a life described with "fidelity to experience." But the account remains less autobiography than biography, more an account of boyhood than the life of a boy, a realistic record that approximates mythical rather than personal truth, for, as Howells wrote in *Years of My Youth*, "no man, unless he puts on the mask of fiction, can show his real face or the will behind it." *A Boy's Town*, neither autobiography nor fiction, neither the personal truth that lies inside nor the realist's fidelity to probability of motive, remains on the level of specific social history and on the threshhold of the myth of American Midwestern boyhood.

Two years before Howells had published *A Boy's Town*, Clarence Darrow, born in Farmdale, Ohio, in the old Western

Reserve, on April 18, 1857, and raised in Kinsman, a few miles away, educated, not in the print shop or country store of an earlier generation, but at Allegheny College, at the Kinsman Free Library, and at the University of Michigan Law School, moved his modest law practice, which had begun in Andover, Ohio, from Ashtabula to Chicago. There, within a decade he had become active in Illinois politics as a disciple of John Peter Altgeld and a friend of Brand Whitlock, and he had gained a national reputation as a socially-conscious labor lawyer and a lecturer on social, economic, and legal issues.

At the same time intrigued by the tenets of literary realism and the implications of Darwinism, Darrow turned to pamphleteering on the Irish problem, on Bolshevism, and on other significant issues, and he and Whitlock became literary as well as political and personal friends. In 1899, Darrow published a collection of critical essays, *A Persian Pearl and Other Essays*, printed by Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Press in East Aurora, New York. Beginning to think of himself as a literary artist, he began to think, too, of abandoning the law for a literary career, or like Whitlock, combining the two. Certainly, again like Whitlock, he knew that his literary and legal philosophies reinforced and mutually complemented each other. In the collection of essays he defined that relationship. Realism, he wrote, should not be graphic but critical:

> The greatest artists of the world today are telling facts and painting scenes that cause humanity to stop, and think, and ask why one should be a master and another be a serf; why a portion of the world should toil and spin, should wear away its strength and life, that the rest should live in idleness and ease.

For Darrow, however, the product of the peculiar Western Reserve fusion of Puritanism and radicalism, of abolitionism and scepticism, his choice of the law as a career was inevitable. In the essay, he wrote that "the true artist has no right to choose the lovely spots alone," and as his practice grew in scope and significance and his role in Chicago reform politics became more influential, he became increasingly concerned with the miscarriage of justice. Persuading Altgeld, shattered by his political defeat after pardoning the Haymarket anarchists, to join his law

firm, Darrow determined finally to relegate literature to a secondary concern. However, in a series of four tales published in the Chicago *Evening American*, he first combined both: two of the sketches were concerned with railroad abuses and two with exploitation and poverty among workmen. Yet the four were vivid and real as well as critically pointed, creative sketches rather than social or economic tracts. These sketches, which he termed "Easy Lessons in Law," were, as he wrote, "drawn from real cases of the way the principles of justice has been warped and twisted by our commercial life." The following year he published *Resist Not Evil*, a Spencerian examination of the role of natural law in the conduct of human affairs and a work that was both a social and philosophical tract.

Consequently, when he published *Farmington* in 1904, a work subtitled by his publisher, "An Idyl of Boyhood," a categorization that Darrow did not deny and a work that has also been called both a memoir and an autobiographical novel—although its facts are not entirely reliable—he was determined, not to recreate an idyl, real or imagined, but to determine what it was that, in Spencerian terms, had made him what he was. It was inevitable, consequently, that he had turned to the time and place out of which he had come.

If *A Boy's Town* is the story of the boy in the Southwestern Ohio town less than a generation after the frontier had passed, Darrow's *Farmington* is the story of the boy in the stable post-Civil War town two generations after it had been established. Nevertheless, immediate relationships between the two works are clear: Howells's town reflects the ambiguity of Southern Ohio settlement, torn between Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian values and between democratic and Puritan definitions of human property, whereas *Farmington* is New England transplanted, its values transferred across the mountains virtually undiluted and its emphasis on the higher law clear. But both are tempered by the major Old Northwestern—new Midwestern contribution to the American promise and the nation's growing mythology: a vision of the open society, an eighteenth century ideal become a reality West of the mountains for the able, the hard-working, the determined seeker after an elusive fulfillment. In both *A Boy's Town* and *Farmington* the boy is where he is because in each family the

father is motivated by what he is convinced is his natural right: the pursuit of an ambiguous happiness. Howells's father, like that of the boy in the story, pursues his opportunity from town to town, from newspaper to newspaper, eventually taking the boy out of the town; Darrow's father, a relatively stable merchant in a stable town, is portrayed as a miller in *Farmington*; the boy is named, perhaps appropriately, John Smith, and the story is told in the first person.

The lives of Howells's and Darrow's boys are similar in many ways; dominated by their active response to the seasons, both stub toes in summer and freeze feet skating in winter, and the pain is shared by the reader; youthful maturing takes each out of the home circle to larger, often protected, roles in church, school, and other local social institutions. Howells's canal becomes Darrow's millrace, but *Farmington*'s Indians are not remembered but imagined; Darrow's boy remembers instead soldiers going off to fight the Civil War. Howells's more primitive town demands less schooling and an earlier introduction to adult responsibilities than does Darrow's more mature society, but the earlier story clearly leads to the latter. Like *A Boy's Town, Farmington* is about the boy in the town, and it, too, stops before adolescence as, Darrow writes, "the life and experience and even the boy of the district school was passing forever into the realm of clouds and myth" and into a responsible adolescence, working for his father in the mill and attending the academy on the hill.

But, unlike *A Boy's Town, Farmington* is not only memory transmuted into a boy's story; it is strongly critical, an intensification of what Howells had begun to practice as well as propagate in works other than those that recount his childhood. *Farmington* is what Darrow insisted such a work must be, an attempt to make his readers stop and ask why. In spite of his assertion in the preface to the 1932 edition that it is indeed the story, half-fact, half-fiction, almost all idyllic, of a dimly-remembered boyhood, the book poses serious questions that are asked by the boy and not yet answered by the man:

> I think the first time my faith was shaken in anything I saw on a gravestone was one day when I chanced upon a brand-new slab erected to the memory of the town drunkard by his loving wife and children." . . .

> I would often shed bitter tears, and mutter exclamations and protests which no one heard, but they were none the less terrible because they were spoken underneath my breath. . . .
>
> . . . We were a boistrous, thoughtless crowd . . . I cannot remember much kindness between the children of the school. . . .
>
> We were taught by our books that we must on all accounts speak the truth . . . must enjoy work, must be generous and kind; must despise riches; must avoid ambition; and then, if we did all these things, some fairy godmother would come along at just the darkest hour and give us everything our hearts desired. Not one story in the book told how any good could ever come from wilfulness, or selfishness, or greed, or that any possible evil ever grew from thrift, or diligence, or generosity, or kindness. And yet, in spite of all these precepts, we were young savages, always grasping for the best, ever fighting and scheming to get the advantage of our playmates, our teachers, and our tasks. . . .
>
> Whipping was a part, and a large part of the regular course. . . .
>
> I could not understand then, nor do I today, why we were made to go to church; surely our good parents did not know how we suffered, or they would not have been so cruel. . . .
>
> I was very young when I first began to wonder why the world was so unreasonable. . . . It seemed to us as if our elders were in a universal conspiracy against us children. . . . Over childhood, as over all the world, hangs the black pall of punishment. . . .
>
> Through all the country Aunt Mary was known for her "neatness." This had grown to a disease, the ruling passion of her life. It was never easy to get any of the other boys to go with me to Aunt Mary's. . . .
>
> None of us liked Aunt Louise. She was old, and had reddish false hair, and was fat, and took snuff, and talked a great deal. . . .

Darrow concludes, "I am most disconsolate because I could not tell the story I meant to write," and yet it is indeed the story that he meant to tell: neither a story of an idyllic childhood nor

of a revolt from the village, neither a story of childhood remembered fondly from middle age nor a book of the grotesque as Sherwood Anderson was later to write in *Winesburg, Ohio,* but a story of the systematic terrorization of its young by a society based on fraudulence, a story of false creeds propagating false values, a story of freedom destroyed through conditioning; a story of children taught to survive a Darwinian struggle and reach for the ultimate victory awarded to Hobbesian values. It was, indeed, the only vision of his childhood, of American childhood, of the Ohio village as microcosm of post-Civil War American society, that Darrow, an increasingly prominent defender of society's victims, debating with himself whether to remain a defense attorney or to become a political activist, was capable of writing.

When Sherwood Anderson wrote *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* twenty-two years later, he was in his fiftieth year; he had come out of Clyde, Ohio, before the beginning of the twentieth century; he had achieved a measure of business success and had become a first-rate advertising salesman and copywriter before he was forty. But in the fifteen years before writing *Tar,* he had abandoned a promising business in Elyria, Ohio; he had divorced his wife, the mother of his three small children, and had married and then divorced a liberated dancer-sculptor, and had married again; he had lived and written in Chicago, had lived briefly and written in New York, Reno, and New Orleans, and he had bought a farm in the Virginia hills. Of most importance, he had published his first novel at 40; it was well-received if unsuccessful financially, and since then, in a single decade, he published four more novels, a collection of verse, three volumes of integrated stories, including the celebrated *Winesburg, Ohio,* a memoir, and a brief work on his philosophy of writing. In mid-life he had, almost suddenly, become a celebrated if not entirely self-supporting American writer, and already critics were beginning to question the worth of his work. It was, they said, nothing more than the story of his revolt from the village and his escape from business, celebrated repetitiously.

Anderson knew, as some critics, then and now, were perceptive enough to see, that such comments were simplistic if not simple-minded, and in *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* he turned again to what some critics immediately dismissed as "the same old story."

It was indeed the same subject matter that he had used in much of *Windy McPherson's Son, Marching Men, Winesburg, Ohio,* in dozens of stories, and in the recently published memoir, *A Story Teller's Story,* but, as too many critics failed to see then and now, it was different.

Tar, is, as Anderson commented on the book's jacket, "of course autobiographical, as such a book would be bound to be, but it is not written as an autobiography." Nor, as two generations of Anderson's critics have learned, sometimes painfully, can its details or the details of any of Anderson's autobiographical works be accepted as true, for as Anderson had written in *A Story Teller's Story,* an admittedly fanciful autobiography, "I have perhaps lied now and then . . . but have not lied about the essence. . . . In the world of fancy . . . no man is ugly. Man is ugly in fact only. . . . It is my aim to be true to the essence of things."

Tar: A Midwest Childhood is not only Anderson's attempt to recreate the boy's growth "from the ages of consciousness and until adolescence begins," as he comments on the book's jacket, to write, in other words, another boy's story, but it is, in Anderson's words "to be true" not to the facts of the boy's life, as both Howells and Darrow attempted to do, but to "the essence" of the boy's life in the town as the boy, the town, and the nation approach twentieth-century maturity.

Anderson's town is, geographically, at least, the Clyde, Ohio, of his boyhood and youth, from 1884, when his family moved there when Anderson was eight, to 1896, when Anderson, at twenty, went to Chicago to seek his fortune. But for Anderson the "essence of things" that he sought to define in *Tar* was recreation neither of his pre-adolescent youth in Clyde nor of the life of the town as it centered around Main Street, the railroad station, the opera house, and G.A.R. Hall; what he sought to define was the spirit of the things that shaped him, his time, and his generation, whatever it was that had led them to accept the values that sent him and countless other young people from the farms and towns of the Midwest to the city—to Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, but above all, to Chicago, the city that more than any of the others manifested the spirit of that age.

Of all the boys' stories written over a period of seventy years, *Tar* is not only the most ambitious but, although it is, like the others, firmly rooted in the simplicity of the town and the boy's life, it is the most important, the most effective, and the most durable. The "essence of things" that Anderson seeks to define is no less than the origins of the Midwestern American experience as he, his generation, and their forebears had known it. In so doing, Anderson creates simultaneously a new dimension of the American myth and a myth of his own, a myth of the curious combination of childlike innocence and ignorant brutality that marked American childhood and the childhood of America and that he had portrayed so effectively in *Winesburg, Ohio,* that marks, too, the beginning of the American's lifelong search for the security and love that one loses as childhood ends and that one forever tries to regain.

In moving from factual experience to the essence of that experience, in effect using what Northrop Frye has called "the only possible language of concern," the language of myth, Anderson goes beyond anything he had attempted before, and, critics then and now not withstanding, the result is clear evidence that his creative impulse was not only as strong as it had ever been but that he had tapped the wellspring of the American experience. There is something of Freud in Anderson's examination of the essence of childhood, America's and his own, or perhaps more properly, one can read something of Freud into it, but there is more of Emerson and Whitman as Anderson searches for the origins of the values that had misdirected America after its emancipation, after its new birth of freedom, after its renewed dedication at Shiloh and Gettysburg and the Wilderness.

Unlike either Howells's depiction of the life of "our boy" or Darrow's of his "John Smith," however, Anderson's portrayal of the life of his Tar Moorhead is neither realistic nor critical, nor is it idealized. As Tar experiences the silent closeness of his mother's love, as he learns to know a craftsman-father for whom there is no place in an increasingly technological society, as he learns to experience the facts of a boy's life, ranging from the sting of a bee to the sudden, gasping impact of cold water as he dives into the swimming hole, as his life expands to know the prosperous town, its people, and their late nineteenth century

American dream, that portrayed by Horatio Alger, Jr. and personified by Abraham Lincoln and James A. Garfield, both Midwestern boys already martyred and deified, as he learns, too, the values of the Main Street and railroad station that give the town life, Anderson is defining the simplicity, the innocence, the brutality of nineteenth century American life in the towns of the Midwest, but he is defining, too, the spirit that sends Tar at the end neither to the print shop in the "city" of Dayton nor to the Academy on the hill, but into the mainstream of a twentieth century dedicated to hustling, to making money. Whereas Anderson's George Willard had gone to Chicago from Winesburg to seek an idealized fulfillment as a writer who knows the human heart, Tar follows the path to an elusive but material, tangible success, to the reality that marked the corruption of the American dream. Anderson concludes:

> A boy, if he is any good, has to be tending up to his job. He has to get up and hustle. . . . He has got to tend up to his job.
>
> These the thoughts in Tar Moorhead's head as he grabbed his bundle of newspapers and, wiping his eyes on the back of his hand, raced away up the street.
>
> Although he did not know it Tar was, at that very moment perhaps, racing away out of his childhood.

With the publication of *Tar,* Anderson's future and the course of his work were clear; neither would he make a major change as did Howells, nor would he reject change as did Darrow. He would remain in the Virginia hills, as townsman-editor-literary craftsman, but he would remain, too, in the twentieth century world beyond the hill country. In both he continued to search out the "spirit of something" that he knew had both motivated and made himself and his people. The publication of *Tar* and his decision to live in Virginia gave new depth, new certainty, a new perspective to his work and his life.

The publication of *Tar* marked, too, the completion of the cycle that Howells had begun two generations before, both in the depiction of the growth, maturity, and decline of the Midwestern town as three boys become men had experienced it, and in the attempt to define the lives of those to whom the towns had given life and purpose. For Howells the meaning of both the town

and the life of the boy who knew it was perhaps captured in that moment when the Wyandots passed through to the West; for Darrow, they were perhaps epitomized in the boy's passage to the Academy on the hill; to Anderson both were certainly made clear in that moment that saw Tar rush out of his youth and into the twentieth century.

THE KINDRED SPIRITS OF WILLIAM JAMES AND EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Robert D. Narveson

In their *Guide to American Literature and Its Backgrounds Since 1890,* Howard Mumford Jones and Richard M. Ludwig cite William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* as an example of those "individual books of such power that their influence in shaping the American mind will be granted by any competent student".[1] Edgar Lee Masters read James's book while composing the *Spoon River Anthology* and the uses he made of it, as well as the general similarities of ideas that the two books reflect, support the claim of Jones and Ludwig about the power and influence of James's work.

James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* is a systematic psychological study of religious feelings, their place among human phenomena, and their claims, objectively viewed, to legitimacy and value. First delivered as a series of lectures before a learned audience in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1901-02, his work has since enjoyed wide and continuous popularity and esteem in published form. As Robert Coles says, it was for James "an occasion to summarize many of his ethical and philosophical views".[2]

Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* offers itself as a collection of 244 epitaphs by and about persons buried, for the most part, in the hilltop cemetery of the fictional town of Spoon River. Loosely modeling his work after the Greek Anthology of classical antiquity, Masters recreates in microcosm the life of nineteenth century rural Illinois and, by extension, of humankind. The poems appeared first in serial form in 1914 and 1915. Reprinted in book form, the volume has gone through numerous editions and printings.

The "kindred spirits" of my title are first the persons, fictional in one case, historical in the second, whose religious experiences are recorded in each book. In a second sense, the kindred spirits are the authors, whose ideas about religious experience, and for that matter about human experience in general, bear certain resemblances indicative of the milieu of which they were a significant part.

I assume that Masters knew and admired James's *Varieties*. At any rate he thought highly enough of the book to present to his friend William Marion Reedy the copy which survives in the St. Louis Public Library with the inscription, dated Dec. 29, 1914, on the fly leaf in Masters's hand.

By the end of 1914, Masters had finished writing all or nearly all of the Spoon River poems that comprise the first edition. Starting with the issue of May 29, 1914, these had been appearing in groups labeled "garlands" in *Reedy's Mirror*, a St. Louis tabloid weekly of gossip and topical commentary. The final poem appeared in the issue of January 15, 1915.

Masters presented the book to Reedy during the period when he was writing the poems of the *Anthology*; but had he been reading it himself during that time? The dates of issues of the *Mirror* in which specific poems appear tell us the latest possible date of composition of each epitaph. If we accept Masters's assertion that he sent the poems to Reedy as soon as batches of them were typed from manuscript by his secretary, we may also assume that the dates of appearance in the *Mirror* establish an approximate sequence of composition.[3] From the evidence thus provided we may infer that Masters had been reading in *Varieties of Religious Experience* at least as early as September 4, 1914. The reason is that the epitaph of Emanuel Ehrenhardt which appeared in the *Mirror* on that date directly echoes a passage from the first page of James's first lecture. James had begun with a compliment to the eminent philosophers of his host country's past:

> Sir William Hamilton's . . . lectures were the first philosophical writings I ever forced myself to study, and after that I was immersed in Dugald Stewart. . . .[4]

Apparently Emanuel Ehrenhardt is meant to be a philosopher much on the pattern of James. Ehrenhardt says:

> I began with Sir William Hamilton's lectures. Then studied Dugald Stewart. . . .[5]

The speaker's first name, Emanuel, a variant of the first name of Immanuel Kant, is another indication that a philosopher is intended. (Such eponymic naming is a common device in much fiction, and occurs frequently in the *Anthology*. Masters's practice was to assign names suggesting the vocation of the bearer. Margaret Fuller Slack, for example, is a frustrated woman writer and probable suicide; Jonathan Swift Somers is a satirist and the poet laureate of Spoon River; Webster Ford is the pseudonym Masters employed for himself.) After beginning with the lines paraphrased from James, Emanuel Ehrenhardt goes on to describe his philosophical career. He read, he says, . . .

> . . . with rapturous industry
> Hoping it was reserved to me
> To grasp the tail of the ultimate secret,
> And drag it out of its hole.

Emanuel Ehrenhardt's derisive metaphor tells us his present feelings about his youthful effort. He goes on to describe how he turned away from abstract philosophical speculations and

> . . . fell back, how glad of earth!
> All through the soul of William Jones
> Who showed me a letter of John Muir.

"William Jones, Naturalist" is another character in *Spoon River Anthology*. He is not inspired by William James, however, despite the similar name; John Muir is the California naturalist. The point seems to be that Emanuel Ehrenhardt abandoned abstract speculative philosophy to approach philosophical questions through natural science. Though James's career does not parallel this exactly, he did approach philosophical questions by way of a background in empirical science. For both Ehrenhardt and James, immediate observation of empirical fact came to take priority over abstract system-making. Thus, if Masters, as he said, pickled Theodore Dreiser in the epitaph of Theodore the Poet, he also embalmed William James in Emanuel Ehrenhard. This in itself suggests an interest in James that went beyond the sentence from the first page of James's book.

Further reading in James's volumes is a likely source of the concepts by which Masters structured his *Anthology*. Nearly twenty years later, Masters wrote that in the definitive order, "which was not the order of publication in the *Mirror*, the fools, the drunkards, and the failures came first, the people of one birth minds got second place, and the heroes and the enlightened spirits came last".[6] The case for connecting some of Masters's terms with terms from James's *Varieties* is complicated but on the whole fairly strong, as we shall now see.

First of all, Masters's term "one birth minds" echoes James's "once-born," borrowed by him from Francis Newman, from whom he quotes the opinion that "God has two families of children on this earth, the once-born and the twice born" (77-78). As James adapted Newman's terms for his own classification of religious temperaments, so Masters seems to have adapted his term from James. If Masters's claim about his organization in the *Anthology* is to be trusted, his "people of one birth minds" should appear in the central portion. It is there indeed that we find numbers of the "once-born" species that James further described as "healthy-minded." These are people who, untroubled by nightmares of radical evils, accept the world as it is and crave no spiritual rebirth. They find support for their sanguine temperaments, James explains, either in the premises of natural science or in those of "mind cure," and hence are either of a materialistic or transcendental bent (87). Masters portrays "healthy-minded" characters who live without the experience of religious longing, fully absorbed, happily or unhappily, in the affairs of this world. A representative solid satisfied materialist is Thomas Rhodes, who after sneers at "liberals" and "navigators into realms intellectual" concludes:

> . . . we, seekers of earth's treasures,
> Getters and hoarders of gold,
> Are self-contained, compact, harmonized,
> Even to the end (9/4, 109).

A "compact, harmonized" character may be equally "healthy-minded" without sharing Thomas Rhodes's enthronement of greed as the highest motive of life. The enigmatic Mrs. Sibley may serve as example:

> The secret of the stars,—gravitation.
> The secret of the earth,—layers of rock.
> The secret of the soil,—to receive seed.
> The secret of the seed,—the germ.
> The secret of man,—the sower.
> The secret of woman,—the soil.
> My secret: Under a mound that you shall never find.
> (10/9, 119)

Whatever her "secret"—could it be a dead illegitimate child?—Mrs. Sigley sounds quite at ease with herself and sure of her harmonious place in the natural scheme. If gravitation and the sexual urge are similar forces in the order of things, guilt over the consequences of the latter would be an absurd egocentricity.

Such are the resemblances between James's healthy-minded "once-born" and Masters's "people of one birth minds." Masters's term corresponding to James's "twice-born" appears to be "the heroes and the enlightened spirits." Included among these we find both secular and transcendental heroes. In penultimate position in his book Masters places a grouping of traditionally heroic men and women who figured in the founding and sustaining of an American republic Jeffersonian in its ideals. Some are said to have been . . .

> . . . in being
> When giant hands from the womb of the world
> Tore the republic (Rutherford McDowell 11/20, 227).

Others are associated with the career of Abraham Lincoln, who at the time Masters wrote (though not later) had his qualified admiration. Explaining his inclusion of this sort of character, Masters later wrote:

> If I had any conscious purpose in writing, it was to awaken that American vision, that love of liberty which the best men of the Republic strove to win for us, and to bequeath to time.[7]

These "heroes" engaged in the task of building and securing a social order that cherished liberty may be included among "the enlightened spirits." Surely they are enlightened in the political sphere. They are not, however, religious in James's sense, and they do not therefore in Masters's scheme occupy the place that

brings his creation to its conclusion either. That place is reserved for a group that is well described by James's term "twice-born." The experiences that they describe are religious in the Jamesian sense; they are subjective, spiritual, ineffable.

The twice-born as James describes them have come face to face with radical evil. After being devastated spiritually by their apprehension of inevitable defeat and death, they have gone on to experience an influx of feeling that enables them to win through to religious affirmation. In the last thirty epitaphs of the *Anthology*, most of Masters's characters testify to experiences of this nature.

Representative of the "twice-born" type of enlightened spirit is Davis Matlock, whose words introduce the group. He first states a perplexing dilemma, then an existential solution:

> The nature of man is greater
> Than nature's need . . .
> And you must bear the burden of life
> As well as the urge of your spirit's excess—
> Well, I say to live it out like a god
> Sure of immortal life, though you are in doubt (10/16, 230).

Nearly all of the poems that follow are given over to similar discussions of philosophical and spiritual issues and the experiences that inspired or accompanied them. Having little to do with institutions or dogma, these are religious experiences in the pure Jamesian sense. Each character speaks in an appropriate metaphorical language. This is Alfonso Churchill, a professor of astronomy:

> . . . through the stars
> I preached the greatness of man,
> Who is none the less a part of the scheme of things
> For the distance of Spica or the Spiral Nebulae;
> Nor any the less a part of the questions
> Of what the drama means (10/2, 252).

Having as a scientist contemplated those interstellar spaces which terrified Pascal and reminded Robert Frost of his own desert places, Professor Churchill delivers a message similar to that of Mrs. Sibley, though on a more urgent intellectual note. Mrs. Sibley did not think to concern herself with "the greatness of man." The doubt that Professor Churchill is combating is as much within himself as within others; the question he answers is one that he himself raises.

Thus it appears that the terms by which Masters described his arrangement of his epitaphs can best be understood by reference to James's elucidation of his own similar terms in *Varieties*. I have been including the dates of appearance in the *Mirror* after the epitaphs I cite in order to underscore my next point, which can be made very briefly. I find it remarkable that a very large majority of the epitaphs of the "enlightened spirits" appeared on or after September 4, the date of the issue with the Emanuel Ehrenhardt epitaph that echoes the language of James from the first lecture in *Varieties*. James's treatment of religious experience may well have been fresh in Masters's mind as he composed these epitaphs.

I have presented my reasons for believing that Masters knew and admired James's *Varieties*. I have illustrated how one may correlate terms from these two writers, and how one may use James's elucidation of his terms to interpret the epitaphs in parts of Masters's *Anthology*. I have shown how some of Masters's characters may well be called "kindred spirits" to those persons from whose testimonials James drew his descriptions of types of religious temperaments. The remaining part of my essay is to show that in their respective books under examination, the two writers share features of temperament and outlook that justify application of the term "kindred spirits" to themselves as well as to the characters whose voices and views they evoke.

As a convenient way of organizing the discussion, I shall accept Jacques Barzun's suggestion in his introduction to the Mentor edition of *Varieties* (v). Each of the principal words in James's title, Barzun observes, brings into focus important elements of the book. I shall take up the topics in a different order than the occurrence of the words in the title. I shall look first at some aspects of "experience," then of "varieties," and finally of what is implied by "religious." In each case I shall also suggest similarities between James and Masters as reflected in their respective books.

1. "Experience." Masters and James share a fascination with personal testimonials. Coles comments that "most of *Varieties*

of Religious Experience is taken up with presentations, then commentary upon, the writings of various religious writers" (29). In his presentations and commentary, James appeals to the existence of what he calls "the yes-function" in us (319), "a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there'" (61). James does not limit this feeling to religious matters, but adduces examples as well from philosophy and science. "So far as religious conceptions were able to touch this reality-feeling," he concludes, "they would be believed in in spite of criticism" (61). Truth, James wants us to agree, is far more a matter of feeling than of rational proof, and therefore, for him, as for Masters, there is a fascination and power in what people claim as truth. It is from this point of view that his constant appeal to testimonials makes sense. An essential step for him in advancing his arguments is "to gain acquaintance with some typical examples" (294). "As soon," he says, "as we deal with private personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term" (379).

In *Science and the Modern World,* Alfred North Whitehead praised James for recognizing the essence of the scientific method in the tenacious marriage of particular experience with generality. He quotes James as writing to his brother Henry: "I have to force every sentence in the teeth of irreducible and stubborn facts."[8] In *Varieties,* James writes: "Religion, occupying herself with personal destinies, [keeps] thus in contact with the only absolute realities we know" (379). The claim makes sense when we keep in mind that James limits religion to personal experience: "The religious experience which we are studying is that which lives itself out within the private breast" (261). There "each emotion obeys a logic of its own, and makes deductions which no other logic can deny" (255).

If we cannot deny the reality of personal feeling, it is also the case that we cannot affirm its reality except by pointing to it and saying, in effect, "There it is." James has really no other recourse than to point to personal testimony. The individual assertion of an experience is the evidence James offers us, and there is no other. The kinship with imaginative literature is apparent immediately, for the truth of the imagined experience

is attested by the words on the page, and either strikes one as true, or it counts for nothing.

While James adhered to empirical experience in reaction to what he felt was the aridity of philosophical abstraction, Masters, in contrast, encountered stubborn irreducible fact in the courts of law. The abundance of lawyers in the *Anthology* may be explained, Charles E. Burgess suggests in "Edgar Lee Masters: the Lawyer as Writer," as a result of Masters's own legal experience,[9] but his having heard the testimony of countless witnesses must surely have had much to do with the testimonial tone of the epitaphs. "This I saw," says one of the characters, stating explicitly what is implicit in all of their words. One may believe of either James's or Masters's witnesses that they are mistaken, but it is impossible to believe that they lie. We are faced with accounts of individual experience, and we must make what we can of them. James helps us along with his commentary; Masters comments only through his arrangement of epitaphs.

2. "Varieties." Within the limits of their respective subjects, both James and Masters fill their books with a teeming variety of voices. In James's thinking, variety of religious experience emerges as a thing of value in itself. The variety arises, he argues, to satisfy the variety of human needs. "Does it not appear," he asks in one of many instances, "as if one who lived more habitually on one side of the pain-threshold might need a different sort of religion from one who habitually lived on the other?" (118). "The whole outcome of these lectures will, I imagine," he states, "be the emphasizing to your mind of the enormous diversities which the spiritual lives of different men exhibit" (98). By establishing such an emphasis, James quite pointedly argues for a pluralistic universe: "The experiences which we have been studying . . . plainly show the universe to be a more many-sided affair than any sect, even the scientific sect, allows" (109).

Masters achieves a similar effect by including in his *Anthology* as great a diversity of life experiences as possible within his imaginative scheme. He conceived of his village as a microcosm. For Masters as for James, the world is a many-sided affair. Masters creates characters whose life experiences have led them to flatly contradictory conclusions. Juries must decide among the

conflicting cases in courts of law, but in the world Masters presents for our contemplation we are spared that compulsion.

3. "Religious." By confronting us with such variety, both James and Masters undermine the authority of absolute dogma concerning human life. James writes: "I need not discredit philosophy by laborious criticism of its arguments. It will suffice if I show that as a matter of history it fails to prove its pretention to be 'objectively' convincing" (333). Claims of revealed truth have, of course, even less "objective" standing. What is left of religious claims, as James sees them, is individual subjective feeling. But for James, that is enough to justify the high valuation that religious persons place upon their religious experience. A person's religion, in James's definition, is "his attitude, whatever it might be, towards what he felt to be the primal truth" (45), with the proviso that "there must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. . . . The divine shall mean for us only such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by a curse nor a jest" (47). But the particular ideas that may accompany that felt response are, James says, a "secondary function" (xvi). The fruits of religious feeling are found in the conduct and the personal happiness of those who experience it, and in James's estimation are sufficient to give religion its high value. Thus, by carefully defining the term "religious experience," James emerges as a defender, of a sort, of religion, but that religion is personal rather than institutional. Locating the essential facts of religion in subjective feeling, and examining religious feeling with a scientist's respect for facts and scepticism of abstractions, James disarms readers who are hostile to theology and to church organizations. Masters was one such reader.

Masters shows his hostility to theology and to institutional religion by placing most of his characters who hold orthodox dogmas or have allegiances to organized religions among the "fools, drunkards and failures" of the first part of the *Anthology*. He allows his characters to heap scorn on "preachers and judges" —those who prescribe codes of belief and conduct—and presents sympathetically the individuals who are seekers after truth. Scattered through his pages are those who in James's words respond to reality with both curse and jest; but the final place of honor

goes to those who in James's words respond to primal reality with feelings that are solemn, serious, and tender. The epitaph of Webster Ford, for example, depicts three responses to the same experience: one is naively superstitious, one mythic, and one scornful:

> Do you remember, O Delphic Apollo,
> The sunset hour by the river, when Mickey M'Grew
> Cried, "There's a ghost," and I, "It's Delphic Apollo";
> And the son of the banker derided us, saying, "It's light
> By the flags at the water's edge, you half-witted fools."
> (1/15, 269)

The value to be placed on each response is clear in the context. Without the sort of feeling that James would recognize as religious experience, characters in Masters's *Anthology* remain earthbound. They cannot be "twice-born," as James put it, and cannot be included among the "enlightened spirits" in Masters's terms.

For neither James nor for Masters is the emphasis upon variety, upon individual experience, or upon feeling as opposed to abstract idea without important consequence. The focus on a vast variety of individual subjective experiences, each felt by the subject to be the truth, produces a general agnosticism toward any particular claim to universal truth. What is left, by implication, is the moral and spiritual equivalent of *laissez faire* in economics. The truth lurking amid or behind the diversity of human experiences is best left to emerge through the free competition of ideas. Subjective claims to truth suffer from the weakness that they "carry authority for him who has them, but for no one else" (xvi). "Nevertheless," James concludes, "they break down the exclusive authority of rationalistic states" (xvi). Henry Samuel Levinson points out that, for James,

> religious originals believed not so much in another world as in a wider world than the ones that most naturalists, positivists, moralists, and materialists affirmed.[10]

In the *Anthology*, Masters's religious characters perceive a wider reality, through visions, dreams, and emotionally intense personal crises. The wider experience, for both writers, is the one comprehending more of reality; consequently, both writers recognize and value religious experience.

Nevertheless, for both writers, the confusion of voices reporting their various experiences is still a problem. The *Anthology* character J. Milton Miles speaks to us in a tone calculated to win the reader's sympathy:

> As many voices called to me in life
> Marvel not that I could not tell
> The true from the false. . . . (10/9, 244).

But even if the effect on the thoughtful observer of "many voices" is suspense of judgment, that result has in its favor a largeness of vision, tolerance, and openmindedness.

Marcus Peter Ford argues that:

> James is almost alone among modern psychologists in his realization that the scientific position is simply one metaphysical option among many, and that the fact that it has proved itself to be successful, is no guarantee that that is the best perspective from which to view everything. It may be, as he suggests in *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* that the scientific position is only a useful fiction.[11]

But if openmindedness is only another name for universal scepticism, it will not be very helpful. Both James and Masters are interested in championing a wider experience that includes religious experience (stripped of its dogma) because they wish to enlist such views in support of enlightened social policy. In Don S. Browning's formulation:

> James's work provides a defense of the usefulness of the Western religious tradition for the dynamic character of the modern world. This tradition and its God could give modern persons the ethical demand needed for the strenuous life; in addition it can convey the mystical security, relaxation, and sense of oneness required to keep the strenuous life from degenerating into hypertensive activism which is ultimately both personally and socially destructive.[12]

As these interpreters suggest, one may see James as having enunciated a view of religion that rescues it from naturalistic scepticism and places it at the service of an ethically responsible, pluralistic social polity. In the words of Levinson:

> Informed by republican ideals, methodical purity and love of God included love of humanity, and, indeed, of any man; salvation became reassociated with social responsibility.[13]

Though Masters would be suspicious of such a term as "methodical purity," he could on the whole have accepted Levinson's statement of James's intention as equally descriptive of his own purposes.

> If I had any conscious purpose in writing, it was to awaken that American vision, that love of liberty which the best men of the Republic strove to win for us, and to bequeath to time.[14]

The shared features that, I argue, make it appropriate to see James and Masters as kindred spirits may still be accounted for in different ways. Perhaps Masters was directly influenced by a reading of James; perhaps on the other hand James merely offers us a lucid account of a view of religion that permeated America in the Progressive Era and was therefore already mature in Masters's mind. Both propositions may be true, for they are not contradictory. Either or both support, I should think, the claim of Jones and Ludwig with which I began, that James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* is one of those "individual books of such power that their influence in shaping the American mind will be granted by any competent student."

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NOTES

1. Howard Mumford Jones and Richard M. Ludwig, *Guide to American Literature and Its Backgrounds Since 1890* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 49.
2. Robert Coles, "Reconsiderations: *The Varieties of Religious Experience,*" *New Republic* (Oct. 2, 1971), p. 28. Page numbers for further citations of this source appear in the text.
3. Robert D. Narveson, "Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology:* Background, Composition, and Reputation," unpublished dissertation: Chicago, 1962, p. 91.
4. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 21. Page numbers for further citations of this source appear in the text.
5. Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 239. Page numbers for further citations of this source appear in the text following dates of original publication in *Reedy's Mirror.*
6. ———, "The Genesis of Spoon River," *The American Mercury* 28(January, 1933), p. 50.

7. "Genesis," p. 55.
8. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 3.
9. Charles E. Burgess, "Edgar Lee Masters: the Lawyer as Writer," in John E. Hallwas and Dennis J. Reader, eds, *The Vision of This Land* (n.p.: n.p., 1976).
10. Henry Samuel Levinson, *The Religious Investigations of William James* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 99.
11. Marcus Peter Ford, *William James's Philosophy: A New Perspective* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1892), p. 24.
12. Don S. Browning, *Pluralism and Personality: William James and Some Contemporary Cultures of Philosophy* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1980), p. 266.
13. Levinson, p. 134.
14. "Genesis," p. 55.

A MIDWESTERNER IN THE MAELSTROM OF HISTORY: THOMAS BOYD'S CHARACTERIZATION OF WILLIAM HICKS

Douglas A. Noverr

Thomas Boyd's literary career was short, spanning the period from 1920, when he began to work as a writer for the *St. Paul Daily News*, after his return from World War I, through 1934. He died on January 27, 1935, with his last two works published after his death. After the publication of his first novel, *Through the Wheat*, in 1923, Boyd produced a total of ten books—five novels, one collection of short stories, and four biographies.[1] For a writing career of only twelve years Boyd was remarkably productive, but he was never considered a major talent and he was always on the edge of the literary circles of the day. Indeed, rather than looking ahead to the avant-garde experimental writing that would pioneer new fictional techniques and structures, much of Boyd's work looked back to the historical past as he sought to identify and trace the roots of an American experience and character that was distinctively Midwestern. Boyd's outlook was essentially deterministic, behavioralistic, and naturalistic, linking him philosophically to Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser, and artistically to Hamlin Garland. Strongly influenced by ideas of economic determinism and by the financial and political conspiracy theories that exposed the background of "the Great War," Boyd became more politically radical and activist, joining the Communist Party in 1934 and running as the Communist candidate for governor of Vermont in 1934.

Boyd's family roots were in Defiance, Ohio, and his ancestors had been among the earlier settlers of the Ohio region, coming

from Pennsylvania and Virginia in the late eighteenth century. He was from farming stock and was proud of his ancestry as well as fascinated with the historical traditions of this border area with its rich background of Mad Anthony Wayne, Indian warfare, and the frontier struggle for existence. In his historical novels Boyd was attracted to strong-willed, bold, and daring individuals like Light-Horse Harry Lee and Anthony Wayne, who distinguished themselves in the Revolutionary War and who both had personal problems of adjustment in the post-war world. Both Lee and Wayne had been drawn back into active military duty after the Revolutionary War, Lee commanding the troops that suppressed the Whiskey Rebellion and Wayne securing the Northwest Territory by commanding the American army against the Indians. In his own ancestors and in men like Lee and Wayne, who were from the two respective states that Boyd's ancestors had left to come to Ohio, Thomas Boyd saw the roots of an American identity and character that was individualistic and democratic. The land provided dignity, self-sufficiency, and opportunity, offering each man a promise of integrity.

As Boyd immersed himself in the past and examined the patterns of American history, he focused repeatedly on the individual who fought in wars out of ideals, a strong sense of personal honor, political commitments, and a sense of contribution to the welfare of a new nation. However, warfare disrupted individuals' lives and often adversely affected their financial well-being. Beginning with the Revolutionary War, the years after peace brought hardships and strife for men trying to pick up with their lives and trying to deal with recessions, unemployment, and debts. Boyd intensely identified with those who were victims of suddenly changing historical and personal circumstances, and he admired those who struggled against their fate and asserted their individualism. As he examined the pattern of the wars in American history, Boyd became more questioning and more interested in the larger forces behind wars. Eventually he began to believe, especially after the disillusioning experience of World War I, that wars were instigated and encouraged by the politically ambitions and by financial interests. Anticipating the popular historical theories about that war by men like Walter Millis and Charles C. Tansill, Boyd began to see that the power brokers,

financiers, and manipulators were only a new form of the indifferent and hostile forces of nature and society that the naturalists saw and documented as destructive forces. These invisible powers had also firmly entrenched themselves in the American economy and social structure as workers became increasingly denied their birthright of financial stability, dignity in work, and democratic equality that was based on economic self-determination. As Boyd saw it, American workers in the postwar 1920's were too easily pacified by the sop of materialism and the promise of middle-class prosperity. In order to gain these, Americans had to accept new roles that made them more acquiescent, more compliant, and more unquestioning. However, the "good life" was, in many ways, an illusion in the 1920s as war veterans and farmers experienced a recession or depression in the midst of prosperity.

Boyd's life was profoundly altered by his experience in the war, where the roots of his progressive disillusionment can be found. At the age of eighteen he volunteered for the marines and left high school before graduation. He served with the Second Division, American Expeditionary Force, in France from September, 1917 until he was wounded on October 6, 1918 at Blanc Mont when a gas shell exploded near him. In his year of combat he saw action at Verdun, Belleau Wood, Soissons, and Saint-Mihiel; he was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his activities in the fighting at Belleau Wood. He was not discharged from the marines until July, 1919, and upon his return to the United States, he moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he began to work for the *Saint Paul Daily News.* More than Hemingway, E. E. Cummings, or Dos Passos, Boyd knew the experience of the ordinary American doughboy from his training at Parris Island and Quantico, to the training camps in France, to the trenches on the Western Front. He knew the tedium, filth, horror, human indignities, and terrible carnage of the front. He learned that survival was a matter of instinct and circumstance.

In 1922, almost three years after his return home, Boyd wrote a novel about his war experiences after first publishing a number of short pieces on the war in the *Daily News. Through the Wheat* (1923) tells the story of Hicks, a young Ohioan who volunteered when war was declared. Hicks's initial patriotism and sense of mission soon wane as the slogans that had inspired him to enlist

turn to empty and meaningless catch-phrases. The fabled morale and spirit of the Marine Corps "leathernecks" mean nothing when all soldiers are expendable in a war that has bogged down into wholesale exchanges of platoons and divisions for meaningless tactical objectives. Hicks's specialized training as an automatic rifle marksman means little when the artillery and machine guns take the heaviest toll or when one rarely directly sees the enemy. As events proceed, Hicks gradually realizes that he is trapped. He is unable to bring himself to commit suicide, as Goldman, the New York Jew, does rather than return to the front, and he is unable to self inflict a wound that will send him home, as Carl Harriman does. Fearing the disgrace of a court-martial for desertion or the refusal to obey an order because of what his girlfriend, fellow office workers, or mother would think, Hicks is compelled to obey orders and to attack. Hicks's platoon and batallion suffer casualty rates of over 80%.

Through the Wheat focuses on the visceral reactions of Hicks and his fellow soldiers—their nerves, reactions, senses, and instinctive movements. They can only respond to threats and dangers out of terror and fear. This sense of documentary immediacy is not interrupted by authorial observations, interpretations, or conclusions. As F. Scott Fitzgerald noted in his review of *Through the Wheat,* published in the May 26, 1923, *New York Evening Post,* Boyd's overall effect is cumulative and straightforward with no "higher relief" and no "intellectualism" evident. Boyd wants to show how Hicks's senses are progressively deadened as he becomes an automaton whose soul is "numb." Twice in the novel Hicks throws his automatic rifle away when it is empty, and each time he picks up another rifle or recovers his gun. The survival instinct, for Hicks, is greater than the tendency toward insanity, although at one point Hicks seems almost to succumb to the hopelessness and despondency that overtake him. One can only obey orders, take and return direct fire, and wait to die. The novel begins in spring and ends in spring, the novel's seasonal background providing an ironic contrast to the war's four years of futility and insanity that would reap a harvest of almost eight million dead and twenty million wounded. The prairie that is thick with wheat is the scene for the staggering smells, sights, and grotesque surprises of the carnage.

Hicks's survival is presented strictly in terms of his ability to respond to danger and his ability to resist each of the "outs" that present themselves—suicide, self-inflicted wounds, desertion, insubordination, exposure to certain death, or insanity. He is a "good soldier" because he is able to function as a soldier must—automatically and instinctively. He survives a gassing and a bad case of shell-shock, only to be directed again to the front. He tries to imagine himself a kind of composite warrior, and he throws away most of his American equipment and puts together an outlandish outfit that includes a French Colonial's bright red kepi military cap, a pair of soft leather officer's boots, and a German Luger pistol as well as a forty-five caliber Colt. When Hicks goes out on a night patrol mission, Boyd describes in an ironic way how Hicks tightens his equipment as he moved through no man's land.

> Importantly he adjusted the strap of his helmet more tightly about his chin. He girded his pistol belt tighter, until his waist was wasp-like. To his leg he buckled his holster until it interfered with the circulation of his blood. He liked the feel of the pistol against his thigh. It made him feel equal to any danger. He was a Buffalo Bill, a Kit Carson, a D'Artagnan.[2]

The modern soldier trained as an automatic rifleman feels more secure with his pistol because it is a personal weapon that has to be fired each time by the individual and because one has to sight the enemy at close range to kill with the sidearm. However, World War I was a war of automatic weapons and the new technology of planes, tanks, heavy barrage guns, rapid-fire machine guns and rifles, and chemical warfare. Soldiers were reduced to automata, and those who survived became secondary functions to their weapons.

In his favorable review of *Through the Wheat* Fitzgerald had said that Boyd's novel demonstrated "political disinterestedness" and that the author's main interests were aesthetic and not ideological or political. To a large extent, Fitzgerald was right; Boyd's novel was a *tour de force* in its execution and in its calculated impact. The novel is documentary and highly internalized in its psychology of the soldiers as they reacted to their situation and fate. However, the novel also reveals an ironic treatment of the

politicians and generals (a Major-General Bumble conducts a review of the troops) who direct the war, and the emphasis on the new technology of warfare certainly implies an awareness of the munitions and arms makers as a force behind the war. In his preface to *Points of Honor*, a collection of short stories published in 1925, Boyd told his readers to "hate the ambitious who cause wars and the financiers who grow fat on them." In his historical novel *Samuel Drummond* (1925) Boyd told the life story of an Ohio farmer who joined the Union Army to prove his patriotism to the Union. After he returns, Drummond finds his farm neglected, and postwar circumstances cause him to sink into debt and lead inexorably to bankruptcy and failure. Drummond is incapable of dealing with his changed circumstances because of his passivity, ignorance, and indecision. This novel chronicled the dramatic changes in the fortunes of the American farmer from the mid-1800s through the early 1920s, and it set the stage for Boyd's updating of the story of William Hicks in the 1935 novel *In Time of Peace*.

Significantly, in the mid 1920s Boyd left the happiness and stability of his life as a journalist and bookstore owner in St. Paul to move with his wife and daughter to the countryside of Connecticut. He decided to devote his efforts to full-time writing, and before he began work on *In Time of Peace* he wrote another historical novel and three biographies, including *Mad Anthony Wayne* (1929) and *Light-horse Harry Lee* (1931). In exploring the colonial, pre-Revolutionary, Revolutionary War, and post Revoluntionary War past, Boyd examined in detail the roots of the American experience and its patterns of warfare and postwar problems and changes as these affected individuals. Boyd's own political consciousness was now thoroughly awakened and stimulated as he perceived the increasing inequities of a more rigid class structure system and an economic system that caused an unequal distribution of wealth. His own social background and his constant struggle to make a living enabled him to identify with those who sensed that the American Dream was slipping away or betraying its promise.

In Time of Peace opens wth William Hicks working a twelve hour shift at a tool and die factory in Chicago. His prospects are bleak and unpromising, but he dreams of being part of the leisure

class that savors the good life rather than tastes it vicariously. Quite by accident, Hicks gets a job working for a newspaper, working as a reporter on the police and city hall beat. He becomes an enterprising reporter who soon gains additional income by writing promotional and publicity materials. He dreams of being a capitalist when, in reality, he is a beneficiary of one of the service growth industries of the 1920s. The newspapers serve the interests of politicians and capitalists, and although Hicks is uneasy about this, he is quickly caught up in marriage, bills, debts, house payments, and increasing material wants.

Boyd characterizes Hicks as a person who has underlying cynicism and bitterness as well as a desire to do some social good. He is vaguely aware that all is not well despite his apparent prosperity and advancement, and he realizes that middle-class prosperity and affluence are dependent upon credit, installment buying, stretched incomes, the desire for instant gratification, and marginal investments. Hick's neighbor, a Mr. Rofer who is an inventor of a new tool and die machine lathe, tries to educate Hicks in the realities of economics and capitalistic manipulations. He tells Hicks that overproduction leads to surplus and to either retrenchment (specifically, decreased wages and tight money policies) or to the war that will open up new markets for goods American workers cannot afford to buy. In his cynicism and doubt, Mr. Rofer believes that the shortsightedness of American capitalists and profiteers will regularly lead to crisis and a squeeze on the workers. However, even with his perspective Rofer cannot prevent himself from failure as he sells his new machine for $10,000 in company stock certificates, which are soon all but worthless. Hicks soon is touched by serious financial problems when he loses money in land speculation and eventually loses his house to Mr. Sharkey, who had earlier presented himself as a socialist champion of the working people in order to try to gain political office.

Gradually Hicks comes to the realization of the forces behind his life. He sees his father-in-law and mother-in-law reduced to poverty, embarrassment, and desperation. As he looks at his mother-in-law, who is wasted from a paralyzing stroke, he connects her to a memory of a dying marine in the Belleau Wood in France. The dying marine, who was being treated by a German

medic, had pleaded with Hicks not to let the German kill him. Hicks realized that all the soldiers were victims of a "dirty frame-up" and had been "made" to go to war. His mother-in-law was "part of the frame-up, too" as she had been used up and was now helpless and useless. She wanted and needed to die rather than to suffer further indignity. As he looks at Mrs. Hughes for the first time as a person and fellow human being, Hicks realizes that "In time of peace, [one must] prepare for war."[3] He needs to "see his enemies in clearer line," and he is radicalized by his awareness that hunger, deprivation, and indignity have devastated his own family. No longer will he deny these realities or ignore them out of self-interest.

Hicks decides to try to get a job as a machinist in the Victory Motors factory, and with Mr. Rofer, who is now working in the plant, they drive past a Hooverville and up to the factory. Taking up his place in the line outside the employment office, Hicks strikes up a conversation with others. Soon a confrontation takes place involving a group of marchers from the Hooverville who are shouting "Jobs or relief!" Instinctively, Hicks leads the vanguard of protesting workers as they press toward the employment office with two frightened company security guards warning them not to advance further. Another worker is shot directly in the face, and Hicks goes down after receiving a machine gun bullet in the leg. In his pain Hicks has a clear realization that this is a new and different war and that "He at least had something to fight for now." This was murder in the "sacred name of Property," but the financiers and profit mongers put the plant guards, the police, and the politicians between their capitalist investments and the exploited workers. Just as Hicks had been the unquestioning soldier who fired the automatic rifle on order, these plant guards opened fire out of fear and on orders to "protect company property." The incident that Boyd described at his fictional Victory Motors plant had its real life counterpart in the 1932 Memorial Day massacre at the plant of the Republic Steel Company in South Chicago, which left ten killed and more than a hundred wounded when police opened fire on marching picketers.

Hicks realizes that peace is an illusion; the ongoing war is one of economic survival and class warfare. By implication, the novel

implies that common and unskilled workers must organize into industrial unions and must commit themselves to municipal and political reform, to the elimination of starvation and deprivation by the institution of direct relief programs, to the improvement of working conditions, and to a commitment to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. To Boyd, the times demanded and required radical action and thorough reorganization of the economic system. Political answers and programs, especially at the local and state levels, were shams that reflected vacillation, compromise, or opportunism. Workers had to demand their rights even if it meant confrontation and violence. *In Time of Peace* shows the influence of proletarian novels like Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited* (1933) and Robert Cantwell's *The Land of Plenty* (1934) because Boyd's novel focuses on the slow evolution of a radical consciousness in one American worker and the growth of solidarity and identification between workers. During the 1920s workers had been caught up in the material prosperity and mistakenly thought they could enjoy some of the comforts, ease, and social privileges of the upper class or could share in the capitalist opportunities of the stock market and land speculation. Many workers moved into the service and function growth industries, leaving behind their blue-collar manual labor jobs and separating themselves from their working class origins. When the bubble of prosperity burst, many blamed themselves and retreated into conditions of shame, guilt, apathy, passivity, and paralysis.

In Time of Peace pays tribute to the traditions and resources that Americans have used to meet changing conditions and to assert the vitality of democratic individualism. Hicks is suspicious and even cynical about government and politicians, and Boyd saw this scepticism as a healthy attitude. When Hicks finally realizes the nature of the crisis and sees the enemy behind the scenes, he is ready to take action and to fight for demands and changes. This determination is rooted in popular uprisings, organized violence aimed at achieving specific ends, and rural populist reform movements that go back to Shay's Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion. The American tradition also is often one of starting over and trying to recover from the shaking out effects of wars, depressions and recessions, or changes in the economic and business organization that adversely affect workers. Those

liberals and radicals who clearly perceive the problems are open to the consideration of alternative social and political systems such as socialism or even communism.

Thomas Boyd's life became more openly political and radical when he joined the Communist party in 1934 and ran in the 1934 election in Vermont as the Communist candidate for governor. At this same time Upton Sinclair was running for election as governor of California on his End Poverty in California movement. Boyd became a member of the League of American Writers and supported the plan for the first American Writers' Congress. He planned a third novel in his William Hicks trilogy—a work that would describe his protagonist's experiences in the Communist Party.[4] However, in late January, 1935, Boyd died of cerebral hemorrhage. In joining the Communist Party, Boyd believed he was committing himself to continuing the work and tradition of the American revolutionary spirit. He firmly believed that men made history and that no political institution or economic organization was sacrosanct or indispensible. Like Jefferson, Boyd believed in the right and duty of the people to alter or abolish a government or a social system that did not secure the rights of the people or "effect their safety and happiness." In studying the lives and fortunes of men from all periods of American history, Boyd's faith in the American tradition of rebellious individualism and resistance increased and became the center of his artistic vision and expression. It is hard to estimate where Boyd's future as an activist and Marxist would have led him, but on the basis of what we know about him, one suspects that he would have pursued a course similar to Upton Sinclair as an independent minded writer rather than move to a conservative social philosophy in the manner of John Dos Passos.

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NOTES

1. For biographical information on Thomas Boyd see the *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Novelists, 1910-1945*, Volume Nine, ed. James J. Martine (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1981), pp. 81-83; Fred B. Millett, *Contemporary American Authors: A Critical Survey and 219 Bio-Bibliographies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), pp. 255-56; and biographical sketch in *Wilson Library Bulletin* (November, 1935)), 170.
2. Thomas Boyd, *Through the Wheat* (New York: Popular Library, 1978), p. 191.

3. Thomas Boyd, *In Time of Peace* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1935), p. 255.
4. Walter B. Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), p. 197.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S *PERHAPS WOMEN:* THE 'STORY IN BRIEF'

WELFORD DUNAWAY TAYLOR

Between the two world wars, American publishers brought forth books which for design, decoration, and quality of production may be said to surpass those created in any two decades before or since. Although most of Sherwood Anderson's titles appeared during this period, few were embellished in the manner accorded those of numerous contemporaries. In fact, the modern reader looks with bewilderment upon the beautifully executed volumes of period authors long since forgotten, and wonders how Anderson could have been bypassed in their favor. One must remember, of course, that several Anderson items were published in limited editions, often by small private presses, and that these are now expensive collectors' items. Also, several of his commercial titles were published in limited deluxe editions by the original publishers. There is, however, a notable exception among those titles intended for the commercial market in its broadest sense: *Perhaps Women* (1931).

Appearing on both the dust jacket and as the frontispiece is a distinctive woodcut showing a bold, handsome woman riding a sturdy horse. She is leading a nag, astride which is a slouching figure of a man, a weak, puzzled look on his face. In the background are modern factories, their smoke stacks belching.

To those familiar with the text of *Perhaps Women,* the woodcut depicts modern American woman, who has retained her personhood in the face of an onslaught of machines, which have sapped the masculinity of the Americal male. Anderson himself acknowledged the appropriateness of the woodcut to the text, stating that it gave "the story in brief, and with fine feeling."[1]

The artist was Julius J. Lankes (1884-1960), a native of Buffalo, New York, who, like Sherwood Anderson, had settled into a small Virginia town (Hilton Village, in the Tidewater region) in the mid-1920's. Within a month after Anderson became editor of the *Marion Democrat* and the *Smyth County News* in early November, 1927, he and Lankes began corresponding in a familiar, yet at times serious, vein.[2] Anderson, himself an amateur painter, was especially interested in artists, and it is not surprising that during the spring of 1931, as the text of his "queer book"[3] took shape, he began to visualize his theme in pictorial terms. These he delineated to Lankes:

> I would like [as an illustration] a drawing by Charles Birchfield (sic), of my native state Ohio or a wood-cut by Julius Lankes of my adopted state Virginia.
>
> The picture would show a cotton mill looming huge in the night before me (Sherwood Anderson). I would be half buried in shadows and in darkness. The building before me would be, as I say, dark and huge but lights would shine out from its thousand eyes.
>
> It would be a fact, that building, as the machine is a fact in American life, as the factory is a fact, as the radio and the automobile are facts.
>
> Do not make me, an American artist, striving to be of his day and time, a bold strong figure as has been done on the paper jackets of some of the books I have published. If my book is ever finished and one of you men consent to do this job make me small and shrinking before the fact.
>
> I beg of you to put in the heavy iron fence surrounding the mill yard and the equally heavy iron mill gate.
>
> Let me stand there, small and shrinking, a kind of Chaplin striving to rub red South Carolina clay off his clothes. (I had just fallen in the mud).
>
> Do not hesitate to make me a rather impotent figure. Modern male impotence in the fact of the machine is that statement I am trying to make in this book.[4]

As if Anderson's own conception of the illustration were not far enough from the finished effort, he enclosed in his letter a magazine reproduction of a Gaugain painting that suggested something of the same theme. This scene showed a small man, his back to the artist, who was flanked on either side by a buxom

Polynesian woman.[5] Lankes also forwarded to Charles Burchfield Anderson's request, which the Ohio artist promptly turned down. Anderson suspected that Burchfield declined on the assumption that Anderson was trying to get something for nothing; actually the artist's reasons were more complex. Having been an admirer of Anderson's early work and having been perceived in some artistic circles as "the Sherwood Anderson of art," Burchfield was apparently offended by the frankness of Anderson's *Many Marriages* (1923)—to the degree that he changed the title of his woodcut "Winesburg, Ohio" to "Carolina Village." Unbeknown to Anderson, Burchfield now considered him "sensual if not immoral."[6]

The execution of the frontispiece therefore became Lankes' charge. There is, however, an interesting sidelight to Lankes' request to Burchfield. When he tells Anderson that he believes Burchfield's attitude toward machines parallels the one found in the book, he recalls that Burchfield had once gleefully told him that a brother-in-law had given up his tractor for a horse, an animal Lankes describes as "God's greatest gift to mankind."[7]

This is the first mention of a horse in connection with the illustration and, as coincidence would have it, the idea was soon underscored by events in Lankes' immediate experience. Late in April, Lankes wrote Anderson of a horse show soon to be held at nearby Hampton and invited him down for the event. He says they might borrow mounts from a neighbor and "go out into the new Huntington Museum Park that is a-building and jog around."[8]

In addition to the mention of the horse incident in connection with Burchfield and the equestrian exhibit in Hampton, Lankes surely knew of ideas for the illustration, one of which was "a woman on a horse holding the bridle of another horse on which a man is sitting holding on to the saddle."[9]

Although this description definitely points to the finished design, Lankes said that at that point he lacked "conviction" for the subject and that he saw "no art" in it. In the event that Anderson were in a hurry he could "force the thing"; though if he could take more time it might later "flow." "I want to do it," he urged. "I may be able to 'see' the thing all of a sudden."

It turned out that the publisher, Horace Liveright, was indeed in a hurry; and during the next several weeks there unfolded the

drama of a conscientious artist, meticulous to a fault, having to force the cutting of the woodblock and then, when time was still shorter, having to cut it a second time. By May 16, he could tell a now urgent Anderson that he was "beginning to see where the various elements of the picture can be fluxed into a whole. So it flows naturally."[10] Even so, he admitted that "unless I see the finished job in my mind I find it difficult to tackle it." He enclosed several sketches, asking Anderson to select one that he might "tighten up."

Three weeks later, having received the outside dimensions of the book,[11] Lankes was cutting the block and was hopeful of success,[12] but a postscript to the unsent letter, added five days later, tells of his having "got into a hell of a state on the block," and having had to start over again, using the first design as a basis. As usual, anxiety over a deadline was affecting performance, but apparently the mounted proofs, pulled from the newly cut block, were in the mail in about a week.[13]

Anderson soon voiced enthusiastic approval;[14] however Lankes, in summing up his performance, reiterated the frustration he had experienced and uttered the futile wish for another month, which would have allowed the project to "mellow" and have given him time to "recut and get the thing perhaps 500% better."[15] But for all his grousing about time pressure, and for all the disclaimers (which were but a part of his self effacement and high artistic standards) Lankes' illustration is without question the best graphic depiction of any of Anderson's work. And although he received only $75.00 for his effort—which was three months late in arriving—his design has been much appreciated by Andersonians over the years. In almost two decades of collecting, this author has found *Perhaps Women* in the original dust jacket far more frequently than any other Anderson title.

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NOTES

1. Unpublished letter, Sherwood Anderson to J. J. Lankes, June 26, 1931 (L). (Unless otherwise noted, all references are to unpublished correspondence owned either by Lankes' son J. B. Lankes (designated (L)), by The Newberry Library (designated (N)), or by Dartmouth College (designated (D)). Special thanks are extended to all three sources for making the material available

and to Mr. Lankes, Mrs. Sherwood Anderson, and Dartmouth College for permission to quote.

2. The first existing item in the exchange is a letter from Anderson of December 2, 1927 (N) responding to an apparent query from Lankes concerning a subscription to Anderson's Marion newspapers and accompanied by some examples of the artist's woodcuts.
3. S. A. to J. J. L., March 5, 1931 (L).
4. S. A. to J. J. L., March 5, 1931 (L).
5. A photocopy of this was found in the Lankes file, in the envelope containing the request letter.
6. Lankes' letter conveying Burchfield's refusal to Anderson has apparently not survived, but Anderson's response to Lankes is dated March 26, 1931 (L) and is reprinted in Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout, eds., *The Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), pp. 243-44. Upon re-reading this letter in the collection in 1953, Lankes wrote his friend Herb West of the Burchfield incident and reminisced generally about him and Anderson. He states that Burchfield's rejection of Anderson's request was contained in "an insulting letter" and that he had informed Anderson "in gentler terms." Lankes had known of Burchfield's changed opinion of Anderson long before the question of the illustration for *Perhaps Women* had arisen and had felt the need of acting as an intermediary. Recalling the two men to West, Lankes observes, "As between the two I think Sherwood was the cleaner and less sensual. At least S. was very dainty in his eating and drinking and clean in his actions." Lankes then recalls that once when he and Burchfield were sketching some young toughs in East Liverpool, Ohio, their subjects had yelled certain obscenities at a third youth, "accusing him of an animal perversion," whereupon Burchfield, "our holy young friend," was convulsed with laughter. "There was Americana for you! Good old Ohio dirt. Boy, it tasted good!" (J. J. L. to Herb West, June 19, 1953 (D)). All textual quotes in the paragraph citing this source are from this letter.
7. J. J. L. to S. A., March 7, 1931 (N).
8. J. J. L. to S. A., April 24, 1931 (N).
9. J. J. L. to S. A., May 4, 1931 (N).
10. J. J. L. to S. A., May 16, 1931 (N).
11. Tom Smith [of Horace Liveright, Inc.] to J. J. L., May 21, 1931 (L).
12. J. J. L. to S. A., May 30, 1931 (tl) with June 4, 1931 message (als) at bottom (N).
13. In J. J. L. to S. A., June 19, 1931 (L), Lankes tells of having sent off the proofs "I should say about a week ago, if not longer."
14. S. A. to J. J. L., June 26, 1931 (L).
15. J. J. L. to S. A., June 19, 1931 (N).

EDWARD DAHLBERG'S KANSAS CITY: TWO VIEWS

ROBERT L. KINDRICK

Among Midwestern novelists and poets, Edward Dahlberg is noteworthy for his use of native materials, despite his disdain of most "regionalist" writers and his professed hatred for his native city. Dahlberg is, after all, the self-proclaimed modern mythographer: his later works, *The Gold of Ophir*, the *Carnal Myth*, and *The Sorrows of Priapus*, are all investigations into the mythic and and historic backgrounds of western culture. Notwithstanding Dahlberg's other interests and his distaste for his own hometown, Kansas City, Missouri, appears as the setting in his two most significant works, *Bottom Dogs* (1929) and *Because I Was Flesh* (1964). Moreover, Dahlberg's vision of his setting is a key to characterization in these two works.

Bottom Dogs, Dahlberg's early proletarian novel, which he has since disclaimed, made his reputation during the 1930's. The book relates the adventures of Lorry Lewis, from his early childhood in Kansas City, through his adolescence in a Cleveland orphanage and in Kansas City, to his adventures in California. D. H. Lawrence, who wrote the preface for the book, described Dahlberg's work as "the last word in repulsive consciousness" and concluded that it "saves one the necessity of having to follow out the phenomenon of physical repulsion any further for the time being.[1] Lawrence's judgment is adequately borne out by the writer's treatment of his setting. Dahlberg portrays Kansas City as a "smutty and religious town:"[2] he is repulsed by the city and the characters he finds in it. The town is typified by the stockyards and the Armour and Swift packing houses: for Dahlberg, a representative street is Twelfth Street, "a livewire hangout for the prohibition Kansanites who came over to the Missouri

side of the Caw to get their Camels, Saturday night booze, and a piece of tail."[3]

As might be expected, it is the bad things about this town that Lorry Lewis remembers. As the novel begins, Lorry and his mother are living in "a flat on 8th Street, between Cherry and Holmes, which was once decent enough and middle-class but which in the last few years had rundown and gotten a tough reputation." (19) With horror he recalls his mother's barber shop and his home, "plug-besmeared cuspidors, the rusty gas range, the ugly flies on the soiled plaster wall, the alley, the 8th Street flat with its bits of rugs strewn over one another like dead moths." (23) This vision remains consistent throughout Lorry's experience in the book. When he returns to Kansas City after he has stayed in the Cleveland orphanage, the same types of images appear in his return visit to his mother's shop:

> The old, rusty gas range was still there: on it were some round black pots, the sides of some bent in: the toilet water was running; it never did flush right, his mother used to say. A roach crawled across the fly-speckled, greasy oilcloth, a loaf cut jaggedly, partly by knife, on the other parts thumb and finger depressions could be seen. (131)

The characters who inhabit the world of Lorry Lewis are just as disagreeable as the physical environment. Lorry's world is filled by slow-thinking commission men from the West Bottoms, seedy Lotharios like Captain Henry Smith, and lady barbers who were "easygoing young kids from Wichita, Kansas or St. Joseph Missouri who wanted to learn a trade and become city flirts." (19) It is in part his mother's association with Captain Henry Smith that precipitates Lorry's move to the orphanage. Smith is a type who fits comfortably in the environment that Dahlberg has described:

> He had knocked about a lot, liked a good time, and had before been a first mate in and around New Orleans. He was almost thirty-six then and felt that he wanted to settle down with some woman who knew how to put a little aside and live on less than a man made. He was tired of running around with skirts; he hadn't bummed about New Orleans for nothing, and was a bit fed up throwing his kale around on fast women. He had also played small-time vaudeville, comedy gags, jigging, clever stage talk, with a cute little gal from Atlanta. (37)

Central among the group of lady barbers, of course, is Lorry's mother, Lizzie Lewis. It seems to Lizzie as if she has been "down on her luck" all of her life. Before she settled in Kansas City to open the barbershop, she had "moved from town to town, selling hair switches, giving osteopathic treatments, going on again when she felt the place had been played out." (1) Although Lizzie tries to be honest and strong, her days are filled with trials, including her son, victimizing characters like Henry Smith, and the lady barbers that she employs. Lorry remembers her, "her face, white with sweaty lines, like that old oily oilcloth he had to eat off on the table." (9) We may remember Lorry's city by remembering Dahlberg's comment on his hometown in 1951: "Homer detested Ithaca, and let me admit; I hate Kansas City."[4] This is the Kansas City and *dramatis personae* of *Bottom Dogs.*

Because I Was Flesh, Dahlberg's award-winning autobiography, is generally accepted as "Dahlberg's masterpiece."[5] The book relates many of the events in the putatively fictional *Bottom Dogs.* Lorry Lewis has become Edward Dahlberg and Lizzie Lewis has become the author's mother, Lizzie Dahlberg, but the action is the same, and, with the exception of a 50 page section at the end of *Because I Was Flesh,* the time period covered is the same. Kansas City, however, is barely recognizable to the reader who knows it only from *Bottom Dogs.* In fact, the book begins with Dahlberg's hymn to the city, one of the most famous passages in his work:

> Kansas City is a vast inland city, and its marvelous river, the Missouri, heats the senses; the maple, alder, elm and cherry trees with which the town abounds are songs of desire, and only the almonds of ancient Palestine can awaken the hungry pores more deeply. . . . Kansas City was my Tarsus. . . . It was a young seminal town and the seed of its men was strong. Homer sang of many sacred towns in Hellas which were no better than Kansas City, as hilly as Eteonus and as stony as Aulis. . . . The bosom of this town nursed men, mules and horses as famous as the asses of Arcadia and the steeds of Diomedes. The cicadas sang in the valleys beneath Cliff Drive. Who could grow weary

> of the livery stables off McGee Street or the ewes of Laban in the stockyards?
>
> Let the bard from Smyrna catalogue Harma, the ledges and eaves of Ithaca, the milk-fed damsels of Achia, pigeon-flocked Thisbe or the woods of Onchestus, I sing of Oak, Walnut, Chestnut, Maple, and Elm Streets. Could the strumpets from the stews of Corinth Ephesus or Tarsus fetch a groan or sigh more quickly than the dimpled thighs of lasses from St. Joseph or Topeka?[6]

Obviously this is not the dirty stockyards city of *Bottom Dogs*. Kansas City has become a Classical metropolis worthy of comparison with Avila, Tarsus, Arcadia, Eteonus, and Ithaca.

More characteristic of the city now are the "Union Depot, a remarkable red-brick building, a fine example of the old-time tradition of honesty. . . ." "The imperial offices of the Burlington Railroad . . . on Walnut Street," and the "cultural public library." (21) Instead of scorning Kansas City's pretentions to parks and boulevards as he does in *Bottom Dogs* ("Lorry remembered when the [Paseo] Boulevard was first laid and grass planted up to the curb and next to the sidewalk. The young saplings were stuck in the ground and people said that Kansas City had the largest system of parks in the country" (139), Dahlberg praises the "half-rural" nature of the town where "the elms and maples lining the streets gave health to the heart and the lungs." (159) Even the dirty Kaw and the Missouri have become the washpots of "Joyous Dianas from St. Joseph and Joplin." (1) These same "joyous Dianas" are of course the "chippies" and "$1.00 hustlers" that we read about in *Bottom Dogs*, and they illustrate another type of change in the later work. Not only have the town tarts become classical courtesans, but even the tawdry assortment of confidence men and slovenly gigolos that inhabit the town have become "well-to-do merchants" and "gentlemanly whiskey wholesalers." (23, 50) Although the lady barbers are not above milching a horse drover or merchant for all they could get on going to court for purely mercenary breach of promise suits, they take a genuine interest in the barbershop and their trade, being "easily discouraged . . . if a customer had been short-tempered." (16) Moreover, the girls have suddenly "got religion"; they are "spiritualists, revivalists, Christian Scientists. . . ." (26)

Even though Captain Henry Smith is later described in terms of disgust and abhorrence, he too has undergone transformation. He is now initially presented as a more romantic and attractive character:

> [He] . . . was a short, fat josher with flat blond hair and river-gray-blue eyes. He was the captain of the *Chester*, a freighter that plied between St. Louis, Kansas City, and New Orleans. He explained the anatomy of the Missouri, its shoals and sandbars, while she trimmed his hair, and she could scarcely believe that it was possible to have so much knowledge of a body of water. (61)

Obviously, Dahlberg has chosen details designed to make us understand why Lizzie found him so attractive.

Even Lizzie herself has changed. She is still the unfortunate Jewess, but now she is compared with St. Teresa and is interpreted against a background of myth.

> A tintype taken of my mother in her early twenties showed a long oval face with burning brown eyes and hair of the same color. She did not have thick features and her hands had the soul of the pentagram, which Plato considered the geometric figure of goodness. . . . Perhaps no more than four feet ten inches in height, health was her beauty. Lucian affirms that "there are some who will be admired for their Beauty; whom you must call Adonis and Hyacinthus, though they have a nose a cubit long." (3)

Despite her personal problems, Lizzie Dahlberg is also clearly able to rise to acts of love and self-sacrifice. When Emma Moneysmith, one of her lady barbers, goes to court in a breach of promise suit, Lizzie closes the barbershop, musters her character references, and goes to testify in Emma's behalf. In a time period not covered in *Bottom Dogs* but included in *Because I Was Flesh*, Lizzie makes the ultimate personal sacrifice to give her son financial security:

> Then she drew from the depths of her breast a sheaf of hundred-dollar bills and placed them in my hand. . . . Standing on the rug bitten by a generation of want, I still clung to all her drudgery in the Star Lady Barbershop. (230)

Dahlberg concludes that she is "like the three Marys of the New Testament."

Even this brief comparison of the two versions of the city and the characters who inhabit it should illustrate some of the remarkable differences. The reasons for Dahlberg's change in approach to his setting are complex, but they are essential to an understanding of the nature of Dahlberg's later works. I think it is insufficient to attribute all of the differences in the two descriptions of the town and the characters simply to what Harold Billings has called Dahlberg's "new Voice," the florid style that evolved from Dahlberg's period of reading and aesthetic revision just after his experimentation with Communism and before *Do These Bones Live.*[7] To suggest, as have some of his detractors, that the changes are due to personal affectation or that they are "simply stylistic" is to ignore how significant the differences really are (and to show, by the way, a very superficial notion of style).

Of first importance in understanding Dahlberg's "revised" Kansas City is his compulsion to return to his native city in *Because I Was Flesh* as well as his later poetry. Dahlberg himself comments that "Kansas City, Missouri is as important to me as an El Greco painting."[8] It is a compulsion singular indeed if we remember Dahlberg's profession of hatred, which I have cited earlier, and Lorry Lewis' desire to escape the town to go "anyplace where there is some action." The explanation lies in the revised theory of artistic form that Dahlberg espoused after the maturity of his new style:

> A novelist is always writing the same books; for he is born to make the perfect poem or novel. . . . The writer belongs to a tribe of men that remembers best, and yet he is always recollecting the same place, or city or childhood, and piecing together a particular river, maple leaf, sand bar, porch, the heady fragrance of a vacant lot sunflower, and when he is describing a room in one town, he is thinking about the depot dust or an orange he knew or nosed in his childhood.[9]

Obviously, then, Dahlberg's later obsession with Kansas City can be explained as a major part of his quest for the perfect poem, novel, or autobiography. While this provides a reason more significant than sentimentality for his return to home ground, it does not explain Dahlberg's praise and amplification of his setting in *Because I Was Flesh.*

Dahlberg's treatment of Kansas City in his autobiography was influenced by two other points in his personal philosophy, his "sense of place" and his "sense of history." Between 1929 and 1964, Dahlberg came to believe that a human being understands himself as he understands his *locale.* Like young Stephen Daedelus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Dahlberg finds that to comprehend who he is he must understand where he is. Man he believes is his geography:

> Whatever we do is vast, unconscious geography; we are huge space giants of the mesa, surd, mad rivers that rush along, and we do not care to be near each other. . . .[10]

And in *The Gold of Ophir* he asks:

> Who may claim he has a dram of intelligence who is unfamiliar with soil that nourishes his body and higher faculties. . . .[11]

In expressing his own lack of understanding of his fascination with his native city, Dahlberg states:

> For I cannot understand what I am save that I am the result of all the streets, shanties, livery stables, and gim crack stores of this buxom, hilly town I knew in the early part of this century.[12]

The loss of this sense of place Dahlberg sees as no less than a loss of personal identity:

> Give us back our origins . . .
> We have lost the ground . . . left it behind us like the Quiche did the Yaqui for whom they wept . . .
> We cannot bear each other because we are immense territory.[13]

It is this sense of place that is characteristic of *Because I Was Flesh.* Kansas City has become an essential part of Dahlberg's identity.

One component of individual identity is a sense of location, but there is the second, just as important, the sense of history. Any reader of Dahlberg is aware that the sense of history is one of the most obvious aspects of his later style, florid and allusive in the Burtonian and Browneian vein as it is. But the sense of history is also connected with Dahlberg's veneration of geography.

He believes that awareness of place is more than just a knowledge of geographical coordinates: it is knowing what has preceded us in the spatial and cultural geography of our origins. It is "farming of our ancestors,"[14] be these ancestors the scholars and poets of Europe or the bloodthirsty *conquistadores* of Mexico. Those who do not forge awareness of geography and history into personal identity are simply automatons:

> the highways have no ancestors;
> the 19th century American was kinless
> iron, and these men of the 20th are houseless
> specters because they have never claimed the continent.[15]

This is the Dahlbergian view that William Ryan describes as seeing "a continuum in which existing populations represent one link in millenial history that may, for all we know, be infinite."[16]

This philosophy which Dahlberg developed between 1929 and 1964 also explains the change in his cast of characters, for they too are affected by his perspective on their environment. In *Bottom Dogs,* Dahlberg selected details about his protagonists characteristic of their unsavory love-lives, physical infirmities or ethical shortcomings. However, when he places his characters in the perspective of myth, as in *Because I Was Flesh,* he selects details more characteristic of their beauty, strength, ethics, or power. Just as Dahlberg is forced to respect his native city and to place it in the perspective of the great cities of Classical Antiquity, he finds that to understand his mother and himself, he must place their experiences in the perspective of the geography and history of the whole western cultural tradition, including Homer, Browne, Lucian, the Bible, Beethoven, and even Mary Baker Eddy.

Dahlberg may indeed have hated Kansas City as he proclaims, but his concept of the city coloured his characters and shaped his own concept of selfhood. Dahlberg's Kansas City is indeed "Buried deep down in the loamy cairn of identity . . .".[17]

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NOTES

1. D. H. Lawrence's introduction to *Bottom Dogs* (London: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1929), p. xvii.

2. *The Leafless American* (Austin: Roger Beacham, 1967), p. 23.
3. *Bottom Dogs,* p. 128. Page numbers for further citations appear in the text.
4. *The Leafless American,* p. 19.
5. Fred Moramarco, *Edward Dahlberg* (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 106.
6. *Because I Was Flesh* (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 1-2. Page numbers for further citations appear in the text.
7. Harold Billings, *Edward Dahlberg: American Ishmael of Letters* (Austin: Roger Beacham, 1968), p. 18.
8. "Return to Kansas City," *Holiday,* 41 (1967), 16.
9. *The Leafless American,* p. 17.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 5.
11. *The Gold of Ophir* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), p. 13.
12. "Return to Kansas City," p. 16.
13. *The Leafless American,* p. 4, 5.
14. *Alms for Oblivion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 60.
15. *The Leafless American,* p. 5.
16. William Ryan, "New York by Dahlberg," *New Letters,* 39 (1973), 115.
17. *The Leafless American,* p. 26.

"BEAUTY BREAKING THROUGH THE HUSKS OF LIFE": SHERWOOD ANDERSON AND JAMES WRIGHT

LELAND KRAUTH

In his foreword to *Mid-American Chants* Sherwood Anderson suggested somewhat defensively in 1918 that his region was not yet ready to produce poetry. "I do not believe," he conceded, "that we people of mid-western America, immersed as we are in affairs, hurried and harried through life by the terrible engine—industrialism—have come to the time of song."[1] Part of the trouble, Anderson felt, was that the Midwest had "few memory haunted places" (i). Its people ached with the "hunger within" that Anderson himself tried to express, but lacking a long rich past, he and his fellow Midwesterners were bereft of more than history: "beauty does not yet belong to us" (i).

Anderson's own chants are, at their strongest, only marginal contradictions of his critique, which is really his apologia, but the work of other poets of the renaissance in Midwestern writing which Anderson would later dub a "Robin's Egg,"[2] notably that of Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, and Vachel Lindsay, reveals that the region was not inimical to poetry even in 1918. In the last three decades, however, the Midwest has yielded up a rich poetic harvest about which there need be no apology whatsoever. William Stafford, born in Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1914, Robert Bly, born in Madison, Minnesota, in 1926, and James Wright, born in Martins Ferry, Ohio, in 1927, have created out of Midwestern imaginations filled with "memory haunted places" one of the most significant bodies of poetry in America today. And at least one of these Midwestern masters, James Wright, has

acknowledged with a backward glance the chants of his self-denigrating forerunner (and fellow Ohioan) Sherwood Anderson.

Wright paid passing tribute to Anderson by using a part of "American Spring Song" from *Mid-American Chants* as an epigraph to his most recent volume of poetry, *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* (1977). Wright's *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* is worth comparing to Anderson's *Mid-American Chants*, not because there is any specific indebtedness, any question of direct influence, but because there are, I believe, congruences of idea and attitude that help to define the outlook of each writer and to locate the vision of each in a common Midwestern experience. Further, the similarities between the two poets illuminate persistent Midwestern concerns; they point to an enduring tradition.

In a sense Anderson's hope, as he put it in his foreword, that his poems would "find an answering and clearer call in the hearts of other Mid-Americans" (i) has been realized in Wright's book. And the call *is* clearer. Lest comparisons seem outlandish, the obvious differences need to be acknowledged. Anderson was not of course primarily a poet, as Wright was. *Mid-American Chants* represents a fledgling effort undertaken in the exhilarating but thin atmosphere of the Robin's Egg world, while *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* is the work of an experienced poet, writing his seventh volume of poems in the full mastery of his craft. As poet, Anderson is often prophetic—"I am with child to dream" (32), he announces; Wright, in contrast, is not pregnant with visions of the future but absorbed in what he calls "the poetry of the present moment."[3] The formal differences between *Mid-American Chants* and *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* are also obvious and important. Anderson's forty-nine chants are, for the most part, highly rhetorical, self-consciously dramatic, free-verse poems employing a language that is an uneasy admixture of the artifically literary and the plainly colloquial, while Wright's twenty-two poems are lean, almost skeletal shapings, sometimes metered, sometimes not, whose language and syntax are predominately those of ordinary speech. Interspersed between these twenty-two poems Wright has fourteen more rhetorical prose poems. (Anderson once referred to his own chants as "verse or 'emotional prose'.")[4] Anderson's poems are incantatory, repetitive, passionate, often vague and almost always mannered; Wright's are simple, direct, honestly

felt, carefully precise, insistently natural. In short, Anderson's poems are enveloped in an atmosphere of artifice; Wright's seem to breathe in fresh air.

One final divergence between the two poets, in many ways the most intriguing, should also be acknowledged: the radical difference in their voices. Walter B. Rideout has called attention to the "multiple personalities" in the chants, and has defined them as the voices of "Anderson himself, Anderson as representative American, and Anderson the inspired bard and prophet."[5] These shifts in persona necessitate corresponding changes in outlook, tone, and language. Wright's late poems, on the other hand, have only one voice—that of Wright himself, who speaks directly in what he has called "a flat voice," "drawling Ohioan."[6] But while Anderson assumes several personae and Wright discards all masks, both poets center their poems in the private self. For if we recall Yeats's use of the mask as a way of liberating the various anti-selves of which the true self is compounded, then it is clear that Anderson's apparent concealments are really ways by which he contrives to release facets of his complex personality. Thus, although their voices are tactically as well as tonally different, both Anderson and Wright express their inner selves. Both begin—and often end—their poems where Yeats said all poems start, "In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."[7]

Wright's two epigraphs to *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* provide perspectives that bring into focus not only his volume but Anderson's as well. The first of Wright's inscriptions is taken from Richard Aldington's *A Wreath for San Gemignano*. It reads in part:

> I forget when it was that I heard the news that San Gemignano had been destroyed or partially destroyed in that war on Italian territory which was merely one more of the criminal stupidities of this decade. . . . It seemed impossible that the tangible homes of so many personal memories—towns and landscapes, buildings and works of art—had vanished utterly or were so mangled that what little being they retained was almost worse than complete destruction. It was something like the shock of incredulous pain and dismay parents feel at the loss of a child. . . . But I will not weary the reader with useless enthusiasms for obliterated pictures or smashed churches or shattered towers and palaces or rubble-choked streets. If they are gone, they are gone; and there is no use in making people unhappy by saying that they have forever lost beautiful things.

This evocation of cataclysmic destruction establishes the background for Wright's poems. But the destruction Wright is most concerned with is not, as one might expect from both the epigraph and the fact that many of the poems are set in Italy, the devastation of war. Again and again in this book as Wright observes life in foreign lands his mind slips back to "the antiquities" of his "childhood" (11)—to Martins Ferry, Ohio, and to the river from which it takes its name. Thus in the poem, "One Last Look at the Adige: Verona in the Rain," the poet's view turns away from the river flowing before him at his feet, inward, to the river of his childhood home:

> The Ohio must have looked
> Something like this
> To the people who loved it
> Long before I was born. (5)

What Wright recalls from his past is a world in which, he says, "everything in Ohio ran down and yet never quite stopped" (11). It is a world torn by destruction done in the name of progress. It is a world in which whole mountain sides are stripped away in "a long shattering of jackhammers" (34), in which the land is riven by "the dead gorges / Of highway construction" (4), in which a "beautiful river" has become a "black ditch" (11). Wright has no fondness for the new industry that transforms places that seem to him "Tall and green-rooted in mid-noon" into "bitter places," and in one poem he rebels against the new industrial order in a way that recalls the central myth of Sherwood Anderson's life:

> I got thirsty in the factories,
> And I hated the brutal dry suns there,
> So I quit. (24)

Although there has been no literal war on his homeland, Wright envisions its destruction, registering, as Aldington does, the loss. Wright is not sentimental, but the nostalgia that sometimes tinges

his rememberings suggests that for him the changes in his Midwest involve the loss of at least some "beautiful things."

Anderson's chants have a similar background of destructive change. Anderson was, of course, both closer to the first great wave of Midwestern industrialization and more self-conscious about the need to protest its corrosive effects. To proclaim the horror of industrial blight—on the land, its people, and the old ways of life—is one of the primary intents of *Mid-American Chants*.[8] Anderson makes the devastation central in such poems as "Song of Industrial America," "Industrialism," "Mid-American Prayer," and "Song to New Song," and he is not only direct but emphatic about his revulsion:

> You know my city—Chicago triumphant—factories and marts and the roar of machines—horrible, terrible, ugly and brutal. (4)

Anderson's nostalgia for the lost world of his childhood is much stronger than Wright's. In his surprisingly delicate, ironically bitter apostrophe to "Industrialism," his new "mistress," Anderson laments the loss he has witnessed:

> Our fathers in the village streets
> Had flowing beards and they believed.
> I saw them run into the night—
> Crushed.
> Old knowledge and all old beliefs
> By your hand killed—
> My mistress
> Grim. (16)

Anderson is obsessed by the destructive transformation of his world because, as William A. Sutton has suggested, he feels it as a threat to his own creativity.[9] Most critics have felt that something impeded Anderson's efforts at poetry, but his poems have their moments. In a time that Hugh Kenner has named The Pound Era (it is always shocking to remember how close in time—and how far apart in art—Pound and Anderson were) one of the emerging strategies for poetry was what Kenner has described as an "aesthetic of glimpses."[10] Oddly, while Anderson would indeed write his novels out of a feeling for the power of the glimpse, in his poetry he relies more on extended statement and

emotional posture than on images. (Anderson makes his prose poetic and his poetry prosaic.) Yet in his chants the most effective realizations of the pervasive changes in his homeland are brief glimpses—glimpses like these:

> I saw [the farmer] kneeling and praying alone, by a destroyed wheat field. (42)

> See the trains in the long flat fields at night,
> The screaming trains—yellow and black. (43)

> It is day and I stand raw and new by the coal-heaps. (24)

> In the towns
> Black smoke for a shroud. (41)

> I am become a man covered with dust. (24)

> In the doorway of the warehouse a tiny twisted body. (22)

In the face of transformations like these Anderson says explicitly what is implicit in many of Wright's poems: the "Thin dream of beauty" is "gone" (16).

Wright's second epigraph is the one from Anderson, and it takes us close to a common core, one that is as important as it is strange. Wright cites these lines from "American Spring Song":

> No one knew that I knelt in the mud beneath the bridge
> In the city of Chicago . . .
> And then, you see, it was spring,
> And soft sunlight came through the cracks of the bridge.
> I had been long alone in a strange place where no gods came.

On the surface, Wright uses Anderson to refer to his time abroad in Italy—"I had been long alone in a strange place"—but the "strange place" to which "no gods came" is also, and more significantly, the strange country of the self. This far terrain of interior being is in fact what Anderson's poem is about. "American Spring Song" opens with these startling lines:

> In the spring, when winds blew and farmers were ploughing fields,
> It came into my mind to be glad because of my brutality. (28)

As farmers break the soil for new growth, Anderson—or should we say his persona?—enters the city and releases the latent vio-

lence of the self: "Men and women I struck with my fists and my hands began to bleed" (28). His repeated acts of brutality enact the hope that Richard Slotkin has described in American writing generally as the dream of Regeneration Through Violence.[11] All the poem's details suggest a regenerative ritual: Anderson notes his dress—"Cunningly wrought clothes, made for a nameless one"—which expresses the conventional person while concealing the essential self; he moves through passageways of transition—across bridges, under bridges—and arrives at the last by traditional waters of renewal, "at the river's edge"; he fashions there from "the mud" a new image, a new "god for myself"; and finally he insists upon the season, making of the time of year an incantatory refrain that keeps before us the magic of cyclical rebirth—"In the spring," then later, "it was spring," and again, "you see, it was spring," and finally in the penultimate line, shifting the tense to the present to signal the achieved renewal, "It is spring" (28-29). In a profound paradox what emerges from the violence—out of the violence—is gentle caring, or as Anderson puts it: "It is spring and love has come to me— / Love has come to me . . ." (29).

While there is no corresponding moment of immediate personal renewal in *To A Blossoming Pear Tree,* Wright's personal history, as recorded in his successive volumes of poetry, is a tortured process of renewal such as Anderson dramatizes, a long slow journey from the vacancy and suffering of *The Green Wall* to the despair of *Saint Judas,* in which Wright identifies with murderers and rapists, taking their guilt as his, on through the various recoveries of *The Branch Will Not Break, Shall We Gather at the River,* and *Two Citizens,* a volume Wright described as "almost a resurrection of *Saint Judas*" that "begins with a curse" only to end with a "long sequence of love poems."[12] Wright has indeed, to return to the lines he found so resonant, "been long alone in a strange place where no gods came."

In *To a Blossoming Pear Tree* there is a recollection of that "strange place." In a poem entitled "On a Phrase from Southern Ohio," Wright summons up from his past an experience in which, as in Anderson's poem, the brutal and the tender oddly intertwine, both in the world and in the self. The poem begins by noting the blasting out of a cliffside—one more ravishment of the land—

for some unspecified progressive development, and then Wright relates how he and six friends, Huck Finn-like, stole a skiff, crossed the river to "the narrow hot mud shore, the foot / Of the scarred mountain" (34). They climb the "absolutely / Smooth dead / Face,"

> To a garden of bloodroots, tangled there, a vicious secret
> Of trilliums, the dark purple silk sliding its hands deep down
> In the gorges of those savage flowers, the only
> Beauty we found, outraged in that naked hell. (35)

This discovery of the beautiful (which is itself perceived as a commingling of the fierce and the delicate—"a vicious secret / Of Trilliums," "those savage flowers") on the "naked hell" of the ripped-out mountain is the first of three interconnected paradoxes. The second erupts at once, as the boys, touched by the unexpected beauty before them on the ravaged mountain, are suddenly gripped by their own violence:

> Well, we found two black boys up there
> In the wild cliff garden.
> Well, we beat the hell out of one
> And chased out the other. (35)

The mixture of the tender and the brutal, of a responsiveness to beauty and a ferocious cruelty, lingers in Wright's mind to link there—in the third paradox—with the image of a bruised, weeping woman who has somehow been injured, perhaps through love:

> And still in my dreams I sway like one fainting strand
> Of spiderweb, glittering and vanishing and frail
> Above the river,
> What were those purple shadows doing
> Under the ear
> Of the woman who was weeping along the Ohio
> River the woman? (35)

In the face of this mystery, powerfully presented through the tensions that coalesce in the figure of the woman, Wright invokes his "Phrase from Southern Ohio":

> Damned if you know;
> I don't. (35)

The turn of Wright's thought at the end reveals in him the same state achieved by Anderson in "American Spring Song," for at

the last Wright contemplates the enigmatic woman with gentle concern.

The mix of the violent and the loving that both Wright and Anderson know in themselves both see in humanity at large. It is fundamental to their conception of human nature. Anderson speaks in "The Lover" of a contrary urge "to kill" and "to love" (33), and in such chants as "Song of Cedric the Silent," "Song of Stephen the Westerner," and "Songs of the Lost One," he envisions both forces at work. The handful of war poems that Anderson included in *Mid-American Chants*, topical poems which seem to break the Midwestern milieu of the book as a whole, have in common with the other poems, at the least, this same awareness of humankind's dual capacity to destroy and to cherish. Anderson's attitude, in keeping with his own darkly divided self, is insistently accepting—"To our own souls," he proclaims, "we take the killer's sin" (54). Wright is attentive to the same conflict of impulses and he makes a similar proclamation of acceptance. He points to the peculiar union in people—real and fictive—of what he calls in one poem "loveliness and danger" (43). The workings of this conjunction appear to him in poets, like Catullus, in evangelists, like Homer Rhodeheaver (Billy Sunday's psalmodist), and finally in history, the record of human nature writ large in the ruins of the Roman Colosseum and in the remains of a Gun Enplacement at Saint-Benoit. In the title poem of his volume, "To a Blossoming Pear Tree," Wright centers on the conflict, comparing the innocently natural with the darkly human. He contrasts the perfection of the tree—filled with "Beautiful natural blossoms," above a "Pure delicate body"—to the menace of "Something human," something that drives a derelict, an "old man," to accost Wright, at the risk of mockery or brutality, demanding violently of him "Any love he could get" (60-61). In the poem's close Wright affirms his tie to the terrifying degenerate in a way that corresponds to Anderson's embrace of even the killer's sin, though Wright's attitude is more resigned than boastful:

> Young tree, unburdened
> By anything but your beautiful natural blossoms
> And dew, the dark
> Blood in my body drags me
> Down with my brother. (61)

Both Anderson and Wright accept—at times, insist upon—their ties to a humanity burdened by its own darkness. Both poets also envision, as counterbalance to this darkness, the possibility of love. (In personal terms, the awakening to love is the renewal each achieves.) Both poets are writers of great feeling. Bernard Duffey has described Anderson's chants as the result of "undivided feeling," and Alfred Kazin, defining Wright's sensibility, has pointed to what he calls "the gift of feeling" as its core.[13] In both poets feeling becomes fellow-feeling; both are deeply compassionate. Wright is especially attentive to the down-and-out, while Anderson embraces all of suffering humanity. The sympathy that emerges so strongly in their poems is by no means the exclusive creation of their shared Midwestern experience, but it has certainly something to do with it. It has something to do with what David D. Anderson has called the "bitter-sweetness" of Midwestern lives that are imbued with a "sense of closeness to others," with simple yet powerful "neighborliness."[14] Wright's brief recollection (published in William Heyen's *American Poets in 1976*) of his childhood during the Great Depression, with its emphasis on families and communities struggling to sustain themselves, reads like a chapter from Anderson's *Memoirs*. Both poets lived through hard times and the neighborliness that softened them. Most Midwestern writers have. From Howells and Twain, through Anderson and Dreiser, to Stafford, Bly, and Wright, Midwestern writers have been unswervingly sympathetic. The locus classicus of the shaping of such pity in a Midwestern writer is probably this autobiographic confession:

> . . . I was filled with an intense sympathy for the woes of others, life in all its helpless degradation and poverty, the unsatisfied dreams of people, their sweaty labors, the things they were compelled to endure—nameless impositions, curses, brutalities—the things they would never have, their hungers, thirsts, half-formed dreams of pleasure, their gibbering insanities and beaten resignations at the end.[15]

Dreiser tells us that in the face of such suffering, frustration, and defeat he "cried so often" he felt himself a "weakling."[16]

Dreiser's passionate recollection is instructive. It is charged with the sense that since everyone is doomed, everyone is to be pitied. Anderson, Wright, and many another Midwestern writer have this feeling. The intimation of doom is not for the Midwesterner rooted, as it is for the New Englander, in the residue of Calvinism with its conviction of innate depravity, nor is it created for the Midwesterner, as it is for the Southerner, by the moral failing of a Peculiar Institution that led to the further failure of defeat in war, although as New Englanders and Southerners settled into the Midwest these outlooks began to haunt the region. The Midwesterner's special sense of doom comes, more simply and more directly, as Dreiser's testament suggests, from a perception of the intractable difficulties of life itself.

Both Wright and Anderson are moved by what Wright calls, "a poet's dream of something hopeless / That didn't have a chance in this world" (43), for both poets have known the reality of chanceless days, of hopeless lives, in their common Midwestern pasts. The Midwest is, of course, a landscape, a people, and an experience, and in all three dimensions there is something both tortured and lovely. (One thinks of Anderson's image of the sweetness of twisted apples.) In his *Memoirs* Anderson offers a perfect single-line summation of his early years: "The ugliness of life, the strange beauty of life pressing in on a boy."[17] Both poets lived in a Midwestern ambience of ugliness and beauty, and both, rather clearly, reflect this in their poems.

While he was working on his chants Anderson reported to a friend that he was writing to show "beauty breaking through the husks of life."[18] This is in fact a task undertaken by both Anderson and Wright. Speaking of Wright, however, in terms that apply equally well to Anderson, one critic has suggested that "whether he likes it or not, Wright's poetry demands of him a continual return to a world of ugliness and potential defeat."[19] Anderson as well as Wright seems to have this compulsion. For both poets seem to have been so seared in their pasts by the simultaneity of ugliness and beauty that they cannot bring one into imaginative being apart from the other. Both poets need to feel the ugliness of life in order to create its beauty. Thus the background of destruction in their poems, their probes into the dark interiors of the human self, and their compassionate attention to the suffering,

are not only honest renderings of raw fact but also empowering preludes to their grasps at the beautiful.

In the midst of the darkened world of his poems Anderson manages to discover beauty. He realized it for himself, and presented it to his readers, in a somewhat unexpected way. However suddenly it may have seized him, Anderson's poetic mode has a long tradition behind it. Josephine Miles has described it (without referring to Anderson) as the "high" or "ceremonial" style which has roots in Greece and Rome, models in eighteenth-century English verse, and a dramatic culmination in Whitman.[20] "To clear and polished surfaces," Miles says, this style "adds depths, however murky; to the objectivities of thought, action, and the thing in itself, it adds the subjectivity of inward feeling tumultuously expressed."[21] Anderson's poetry is nothing if not given to murky profundity, subjectivity, and tumultuous emotion. But while the traditional writer in this mode expresses directly a joyful sense of life—and a delight in its beauties—Anderson appropriates the mode to register chiefly the depletion of his world. Where is beauty?

In *Mid-American Chants* it is realized in the different moods and the common imagery of passages like these:

> Spring. God in the air above old fields.
> Farmers marking fields for the planting of the corn.
> Fields marked for corn to stand in long straight aisles. (15)

> I have been to the Dakotas when the fields were plowed.
> I have stood by the Ohio when the dawn broke forth.
> Promise of corn,
> Promise of corn,
> Long aisles running into the dawn and beyond
> To the throne of gods. (20)

> Back of your grim city, singer, the long flat fields.
> Corn that stands up in orderly rows, full of purpose . . .
> I see new beauties in the standing corn,
> And dream of singers yet to come . . . (31)

Anderson's landscape of destruction is relieved by row after row of beautiful growing corn. As more than one critic has pointed out, corn is the master symbol of *Mid-American Chants*. Its import has been well defined by Walter Rideout. "The physical

order of the corn on the land," he writes, "symbolizes the metaphysical order of 'the gods,' who represent the essentially religious harmony of brotherhood . . ."[22] In Anderson's poems the corn does point to an order beyond the human, and it seems to suggest not merely the religious harmony of brotherhood but the even more harmonious, more religious order of transcendent mystery. This is the ultimate meaning of beauty.

Although Wright's poetry is filled with destruction, loss, and human pain, he, too, creates moments of joyful vision. The darkened world of his poems, with its disinherited suffering figures is, like Anderson's, uplifted by glimpses of a transfiguring beauty. Wright has, almost from his first emergence, been described as a visionary poet, and while defeat has seemed to dominate his imagination, there have been in his poems from the first notable interludes of manic joy—moments of near ecstasy, attained, for instance, observing the world through the haze of a hangover, encountering horses in a grassy pasture, or releasing the soft, flying petals of milkweed, or just imagining Mary Bly. His technique for realizing these experiences is now famous; it has been variously described as the "deep image," the "subjective image," as "phenomenalism," or the "emotive imagination."[23] Some of his poems in this mode seem, by virtue of the self-conscious commitment to the technique, less acts of experience than exercises in talent. In *To A Blossoming Pear Tree,* however, Wright has all but abandoned the deep image. He has found a new way to render ultimate beauty, a new way which, like Anderson's corn symbol that harks back to the Bible and beyond it to fertility rites, is really an old way.

The world for Wright has always been what he called it in his first volume of poems, a "vacant paradise."[24] It is twice bereft—shorn of deity and devoid of beauty. Most often he can only grasp the beautiful in its passing, catching it in flashes as he does for a moment in "Redwings," the opening poem of *To A Blossoming Pear Tree,* when he recalls seeing in an Ohio already gone "to hell" "a few redwings / Come out and dip their brilliant yellow / Bills in their scarlet shoulders" (3). Such natural sights relieve the oppression of the declining land. But Wright goes beyond these to record moments of true vision in which the beautiful is, as in Anderson, a glimpse of some permanent order, of a transcendent mystery. It happens this way:

> She stands among them in her flowered green clothes. Her skin is darker gold than the olives in the morning sun. Two hours ago we got up and bathed in the lake. It was like swimming in a vein. Everything that can blossom is blossoming around her now. She is the eye of the grove, the eye of mimosa and willow. The cypress behind her catches fire. (40)

Here is beauty breaking through the husks of life, overwhelming life, literally transforming it. The woman (Wright's wife, Annie) is transfigured, becoming the "eye of the grove," the eye of all "blossoming." (Emerson's transparent eyeball seems to lurk somewhere behind the image.) The tree that "catches fire" is also transformed; ablaze with light, it becomes a traditional symbol of infinite spirit suddenly visible in the material world. For as Wright's friend and fellow poet, John Logan, pointed out in discussing one of Wright's earlier books, Wright tries to capture "love in images of light," and "light is the shadow of God."[25]

Wright uses light as recurrently in *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* as Anderson uses corn in *Mid-American Chants,* and he uses it to the same end. The need felt by both poets in their search for beauty was expressed by Anderson when he said, "The more obvious mysteries of life have been destroyed. . . . It is the nature of man to need God, the mystery. Without the mystery we are lost men."[26] Within the darkness of their poetic worlds, both Anderson and Wright create compelling glimpses of the beautiful mystery.

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NOTES

1. Sherwood Anderson, *Mid-American Chants* (West Newbury, Mass.: Frontier Press, 1972), p. i. This edition, more readily available than the now rare first edition, is cited parenthetically in my text.
2. *Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs: A Critical Edition,* ed. Ray Lewis White (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 317. Hereafter cited as *Memoirs.*
3. James Wright, *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 37. Future references to this edition are given parenthetically in my text.
4. Anderson to Harriet Monroe, 21 Sept. 1917, quoted in William A. Sutton, *The Road to Winesburg: A Mosaic of the Imaginative Life of Sherwood Anderson*

(Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1972), p. 387.
5. Walter B. Rideout, "Sherwood Anderson's 'Mid-American Chants'," *Aspects of American Poetry: Essays Presented to Howard Mumford Jones*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962), p. 163.
6. James Wright, *Collected Poems* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1971), p. 149; *To A Blossoming Pear Tree*, p. 6.
7. "The Circus Animals' Desertion," *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 336.
8. For an illuminating discussion of Anderson's creation of a "new myth for urban-industrial man," see Philip Greasley, "Myth and the Midwestern Landscape: Sherwood Anderson's *Mid-American Chants*," *MidAmerica* VI (1979), 79-87.
9. Sutton, *The Road to Winesburg*, p. 409.
10. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1973), p. 69.
11. See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973).
12. James Wright, "The Art of Poetry," *The Paris Review*, 16, No. 62 (Summer 1975), 56-57.
13. Bernard Duffey, *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters: A Critical History* (Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), p. 203; Alfred Kazin, "James Wright: The Gift of Feeling," *The New York Times Book Review*, 20 July 1980, p. 13.
14. David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 6.
15. Theodore Dreiser, *A Book About Myself* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), p. 107.
16. Dreiser, p. 107.
17. *Memoirs*, p. 49.
18. Quoted in Sutton, *The Road to Winesburg*, p. 383. Anderson added, "If I can do anything at all it is by this road, keeping close, understanding, believing."
19. Shirley Clay Scott, "Surrendering The Shadow: James Wright's Poetry," *Ironwood* 10, 5, No. 2 (1977), 61.
20. Josephine Miles, "The Poetry of Praise," *The Kenyon Review*, 23 (Winter 1961), 104.
21. Miles, 105.
22. Rideout, "Anderson's 'Mid-American Chants'," p. 169. In *A New Testament* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927) Anderson has some fascinating prose poems in which the landscape—sometimes specifically a corn field—becomes the repository of spiritual truth. See especially "Word Factories."
23. See "Jerome Rothenberg," in David Ossman, *The Sullen Art: Interviews with Modern American Poets* (New York: Corinth Books, Inc., 1963), p. 30; Stephen Stepanchev, *American Poetry Since 1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 175-87; Duane Locke, "New Directions in Poetry," *dust*, I (Fall 1964), 68-69; and George S. Lansing and Ronald Moran, *Four Poets and the Emotive Imagination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 3-20.
24. Wright, *Collected Poems*, p. 8.
25. John Logan, "The Prose of James Wright," *Ironwood 10*, 5, No. 2 (1977), 155.
26. Sherwood Anderson, *Perhaps Women* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931), pp. 42-43.

JAMES JONES' TRILOGY, OR IS WAR REALLY HELL?

ELLEN SERLEN UFFEN

Each separate novel of James Jones' World War II trilogy (*From Here to Eternity* [1951], *The Thin Red Line* [1962], and *Whistle* [1978]) may, like any other book, be evaluated on its own merits. Viewed as a trilogy, however, criticism of the novels must consider as well the connection(s) among them, what it is that makes a single entity out of three seemingly discrete works of literary art. In earlier trilogies, obvious links have been thematic—the *Studs Lonigan* books, for instance—or stylistic—Dos Passos' *U. S. A.* In the case of Jones' trilogy, however, the major link is extra-novelistic and philosophic: his own ambivalence toward his material, his love/hate relationship with war and the military which makes him or, more precisely, his narrative voice, appear uncertain whether they are creative or destructive of human energies. This attitude, common to all three books, rather than the varying internal exigencies of each, is what determines action. The most intense antagonism of the books resides not (where it usually does) in the characters' relationships to themselves and to fictional events, but rather in the mind of the author as exhibited through the fiction.

Jones' ambivalence is suggested by an apparent blindness to his own irony. The extended metaphor on which the three novels are based, that is, contains within it this irony: the army is presented as a microcosmic society. The "company" is the smaller unit or "family" within the larger society. It represents a place to belong, to be loved, possibly to find heroism and, most of all, a place where one may be an individual, clearly differentiated from the rest of society—the other companies—outside of it. But society is only the sum of its parts, and must be defined by a

great degree of sameness; the uniformed quality of the army, in fact, would emphasize this. Consequently, the army must be antithetical to both love and heroism. The first is a coming together of individuals and the second is an action performed by an individual which constitutes, really, a deviation from "normal" social activity. It is in the very nature of the army that it must act to destroy individuality. Family members are doomed to a losing battle.

James Jones, however, often does not—or will not—see through his own depiction of the military. This is immediately clear from his choice of epigram to the first work of the trilogy, *From Here to Eternity,* set in Hawaii, the events of which take us to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The epigram from Emerson is basic to all three novels: "The Sphinx must solve her own riddle. If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience." (8)[1] To Emerson—and, presumably, to Jones—each man is an individual yet, at the same time, encompasses within himself all other men. In context, each soldier, acting for himself, acts for all. This is the ideal. The reality differs. The company itself becomes almost insubstantial, a mystique; to belong or be a "thirty-year man" is the goal. But to achieve this the soldier must actively work to die to himself. He must steel himself to his own feelings. If he is unable to deny his self, he can be destroyed by the very system he aims to be a part of. Yet successful denial implies still another level of irony. When the individual forces himself to believe so strongly in the sanctity of the company that, at times, he performs heroic acts to preserve that sanctity, the act of heroism itself, as suggested earlier, becomes an act of individualism and so defeats its own purpose.

This irony is illustrated in *From Here to Eternity* primarily through two members of "G" Company, Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt ("Prew"), and First Sergeant Milton Anthony Warden, with several other characters functioning as foils or variations on the theme. Prew's problem, when we first meet him, is a kind of psychological and emotional muteness. He had been a fine bugler, but has since lost his rating and may no longer communicate through music. He had also been a boxer, but once blinded a man in the ring and refuses to fight again. Thus, he has also

lost this—albeit rougher—form of physical communication. In the course of the novel, Prew attempts to reestablish channels of communication through both male and female relationships. But the army itself, with its pervasive sense of impending death, and its Hemingwayesque code, disallows closeness with either sex.

There are many scenes in *From Here to Eternity* which depict Prew together with other men—in card games, in drunkenness, in aimless (and, again, Hemingwayesque) conversations on movies or sports. But these scenes also convey the fragility and futility of the relationships. The feeling Prew has for Maggio, for instance, the boy from Brooklyn, is finally defined by Prew as guilt, not friendship, not love. Prew blames himself for Maggio's being jailed and sees himself as Nemesis, in possession of "a special quality . . ., a strange unpleasant quality that seemed to force everyone he touched into making drastic decisions about their own lives. . . ." (394) Even with Warden, for whom he feels "a closeness . . . an understanding . . . closer and stronger than even what he felt for Maggio" (270), he can communicate only in drunkenness. Only then can Prew (and Warden, as well) imagine that ". . . they had managed for a moment to touch another human soul and understand it." (462)

The Army (the "system," a character calls it, with Dickensian accuracy), also creates a false feeling of kinship. The men are physically together, but unable to reach out emotionally. Prew himself realizes this. He sees that each man is

> struggling with a different medium, each man's path running by its own secret route from the same source to the same inevitable end. And each man knowing as the long line moved as skirmishers through the night woodsey jungle down the hill that all the others were there with him, each hearing the faint rustlings and straining to communicate, each wanting to reach out and share, each wanting to be known, but each unable . . . to make it known that he was there, and so each forced to face alone whatever it was up ahead, in the unmapped alien enemy's land, in the darkness. (129)

To attempt to relieve the loneliness of group-man through love of a woman must also fail, another result of the system. That is, since the definition of self is blurred by the sameness of the

army uniform, when the soldier turns to a woman he does not seek to become part of yet another entity. He looks instead, as Prew realizes, to find the self the army has denied him:

> . . . it seemed to him . . .that every human was always looking for himself, in bars, in railway trains, in offices, in mirrors, in love, especially in love, for the self of him that is there, someplace, in every other human. Love was not to give oneself, but find oneself, describe oneself. And that the whole conception had been written wrong. Because the only part of any man that he can ever touch or understand is that part of himself he recognizes in him. And that he is always looking for the way in which he can escape his sealed bee cell and reach the other airtight cells with which he is connected in the waxy comb. (96)

Prew's (rather Emersonian) definition of love is selfish: recognition of his own individuality means a denial of the individuality of the woman. She is alive only inasmuch as she reflects the man. Indeed, Prew tells us that his native lover, "Violet did not exist until he saw her, then she began again where she had left off before. In between she existed only in his mind. . . ." (84) That is, when he can "see" himself in her. Even the prostitute Lorene, to whom he proposes marriage, does not truly exist for him. Her house is on one of "those steep streets in the Casbah movies or in fairy tales," with a roof like that "in a Spanish hacienda in a fairy tale," and looks generally "like a castle in a fairy tale." (410-11) He goes on:

> In fact all of it, when he thought about it, seemed to have a great deal of the fairy tale about it. That same thinness and unreality of great gentleness and leisurely beauty that he could believe as long as he was still reading the story but that when he put the book down afterwards, reluctantly, he no longer could believe, to his unassuageable disgust. (411)

There is also irony here which, perhaps, points to the self-destructive quality of Prew: he chooses a prostitute as an object of love. Her job requires that she not see men as individuals. Moreover, she is a prostitute whose delusions of eventually leading a "legitimate" life require that, during the day, she blind herself to her present work and live in the style Prew has described,

so far away from reality. It must mean as well that she refuse to marry Prew because—irony again—he is not respectable enough. When she finally goes straight she will have to marry a man above suspicion and he will not do.

Finally, then, Prew is correct in his evaluation that he has "a very close working alliance with irony." (25) The army, the group, a place to be with others, is really the opposite. And love, a situation in which one shares with another, is, in reality, lonely, too. There is no way to win. Prew, somewhere realizing this, steadily loses any will to survive. He disintegrates both physically and emotionally until, in effect, he allows himself to be killed by a fellow soldier acting in the line of duty. It is a case of mistaken identity. The final irony.

Sergeant Warden, the character who understands Prew best, may, in fact, be described as an older, more cynical Prew—he is thirty-four years old to Prew's twenty-one. Warden, however, has survived because he recognizes there is no way to win. Instead, he has learned that to retain some amount of identity and self-respect, it is necessary to appear to adhere to the system. Consequently, he is a good soldier. He does his job well. This, in turn, allows him a certain freedom not granted to others. He can, for instance, argue with superiors, although never to the point of actual insubordination, and win because he knows more than they do and they know it.

But even with his minor victories, Warden realizes his life is an act played out for himself. He is drawn to Prew because he is a philosophical purist, an innocent who, unlike Warden, has to no extent "sold out."[2] He is therefore free in a way Warden is not. Warden knows this and is saddened by his recognition. He realizes that whatever quality it takes to be free has been lost or held down in himself. He envies and loves Prew for retaining this quality; or, in Prew's terms, Warden loves the part of himself he sees in the other man. Yet he fights not to acknowledge the love. That is, because Prew's beliefs come a little too close to home, and because the army's male code will not allow human closeness, while Warden helps Prew, he also tries to keep his emotional distance. For instance, here is Warden's rationalization before he acts to extricate Prew from a potential court martial for insubordination and refusing to take orders from an officer:

> Hell no, it wasn't worth it, not when you might crimp your own concatenation, what was it to you if some damned son of a bitching stupid fool of an antediluvian got himself beheaded by a progressive world by going around in a dream world and trying to live up to a romantic, backward ideal of individual integrity? You could go doing things for a jerk like that forever, and never help him any. It was never worth it, but it would really be a feather in your cap if you could pull it off again now, this time. That would be worth a try, just for the hell of it. If he was doing this, it was not because it was his responsibility to knock himself out taking care of headless chickens who refuse to become modern and grow a head, it was just for the fun of seeing if he could pull it off, not for no stupid ass who still believed in probity. (279)

But despite Warden's attempts to harden himself to the reality of his feelings and his situation, he is still frustrated and still tries to be free. He does so not only through vicarious means, as in the example with Prew, but actively as well—in his affair, for instance, with Karen Holmes, the wife of his commanding officer. He would have the affair with her

> not as vengeance, or even retribution, but as an expression of himself, to regain the individuality that Holmes and all the rest of them, unknowing, had taken from him. And he understood suddenly why a man who has lived his whole life working for a corporation might commit suicide simply to express himself, would foolishly destroy himself because it was the only way to prove his own existence. (107)

Nothing can come of the affair, as Warden himself knows and not only because Karen is married, but for another, more ironic reason as well: Karen is willing to leave Holmes and marry Warden, but she insists first that he become an officer. To do this would be to make Warden a part of the very system—the "goddam middleclass"—he despises. "I've stood up for me Milt Warden as a man," he tells Karen, "and I've made a place for myself in [the army] by myself, where I can be myself, without brownnosing any man, and I've made them like it." (594)

Warden will lose Karen because of his decision, but will keep the place he has created within the system. He will use the army—and the war—for his own benefit. At the end of the novel,

when Pearl Harbor is attacked, we witness Warden fighting with a wild, almost hysterical glee. The irony here is that Warden is fighting to harden himself against love, and as a soldier in the American Army which aims to preserve that 'middleclass" he had devoted his career to fighting against. He, then, may survive, may live, but in his own terms he is a loser. He may turn out to be a hero, but it will be with the sanction of the group. Or as Chief Choate, another character in the novel, puts it, "Warden dont belong in the Army," but "he's the best soljer I ever saw." (480, 482)

Lastly, there is one rather minor character in the novel worthy of some brief mention since it is he who presents the ultimate solution to the soldiers' situation and, with it, articulates the ultimate irony. Jack Molloy appears in the novel as a kind of Messiah of the stockade, his apostles his fellow convicts, his proclamations, the Word. Molloy is obsessed with "the next logical evolvement" of religion (617) which will constitute, in effect, a "superhuman distillation of experience in an attempt to account for everything." He believes that

> . . . over the old God of vengeance, over the new God of Forgiveness, was the still newer God of acceptance, the God of Love-That-Surpasseth-Forgiveness, the God who saw heard and spoke no Evil simply because there was none. (618)

Molloy's religion, that is, by not recognizing evil, need not recognize hurt. Thus, the "believer" cannot be touched in any serious way by another human being because to allow real contact is to leave oneself open to potential hurt. What is left is the individual, alone.

From the situation depicted in *From Here to Eternity*, we move, in *The Thin Red Line*, to 1942 Guadalcanal, to the thick of battle. This novel is, perhaps, the least artistically successful of the three books, and for a very ironic reason: it is the only true "war novel" of this trilogy of war novels, the only one whose action actually is wartime combat. The problem is that its setting manages gradually to overwhelm its characters.[3] Obviously, war is very important in this novel and in the other two, but not so much in fact as in its function of historic and motivational backdrop. The war affects people in certain ways, makes them feel

and do certain things. It is not particularly significant that readers see a great deal of combat, rather we must be *aware* of impending, ongoing, or completed combat in order to understand what we are shown to be the individual soldier's relationship to himself and others. In *From Here to Eternity* and *Whistle* the most important conflicts are internal, caused, we are meant to believe, by the horrors of war and by army life itself. In *The Thin Red Line,* so much novelistic energy is taken up with the graphic scenes of actual war that characterization becomes secondary. The result, finally, when the trilogy is seen as a whole, is a shift of dramatic centrality, a movement of interest from character to scene. The book reads less as a novel than as a collection of wartime vignettes, rather like extended versions of some of the vignettes in Hemingway's *In Our Time.*

The novel begins with the landing on Guadalcanal and the subsequent bivouacking of "C-for-Charlie" company. The bulk of the book is taken up with scenes of fighting interspersed briefly with the men's reactions to the events. These reactions take the form of short, internal monologues, few of which consider the characters deeply enough for the reader to understand sufficiently. Motivations, too, often remain unclear, with the result that the men's decisions and actions appear arbitrary. This, in turn, makes gratuitous the sections of the novel dealing graphically with the gruesome scenes of combat: there seems too much gore for so little response to it from the soldiers that will be put to any novelistic use. Perhaps it is valid to believe that participation in combat leads to numbness of sensibility but, in relation to *The Thin Red Line,* this is a superimposed judgment. Based solely on the facts of the novel, we are not made to understand this clearly enough.

This is not to say, however, that the themes apparent in *From Here to Eternity* have disappeared altogether. They are still evident, but because of the much increased significance of actual combat, they are muted to the point where they have become no more than literary leit-motifs. They titilate the reader with their potential significance, but frustrate finally because they are never worked out. We are told, for instance, about the necessity of role-playing in the army, how ". . . everybody lived by a selected fiction" (23), how soldiers are all "tough veterans" (314) simply

because it is the most available role. And we learn that real friendships are impossible: the closest we come are Tills and Mazzi, who are "more or less . . . sidekicks. . . . At least they often went on pass together." (15) And we are told, at several points, of the sexual nature of both power and combat. Each of these themes is suggestive and probably important, yet none is considered closely. The latter theme, in fact, of great potential psychological interest, is, as many of Jones' contemporary reviewers noted, more often exploited for its sexual potential.

But no matter how effective or ineffective Jones' treatment of themes and characterization in *The Thin Red Line,* one might think it safe to assume that the novel is making a statement about the devastating effects of war on soldiers. Considering the destruction of sensitivity and humanity depicted in the novel as necessities for survival, this would have to be true. Yet Jones' dedication to the book would seem to deny it:

> This book is cheerfully dedicated to those greatest and most heroic of all human endeavors, WAR and WARFARE; may they never cease to give us the pleasure, excitement and adrenal stimulation that we need, or provide us with the heroes, the presidents and leaders, the monuments and museums which we erect to them in the name of PEACE. (v)

It is difficult to imagine that these words could be anything but ironic. But, in context, there is no indication that they are. Rather, Jones seems honestly to rue the end of "WAR and WARFARE." This would explain the obvious delight apparent in some of the battle scenes in the novel, an attitude so antithetical to what the books seems otherwise to be about. And it would also explain in part why *The Thin Red Line* does not "work" novelistically: it is a book whose action is contrary to its philosophy. Jones, that is, portrays war as inhuman, degrading, and destructive—in fact, the only man in the novel said to enjoy war is Walsh, and he is obviously mad. Yet, somehow, Jones will not—or cannot—believe strongly enough in his own depiction.

The result of the men's experiences in *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line* is the concern of the last novel of the trilogy, *Whistle.* The book, the final two and a half chapters of which were completed by Willie Morris following Jones' death, takes up the chronological scheme of the two earlier novels. It

opens near the end of the war in an army hospital in the town of Luxor, Tennessee, a fictional combination of Nashville and Memphis, where Jones himself was a patient in an army hospital. The familiar "company" is now referred to as the "old company." Like its metaphorical counterpart, the modern family, it is falling apart. War is the force here which earlier held it together; war no longer exists for the members of the company and now they find themselves "homeless," without ties, and unable to survive alone. And society in general—the army as a whole—is sick, as is suggested, a la Thomas Mann, by the use of a hospital as setting. Jones is careful to show us that the soldiers do have real families—composed of unfaithful, scheming wives and overbearing fathers mostly. But the men still feel "uprooted" when faced with the dissolution of their more real army family. One soldier, Strange, speaks for all in his belief that "The existence of his civilian wife and her civilian family where he was accepted as a member was no help for this feeling at all." (207) The army as metaphor for the family is clearest in this novel.

The "returnees," we are told early in *Whistle*, "were like a family of orphaned children, split by an epidemic and sent to different care centers." (4) Four, however, are sent to the same center. At the start we see Strange, Winch, Prell, and Landers, members of the old company and all wounded—another metaphor—in various ways, on a ship en route to the hospital where they will join other survivors from their own and other companies. Strange is the Mother figure, a Madonna, in fact, in whose face there is "a kind of peasant's long-standing patience with the universe, and a sadness." (18) He is even called "mother" by the men and, perhaps too fittingly, has been the company mess sergeant. First Sergeant Winch (nee Warden, nee Walsh),[4] himself suffering from a permanent heart impairment, is presented as the tough, yet gentle and understanding Father-figure. (There is a double irony here: the fact of the heart-impairment, and the fact that Ford Madox Ford had used this irony already in *The Good Soldier*.) Winch, knowing that "Prell and Landers and Strange were what was left to him of his real life" (289), tries desperately to hold the disintegrating "family" together. He visits Prell, for instance, who, along with Landers, are the recalcitrant "sons," and, aware that Prell is losing heart, gets him so angry that he

begins to heal. He also helps Landers "play psycho" in order to get his discharge. The troubled sons, in turn, fight their "parents," the army, and their own feelings of alienation and displacement. Prell despairs first over his wounds and then, after being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, feels like a "fake hero." (450) Landers suffers the conflict between his "directionless rage." (163), the angst caused by membership in the army he hates, and his need to be part of the "family."

The fates of the characters are similar. They are all suicides of various sorts, the "sons" followed by their "parents." Landers had gone AWOL for weeks and then returned as if compelled to do so: he ". . . hated himself for coming back . . . when he could have stayed away. But he could no more have stayed away than he could have changed himself into a genuine deserter." (376) With the aid of Winch, Landers gets a medical discharge. He leaves the hospital, free. Yet, now removed from his "family," he has no place to go. He deliberately steps into the path of a speeding car and is killed. Then, Prell, who had been the most seriously physically wounded of the four returnees, after he has received his Medal, makes a bad marriage, agrees to act as a Public Relations man for the Army, and becomes involved in speechmaking and bond-selling. He, like the other men, is "beset with nightmares involving the squad." Moreover, he is guilty about his own position as the Medal of Honor Hero, an honor he does not believe he deserves. He feels he is making speeches for a living, that he has become an entertainer, part of a vaudeville team." (449) Prell's "accumulated rage" (451) leads him to pick fights in bars. He is killed during one of them.

Winch, the "father," has watched his family slowly deteriorate. His two sons dead, there is no reason now for his survival. He steadily begins to lose touch with reality. He fears the future which he sees symbolized as ". . . the two Wurlitzer jukeboxes in the main PX . . .—'chrome, and pipe, and plastic, and whirling irridescent lights, and jarred, canned music," (452) With two grenades, he destroys the Wurlitzers and the PX and is taken away to the hospital prison ward. Meanwhile, Strange—whom, because of this, Winch had earlier viewed as "off his rocker and a little crazy" (440)—has decided to rejoin the European campaign. He, the perennial Mother, has become attached to the

men of his new infantry unit. Strange, knowing what these men will soon so innocently face overseas, cannot ". . . stand being a witness again to all the anguish and mayhem and blood and suffering." (456) In the last scene of *Whistle*, on the ship which is taking him and the men to battle, Strange jumps over the side and is drowned.

Finally, in a world apart from battle, the situation in which the "company" was most tightly knit, its members, we are told, feel a "total disassociation and nonparticipation." (8) The conflict—war—had served to hold the "family" together. It has ended for the men. What remains is only the mystique of togetherness, the memory of past comradeship. Prominent now are personal problems, not so obvious before, when all emotional energy was expended in fighting a common enemy. Old ties can no longer sustain the family.

If there is a tie that binds all of Jones' war trilogy together, it is suggested by Jones himself in his "Note" to *Whistle*: the trilogy, he writes, ". . . will say just about everything I have ever had to say, or will ever have to say, on the human condition of war and what it means to us, as against what we claim it means to us." (xxi) Our "claim," as I understand the statement, is that war is destructive. But perhaps what Jones has tried to show, through the action of these three novels, is that it is creative in that it draws people together, forms ties, points human energies, and, contrary to expectations, keeps people alive. Peace—especially as evidenced in *Whistle*—is the true destructive force: it provides no outlet for frustration and the unleashing of its energies. With nowhere to go, these feelings turn inward and kill those who have them. The "message" we carry away from these novels—and perhaps some of Jones' other novels as well[5]—is one we civilians may find hard to accept: perhaps the only way we can survive is to take the chance of literally being destroyed.

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NOTES

1. All quotations from the trilogy refer to the following editions (where two dates appear, the second is the original date of publication): *From Here to Eternity* (New York: Avon Books, 1975; 1951); *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Avon Books, 1975; 1962); *Whistle* (New York: Delacorte, 1978).

2. Warden is drawn, that is, to what Richard P. Adams calls Jones' (not Prew's, interestingly) "romantic" beliefs. His characters, Adams believes, wish for ". . . a society so organized that a man can function in it freely, without compromising his individual integrity," a romantic notion ("A Second Look at *From Here to Eternity*," *College English*, XVII, p. 206).
3. The importance of setting in Jones' novels deserves a special study in itself. In the trilogy, obviously the war and army background is essential; it is, in great part, what the books are *about*. The setting creates the characters, in a sense, or, at least influences them so much that in another setting they would be different people. I am suggesting that it may work *too* well in this book. In some of Jones' other novels, in contrast, setting serves almost no function. In *The Merry Month of May* (New York, Delacorte, 1971), for one, set in the 1968 Paris of student revolution, the scene is not intrinsic to characterization, but rather seems arbtrarily chosen. It exists simply as a place where the story occurs. It is as if the people just happen to be living there at the time. A similar criticism might be made of *Go to the Widow-Maker* (New York: Delacorte, 1967), or *A Touch of Danger* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), either one of which could easily take place in a less exotic locale.
4. Cf. Jones' "Note" to *Whistle* in which he points to the similarity of characters' names in the three novels (i.e., Warden, Welsh, Winch; Prewitt, Witt, Prell; Stark, Storm, Strange), and says that a "cryptic key" ties them together. The characters "became" others, he writes, "while remaining the same people as before" (xix-xx). He does not elaborate further.
5. This is a situation—a "message"—which crops up in at least three other novels: in *Some Came Running* (New York: Scribner's, 1957), in the fight between Dewey and Raymond Cole as to whether war is "happy" or "sad"; in *Go to the Widow-Maker* in a slightly different way. There, the protagonist, Ron Grant, feels compelled to prove his manhood by taking disastrous chances skindiving; and in *A Touch of Danger*, where the aging detective hero, Lobo Davies, admits several times his delight in fighting.

From Carl Pretzel to Slats Grobnik: A Study of Chicago Humor

KENNY J. WILLIAMS

The study of humor as a literary genre is hampered by several conditions. To determine what is funny at any given moment is to suggest that there is some measurable norm which can be applied to material and which will produce—in spite of the great variations between readers—a similar response. Such a belief assumes that people will tend to laugh at the same things. Up to a point, this assertion has validity. Mistaken identity, slapstick of all types, the put-down of the urban elite by the proverbial country cousin, a play upon words, and incongruous situations have tended to produce laughter through the ages as one travels from any national culture to another. Because of this, it is easy to overlook the fact that humor is essentially a way of looking at life. It is a perception of one's world which for any given people or era is highly subjective and which—in the final analysis—defies explanation.

While overlooking the inadequacy of most attempts to define humor, many have assumed that American humor is somehow a monolithic form. They point with pride to the frontier spinners of yarns, to Mark Twain and other well known purveyors of comedy, to prove the homogeneity of American humor. Coupled closely with this belief is the notion that our national humor emphasizes overt actions and external events rather than wit or any other form of intellectualizing. This may also have validity, but it also ignores the host of humorists who do not fit well into any such predetermined mold. Perhaps movies and television have so reinforced elements of slapstick that it is difficult to imagine other facets of our national comic spirit.

The study of nineteenth-century American humor has been hindered by the tendency to locate the tradition in the West, a vague place whose constantly changing boundaries matched a definition which changed as rapidly as its position. It is not always possible for modern Americans, so accustomed as they are to spanning the continent in a few hours, to understand the concept of the "moving frontier" nor to understand that the nineteenth-century traveler had to make a tremendous cultural leap as he moved from East to West. It was generally assumed that the East—with its close ties to England and its relative close proximity to Europe—had absorbed an urbanity denied to the backwoods of the West. As a result, the East frequently overlooked its own crackerbox philosophers and comic Yankee peddlers while assuming a pseudo-sophistication which was not altogether native to the region. In the meantime, the western pioneers—in spite of obvious hardships—laughed at themselves and poked fun at the East.

Perhaps this is a simplistic portrait, but it does explain a partial development of our national humor. A more complex or complete analysis is risky for a number of reasons. In addition to the subjective element and a general perception of life, obviously the "funny" aspects of a situation often become more and more obscure as the event which occasioned it becomes more remote. Hence the quality of "universal appeal"—so highly touted in literary circles—becomes a quality infrequently seen. Furthermore, in some past cultures the purveyors of the comic tradition were either paid court fools or products of the leisure class. In either case, they had time to look at life around them and to laugh gently or acidly at what they saw. American humor, on the other hand, comes primarily from that great ubiquitous middle class, and it was produced by those who inherently believed that the New World was indeed a place of possible perfection; hence, any deviation from this promised perfection was cause for alarm. Such a concern was often expressed in the various attacks made upon what existed in order to get what could exist. Yet, the propaganda element—while an effective satiric device in its own time—does not make a study of the humorous perceptions of an earlier age a simple procedure. The conditions which caused alarm may no longer exist, and repeatedly the modern reader finds it a laborious

chore to reconstruct an earlier world. And certainly there is nothing more deadly than a joke which has to be explained.

Humor—as perhaps no other literary perception—demands that the reader reject current fads and knowledge in order to relive the conditions of the past. Out of this, however, there have emerged some comic types which are fully recognizable no matter how often their garb changes nor how frequently their situations differ. These types are certainly not native to American humor, but they have been utilized from the colonial period to the present. Eventually they became key figures in the humor of Chicago. For example, there is the unsophisticated one who "knows more" or "perceives more" than those who are considered enlightened. From the Yankee peddler to the southern slave and the western cowboy these characters have amused audiences with their gutsy perceptions which have rendered their sophisticated associates helpless. An important corollary of this type is the country bumpkin who can "put down" the urbane city dweller. In spite of protestations to the contrary, men and women with "book larnin' " are frequently set up to portray the ineffectiveness of education in the matter of day-to-day living.

While the general development of American humor must ultimately consider the inevitable regional distinctions which were decidedly more pronounced during the nineteenth century than they are today, the evolution of humor in Chicago was not as dependent upon the moving frontier as the growth of the city might suggest. Although much of it is related to both the local color tradition and the realistic movement in American writing in its use of locale and realistic details, early Chicago humor is far more akin to literary wit than to the vernacular humor of the frontier. Through the years an image of Chicago has emerged in American culture which has seriously curtailed a study of the city's comic tradition.

Traditionally Chicago literature tends to evoke a portrait of a gloomy literature which is devoted to charting the course of man's conflict with the urban environment. Whether the battle rages on LaSalle Street or Prairie Avenue or in the tenements near the stockyards, readers expect to see characters who are caught in a vise from which few escape. No one can forget Dreiser's "waif among the forces" nor his titan, both of whom are at the

mercy of the city of Chicago. Even Sandburg's celebration of the "Hog Butcher of the World" acknowledges the force of the city. Then there is the awesome picture of Bigger Thomas crossing Drexel Boulevard into a world which he certainly never made. Even the popularity of the Chicago Renaissance did little to alter the grim urban force which seemed to work constantly. Within this milieu there seemed to be little room for the amenities of life let alone humor. One can readily accept the role of the city in the development of the modern business novel, but a consideration of a comic tradition in the city frequently taxes credibility.

The earliest evidences of humor, interestingly enough, were comic by accident rather than by design. In the rush to tell the story of Chicago to the rest of the nation in the 1830's and 1840's the city's first historians relied heavily upon over-statement and the gross exaggerations associated with the tall tale. This tendency perhaps peaked in the early 1890's when the city's apologists were intent upon convincing the rest of the nation as well as the world that the choice of Chicago as the site of the World's Columbian Exposition was the correct decision but it continues to manifest itself in the writing of Chicago history even to the present time.

Traditionally the central figure of the tall tale tends to be a male figure who is "larger than life," whose superhuman strength permits him to tame the wildest elements of nature and of mankind. Around him developed a distinctive frontier humor associated with the rural West no matter whether that "west" meant the border towns of up-state New York or the prairies of the plains states or the backwoods of Georgia near the Okefinokee Swamp or the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The anonymous creators of the tall tales told their narratives with a straight-faced intensity but the over-all result was the evocation of laughter. When the techniques of the tall tale were re-structured by the city's historians, the intent was clearly different although the ingredients were the same. Yet, one cannot forget that the city's historians told their narratives—designed to be taken seriously—with all of the hyperbolic writing of the western narrative. They played up to the isolated feats of genius in such a manner that people came to believe that these gross exaggerations represented the rules rather than the exceptions.

It is perhaps in the re-definition of the frontier hero and in the utilization of the tall tale that Chicago demonstrated how thin indeed is the line between fact and fancy. The phenomenal growth of the city, the success of so many of the early settlers, the creation of a number of fortunes in a short period, the vast wealth which came from industries such as lumber, transportation, meat packing, the almost miraculous recovery from the Fire of 1871, and the presumption to entertain the world through the World's Columbian Exposition are still the substantial elements in the histories of Chicago. Yet each is so thoroughly imbued with exaggerations it is difficult to discover the truth. Often it seems that historians are actually pulling our legs, that they are piling one over-statement on top of another, that somehow the reader will awaken to find it all a BIG LIE. But the city stands defiantly on the shores of Lake Michigan telling its observers that the oft-repeated nineteenth-century tall tale has more truth in it than one would initially imagine.

What makes Chicago history such a likely candidate is the fact that the great accomplishments of the city were in the future when the first chronicles began to appear. The historians were so convinced that Chicago had some kind of divine mission that they were willing to subordinate absolute fidelity to the facts in order to transmit their sense of the city's unique place in history; in so doing they unwittingly adapted the popular tall tale for their purposes. The frontier hero who blazed new trails in the wilderness was replaced by the superhuman man of vision who looked at the mud around him and envisioned great buildings which would arise. The new urban heroes, many of whom actually did become legends in their own day, tackled the hostile environment and overcame it with a bravado seldom seen. No history of Chicago is complete without the story of S. D. Kerfoot who the day after the Fire of 1871 took some still warm lumber and constructed a shack. He then attached the sign which has been read around the world as a symbol of the "I-Will" spirit of Chicago: "All gone save wife, children, and energy." And with that announcement, he began his real estate business again. But Kerfoot was simply one of many such heroes in the city.

Undoubtedly the emphasis upon the self-reliant individual who could successfully conquer the city led eventually to an emphasis upon biography. It is not surprising to see the history of the city told and retold in terms of the lives of the businessmen who succeeded. This partially explains the multiplicity of collected biographies which were produced in the nineteenth century. Designed to be taken seriously, they nonetheless are frequently humorous exercises in the gross exaggerations which so often can be seen in laudatory biographical studies. They portray superhuman characters performing superhuman deeds, and they have become the basis for much of what is known today about the "giants of finance." Other communities—notably New England and the South—have had their share of vanity biographies, but nowhere were they taken as seriously as they were (and perhaps still are) than in Chicago.

The urbanized tall tale has as its hero the character who not only has been influenced by the commercial nature of the city but also one who is willing to take as many chances as is necessary with the unknown. With each retelling of his story, he actually seems to assume dimensions which defy explanation. Whatever humor one may find in the exaggerated sense of place in these early historians, it must be remembered that they—like their frontier counterparts—often told their narratives with absolute solemnity; however, they rarely viewed their work as mere entertainment. Most of them were polemical and didactic in order to prove to the weak as well as to the uninitiated that "all things are possible." At the same time, they were designed to convince older sections of the country that the city was a community which had to be viewed seriously. In retrospect, however, the modern reader is almost forced by the diction used in these works to take them with that proverbial "grain of salt."

The reality of Chicago was seldom emphasized in those early days. What was to become the city was not a particularly hospitable region. What has become known as the "loop area"—the center of the commercial city—was virtually a swampland. The magnificent lakefront was still part of the lake, and the North and South Branches of the Chicago River were little more than streams which flowed in the wrong direction. The territory was not a natural junction between any two known points. Out-of-the-way, dependent upon the mercurial wiles of the often severe weather, at the mercy of understanding the vagaries of the Chica-

go Portage, this was a place which truly, as the novelist Robert Herrick was to say at the end of the century, developed "in defiance of nature."

While the tall tale is frequently associated with the western frontier and with "folksy" characters who compensate for their lack of "book larnin' " by an extraordinary amount of "horse sense," it is not unusual to identify the tall tale with more literate historic writing. Both Rev. Samuel Peters' *General History of Connecticut* (1781) and Washington Irving's *History of New York by Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809) contain many episodes which are predicated upon gross exaggerations, super-strong characters, wild adventures which tax credibility, and even enough seriousness to make a reader wonder at times: "Is this true?" Throughout the nineteenth century it was not unusual for the historian "to embroider" the facts either for entertainment or for moralistic purposes. It was in Chicago, however, that this embroidery seemed to reach gigantic proportions; and the tall tale became an essential ingredient in the writing of history.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century Chicago had produced more historians than the average city of its age. Certainly by this time the tall tale had lost its frontier qualities and had become an integral part of the urban experience. The gross exaggerations were still present, but now they seemed to be based upon the truth. These works were highly defensive and became a means of combatting the questions which were in the minds of many about the city. The peculiarities of locale were examined for praise rather than ridicule. The wit of the backwoodsman was replaced by the shrewdness of the businessman who was just as adept at outwitting external forces. Adventure—or rather a series of instances in which the hero prevails in spite of overwhelming odds—was still important. Language, however, was "laundered," and the substandard diction with its frequent misspellings and other aberrations of the speech pattern were omitted. The tall tale had come to the city and in the process had produced some unintentional humorists. Consequently, by the end of the century and well into the twentieth, historians of Chicago life continued to repeat the tall tales of their predecessors. And—thanks to these early historians of Chicago—the city remains an urban area surrounded as much by this aura of myth and legend as of fact.

Among the earliest historians of Chicago was Joseph Balestier, a native of Vermont who migrated to Chicago in 1835. As a lawyer he was kept busy with various real estate deals. Speculation in land had become a national sport, and he was aware that many fortunes were being made. Five years after his arrival (and just three years after the incorporation of the city), he delivered a lecture entitled "The Annals of Chicago" on January 21, 1840. It was subsequently printed and widely circulated. This first history of a city less than five years old was based upon the promises and liabilities of land speculation. At the same time it was insistence upon the "manifest destiny" of the city as it heralded the many possibilities which could be anticipated. Later historians of Chicago have agreed that the early real estate dealers played a major role in the development not only of the myth of Chicago but also of the major fortunes of the city. So widespread was the "land fever" that, according to Balestier, no walk of life was spared. "The farmer forsook the plow and became a speculator upon the soil instead of a producer from beneath the sod . . . / and even / the physician 'threw physic to the dogs' and wrote promissory notes instead of prescriptions . . ."

While Balestier and other historians dealt with the phenomenal possibilities of the location, Juliette Kinzie unconsciously defined the character who would be successful in the city. Her pamphlet *Narrative of the Massacre at Chicago, August 15, 1812, and of Some Preceding Events* (1844) and subsequently her personal narrative of life in the Northwest, *Wau-Bun* (1856) are significant statements of definition. Using her father-in-law as the example, she makes clear that John Kinzie is a product of the place and it is to be his type who will be the "new man" in this new world and ultimately the hero of the new city. She overlooked his dubious role during the Fort Dearborn Massacre and declared that urban honor would be predicated upon a faithfulness to the commercial spirit rather than to any abstract view of honor.

Each calamity in Chicago brought forth renewed efforts to prove the city's worth. Once again, over-statements and exaggerations were common. Especially was this true during the post-fire period which saw a strong emphasis upon the power of the city to regain its former stature and to become even better than ever.

"Chicago will rise again" became the unofficial motto during this period and was repeated so often that no one is quite so certain where it began. The Fire of 1871 produced more "instant historians" than any other era in the city's life. Everyone—or so it seemed—had a story to tell, and everyone else—no matter how far away—seemed to have time to listen. Among the strong supporters of the city was one J. M. Wing whose journal, *The Landowner*, had been established in 1869, in order to support the real estate interests. After the Fire he declared:

> The lands of the West are the magician whose work has astonished the world, and because these lands still exist, Chicago can never be destroyed, but must rise again.

Later he explained the development of Chicago in biblical terms:

> There has been but one parallel to the mighty creation recorded in Genesis, and that parallel is the rebuilding of Chicago in twelve months. That God made the world in six days, by the divine exercise of power, is no greater a marvel than that men have erected 3,000 brick and stone structures—a majority of them as costly and massive buildings as the world can boast—in three hundred working days . . .

Although the descriptions of early Chicago make much of the city's beauty (real and imagined) and assert that the official motto *"Urbs in Horto"* was realistic, every resident was aware that the garden-like beauty was not apparent at all times. Particularly annoying to many were the wooden sidewalks which would often float away from their insecure moorings. More than one author commented on this inconvenience. It was not unusual, after a snow-laden winter or heavy spring rain storm, to see the unpaved streets and walks turn into mudholes. Chicago's early mud was—and still is—the basis for a number of apocryphal stories. Signs such as "This Way to Hell," "Short Cut to China," or "No Bottom Here" were supposedly quite commonplace. And one of the frequently-repeated tales deals with a Chicagoan who was going about his duties when he sank in the mud where he remained for some time with only his head showing. A passerby finally saw him and asked if he needed help. The man replied: "Hell, no! I've got my horse under me!"

As late as 1912 the anonymous author of *The Story of Chicago* claimed:

> The writer once saw a team of horses that had been drowned in a ditch that is now within the corporate limits of the city, and on another occasion helped to dig out a farm wagon and a team of horses on West Madison Street near Central Avenue, the wagon containing the farmer and his wife and two children. They had been swallowed up in a ditch . . . This occurred in about the year 1879 when that portion of the city was open country with but few scattered residences. Getting downtown in those days may be left to the imagination of the reader. In the spring months it was by no means a light undertaking.

Among the purveyors of provincial history Joseph Kirkland was most consistent in trying to come to terms with the many myths that had developed about the city, and he attempted in his *The Story of Chicago* (1892) to examine as many of them as possible. For example, Chicago was frequently attacked for the impurity of its drinking water. This was often a reason given by detractors of the city in the late 1880's to prove that the World's Columbian Exposition should not be held in Chicago. In "Chowder in the Bath-Tub" from his *History*, Kirkland addressed himself to the issue of the city's water.

> [In the 1850's], be it remembered, the water was taken into the pumping well (at the east end of Chicago Avenue) directly from the lake shore, a few piles being driven around the inlet, about close enough together to exclude a young whale. The small fry of the finny tribe passed freely inward, and if they were lucky they passed out again; if unlucky, they were sucked up by the pumps and driven into the pipes; where they made their way into the faucets of private houses—even the hot water faucets, in which case they came out cooked, and one's bathtub was apt to be filled with what squeamish citizens called chowder. At about this time a most sensational article appeared in the "Times," gravely asserting that we were like cannibals, eating our ancestors. For, it said, the cemetery, being on the lake shore a half mile north of the pumping works, was subject to overflow and abrasion by the waves; wherefore the fishes were fed on the dead at the cemetery [and] were sucked into the pumps,

> and were then fed to the living in the city! Of course, this was nonsense, but it was the kind of nonsense that fastened public attention and made easy the next step in our civil life, the tunneling of the lake and bringing the water from the pure depths two miles from shore. It was a bold, a startling project, successfully put into operation.

Another charge frequently hurled against Chicago during the latter part of the nineteenth century related the city government with political corruption. Kirkland stated unequivocally in a section entitled "No Chicago Fortunes Based Upon Public Plunder" that "no rich man in Chicago can be pointed out as having made his fortune by his connection with 'politics,' National, State, or City, or by any dealings with the civic government." He found it necessary to footnote his statement with the following remark:

> On the other hand, much wrong may be done by corruption whereby the corrupted public servant profits but little, while the corrupting outsider profits hugely. The charge is freely made that the legislative branch of the city government is hopelessly corrupt; that even legislative measures for public good can not be passed without a lavish use of money, and that franchises of fabulous value are constantly and shamelessly bartered away. Meanwhile, men in general are looking for some Messiah to arise who will clear out the temple with a knotted scourge—but each man is individually 'too busy' to stir in the matter.

Toward the end of his *History* Kirkland took cognizance of the elements of humor which unwittingly creep into historic writing. In a section entitled "Each Historian Laughs at His Predecessor," he observed:

> In dwelling upon the growth of Chicago the historian is prone to treat it as if it had arrived at its acme; forgetting that every past chronicler has done the same, and been belittled by later progress. Mr. Balestier in his paper . . . [of] 1840 when the population had reached the proud eminence of 4,479 exults thus: 'Chicago has sprung, as it were, from the very mire, and assumed the aspect of a populous city . . .' Such enthusiasm . . . compels a smile as one looks back upon it; and he is like to forget that his own observations will be no less amusing to the writers who shall come later. Yet he has always the comforting thought that each laughter in turn, through a long series, will furnish amusement to those who follow him, even as the annalist of 1840 is smiled at by him of 1891 . . . .

At the end of his work Kirkland returned to the theme of "manifest destiny," a common characteristic of the city's historians who point to the almost supernatural quality of Chicago's growth. While much of the superhuman is explained in abstract terms, specific issues such as the problem of drainage in the city, the installation of sewers, and the raising of the grade were marvels which historians constantly repeated. They became—along with the role of George M. Pullman—part of the folklore of the region. While the story of the raising of the Tremont Hotel has varied with historians, according to most reports 5,000 jackscrews were used and the guests in the hotel never knew what was occurring. After this, some of the brick and stone buildings on Lake Street—the major commercial thoroughfare—were raised in a similiar manner "without the interruption of a single day's business." The extent to which the tales of the heroic feats in Chicago have permeated the city's history can be noted in the serious "The Incredible Saga of the Raising of Chicago" which appeared in "Jack Flack's Chicago" in 1975.

The notion that the urbanization of the tall tale means in reality that the tale itself moved from the genre of literary imagination to a utilitarian function as it was used for the recording of history becomes less implausible if one remembers not only the phenomenal growth of the city but also the basic nature of the West which has been described well by Charley Russell, a cowboy who asserted that the lies told by men on the frontier were essentially reflections of the lies inherent in the natural surroundings of the West. According to Russell:

> When [a man] comes West he soon takes lessons from the prairies, the desert ranges a hundred miles away seem within touchin' distance, streams run uphill, and Nature appears to lie some herself.

It is undoubtedly because we have associated so much of western humor with the free-for-all spirit of the traditional tall tale, the practical joke, and the "belly laugh" that we are not always prepared for the iciness and tartness of much of Chicago's

early deliberate humor which is far more sophisticated than the times would suggest. As early as the 1840's a group of satirists appeared who observed the political situations of the city, state, and nation and recorded their perceptions. Much of their work perhaps fails to impress the modern reader because the issues now seem vague, but at a given moment in the city's history these early humorists made some cogent — albeit bitter — comments about the city which was being described by the historians as a place of great possibility and opportunity.

In 1840 "The Magician," a two-act play satirizing the candidacy of Martin Van Buren for re-election, appeared in the *Daily American* on May 5 and 6. Written by J. T. C. of Ottawa, Illinois, the play utilizes every Juvenalian device to ridicule Van Buren and his associates while bordering on libel. In 1843 Rocky Mountain, Esq. produced the city's first lampoon. "The Charivari" is filled with obscure allusions, many of which may fail to amuse the modern reader; yet there are clear enough references to the elected officials of the city, foreign immigrants, and the judicial system for the farce to be understood—at least in part. It is of historic interest, however, that a city less than ten years old could have produced such a detailed work which was published and circulated in pamphlet form. During that same year, *Isaac N. Arnold: A Satire in Two Cantos* appeared. Written in polished heroic couplets the unnamed author attacked all of the important political figures in the city and concluded with the lines:

> And now,—farewell to thee, thou luckless wight;
> To all thy bastard honors—a good night.
> Spurn not, our ruder manners in thy wrath,
> We'll mend them—*when we write thy epitaph.*

The strong tendency toward the use of political satire as well as a concern for matters of civic and national corruption have been integral elements in the development of Chicago's humor. From the 1840s through the Civil War period to the end of the nineteenth century the city has produced political observers who have imagined that their public ridicule might in some way change the course of events. This extends to the present day in the work of such columnists as F. Richard Ciccone of the Chicago *Tribune* whose extended-dialogues between Good Jane and Bad Jane comment specifically upon the strange ambiguities which he perceives in former Mayor Jane Byrne. And much of the syndicated work of Mike Royko, whose Slats Grobnik is a latter-day observer of the local national scene, seems to be a direct descendant of the critics of the 1840s. Underlying much of the satiric production is an oft-unstated belief that the city had—and perhaps continues to have—a unique opportunity to create an ideal community on the shores of Lake Michigan.

By the 1850s there had developed a group of newspapermen who behind the anonymity of assumed names commented on the growth of the city as well as of the nation in a tradition perfected by Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley. It was an accepted technique to discuss the issues of the day through a created persona, and Chicago's writers took advantage of it. The tradition, of course, was by no means limited to Chicago. Throughout world literature this has been an acceptable means by which observers could remove themselves from the immediacy of their work and gain additional perspective. In early American literature one cannot forget Franklin's Poor Richard nor Washington Irving's Diedrich Knickerbocker, Jonathan Oldstyles, Geoffrey Crayon, Esq. For those who find Dunne's creation of Martin Dooley to be unique, it always comes as a shock to realize that there were many such figures before the real one came along. He was preceded by a host of such commentators and observers. Few of them achieved the kind of popularity which was Dooley's, but before the end of the nineteenth century in Chicago George P. Upton's Peregrine Pickle, Franc B. Wilke's Poliuto, and Charles Harris's Carl Pretzel were familiar figures.

The Chicago *Tribune* perhaps used the largest group of such created characters to comment on the city and the nation. In the absence of conclusive identifications for all of these columnists they could be identified by their apparent concerns. For example, in the early 1870s Aaron About wrote of the Far West including in his reports tales of Brigham Young and his marital situations. "Nix" dealt largely with the matters leading to the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson, and "Fern Leaf" devoted attention to the interests of the newspaper's female readers. The correspondent from Boston who signed himself "Revere" and Raconteur" repeated the tales of Midwestern interest which came out of

Washington, D.C., as did "Ouisel." State matters from Springfield were duly reported to Chicago by "Sangamon." But of all of them it was perhaps the letters of Peregrine Pickle, authored by George P. Upton, that provided the longest lasting interest for *Tribune* readers. The letters, which generally appeared in the Sunday edition of the newspaper in the late 1860s, covered all subjects of general interest to the subscribers and were eventually issued in book form.

George P. Upton (1834-1919) moved to Chicago in 1855. After some minor newspaper work, he became a member of the *Tribune* staff and remained with that journal for fifty-seven years. He first introduced his alter ego as "Old Gunnybags" but soon switched to "Peregrine Pickle." He was especially fond of portraying the peculiarities of Chicago businessmen, but the general life of the city came under his scrutiny. Upton found the hypocrisy of the clergy to be rather disconcerting and attacked this whenever he could. For example, in "Whited Sepulchres" which appeared on May 18, 1867, he presented the following portrait of one Rev. Augustus Fitz-Herbert

> [who] pays more attention to his linen than to his text; who parts his hair with more care than he writes his discourses; who is sweet at a wedding and "ravenish" at a funeral; who toadies to his wealthy parishioners; who consigns the poor devil to eternal torment and glosses over the failings of Croesus; who takes to the young ladies' aid societies and neglects the maternal meetings; who, in the capacity of a shepherd, prefers a tender young ewe to a faithful old sheep; . . . who can tell you the new ritualistic fashion of the robe, but knows little of the spiritual fashion of the great congregation. . . .

In "Muscular Christianity," which appeared on August 17, 1869, Upton suggested that it would be well if the city's clergymen learned to play baseball because "the Devil plays on all bases at once, and he can take the hottest kind of ball without winking. Our ministers ought to get so they can do the same thing." The observation continues:

> A great many of our ministers have bones—some, rather dry bones—nerves, sinews, and muscles, just as an infant has, but they want development. They need blood which goes bounding through the veins and arteries and tingles to the finger tips. Their sinews must stiffen up, their nerves toughen and their muscles harden. This process can be obtained by baseball. It will settle their stomachs and livers, and when these are settled, their brains will be clear. They won't have to travel to cure the bronchitis, and won't be so peevish over good sister Thompson, who needs a great deal of consolation, owing to her nervous system.

After singling out specific well known ecclesiastical figures to participate on his divine baseball team, the commentary ends with the following admonition to the clergy:

> I tell you, my brethren, in this city of Chicago, the Devil is getting the upper hand, and you must go in on your muscle. Get your backs up. Stiffen your muscles and then hit like a sledge-hammer. If old Croesus, in your congregation, is a whiskey-seller, don't be afraid of him. Hit him on the head so it will hurt. If Free-on-Board is a professional grain gambler, hit him on the head. If old Skinflint acts dirtily with his tenants, tell him he is a miserable old devil. Don't be afraid of him. He will like you all the better for it. If he won't get down on his knees by fair talking, take hold of his coat-collar and put him upon his knees.

While Upton at the *Tribune* was amusing readers with the observations of Peregrine Pickle, Franc B. Wilkie of Wilbur Storey's Chicago *Times* was writing under the pseudonym of Poliuto. In one of his most successful and masterful pieces he described the city's west side whose wealthy never achieved the status of the residents of Prairie Avenue of the city's south side. But it remained the task of Charles Harris (1841-1892), who, in the persona of Carl Pretzel, summarized much of the technique of humor which had preceded him, to provide a portent of what was to come.

Amazingly little is known of Harris's life given his popularity in the 1870s. In one of the early issues of his magazine he wrote a self-portrait, but one wonders how much of that is substantial and how much was designed for the titillation of the readers. Carl Pretzel was first introduced before the Fire of 1871, but he gained national recognition the following year through his first major publication which was the monthly *Carl Pretzel's Magasine*

Pook. Carl Pretzel, a recent émigré from Germany, had settled in Chicago and found the American experience in general and the urban one in particular quite fascinating. He commented upon the city's history, politics, and general life initially in a German-American speech which in itself was a comic device. So great was his success in the city that he soon "went national" and subsequently issued *Carl Pretzel's Weekly* and *Carl Pretzel's National Weekly* (which was occasionally called the *National Illustrated Weekly*). Each successive name change took Harris farther away from his original style until the *National Weekly* became truly a weekly of "social, political, and miscellaneous matters" in a city which had an over-abundance of ephemeral journals. Although the national journal appeared until the 1890s, success had apparently spoiled Carl Pretzel and had not dealt kindly with him. Harris found it necessary to augment his German-American speech pattern with homilies and political tirades written in standard English. Clearly devoted to Republican politics the weekly magazine became simply another outlet for political commentary in a city which had too many rather than a unique magazine of humor. But in its heyday, its long and short comments on various aspects of urban life provided the city which had such a large German population with many laughs. For example, Carl Pretzel was fond of satirizing the religious charlatans of the day, and Protestantism with its many clergymen and sects was an especial favorite of Harris. In one of the short comments, Harris recounted Carl Pretzel's visit to a spiritualist meeting, a favorite pastime among many nineteenth-century Chicagoans.

> Dhere vas a shpirdual meedin der odder nite, und Carl Pretzel vhent to see himself about. Der peoples vas all sidden der table round, und vas dalking und lafin plenty fun mit der shpirids, (bottled, I dink.)
>
> Some vidders vas dalking mit dheir dead husbands, and old vimmens vas dalking, und old mens vas dalking mit der shpirids of some young damsels, und dhus it moofed along for a good much vhile.
>
> Pooty quick, dher shpirid of Pretzel's dead frow Gretchen, vas vissible among der shpiridesess vat did comed on der scene, und she did vant to comed, to talk mit him some tings.

> So der shpirid did said:
> "Ish dot mine husband vat vas ben?"
> "Yah," said Pretzel.
> "Vell, Carl, vas you habby like der duce?" said der shpirid.
> "Vell I dink I vas," said Carl.
> "Vell, mine husband, wouldn't you like pooty vell to come und been mit me here?" said der shpirid.
> "Not ofer I know myself pooty vell, for I dink it was enuff plenty warm here," said Carl.
> Der meedin broke out now, mit dat.

Hardly a subject passed the notice of Carl Pretzel, but the unevenness of the selections may well have been a result of Harris's inability to sustain his use of dialect. By 1880, his seventh year as a journalist, he was relying more and more on political pieces and didactic sketches written in standard English. His magazine's appeal to German-Americans was minimized, but it was still a Republican journal. Rather typical of the type of material which seemed to interest Harris is the column "Morsels for Sunday Contemplation." On September 11, 1880, Carl Pretzel, without dialect, presented the following "morsels":

> 1. There are men whose friends are more to be pitied than their enemies.
> 2. A weak man will say more than he does;
> A strong one will do more than he says.
> 3. An obstinate man does not hold opinions, they hold him.
> 4. If slander be a snake it is a winged one; it flies as well as it creeps.
> 5. Fortune does not change men, it unmasks them.
> 6. We are sure to be losers when we quarrel with ourselves.
> 7. Violence in the voice is often the death rattle of reason in the throat.

The weekly editions generally carried a large number of advertisements (some of which were written in German dialect in an obvious attempt to sway the German population), various snippets from other papers, jokes, and local gossip which appeared in a column entitled "Lies of the Week." Many of the jokes clearly carried a moralistic message which seemed in keeping with the

self-appointed messianic mission of Harris. For example, the following "joke" appeared in *Carl Pretzel's Illustrated Weekly* of Saturday, July 6, 1878:

> "How dare you say that I never open my mouth without putting my foot into it?"
>
> "I hope you will forgive me: for when I said those words I had never seen the size of your foot."

The variety and unevenness of Charles Harris's miscellanea are so diverse that it is difficult to assess judiciously his contributions to the development of humor in Chicago. Clearly capitalizing on the techniques and methods of Hans Breitmann, Harris never achieved the popularity which he sought. Yet his initial successes were great enough locally to make him believe that he could survive through a national publication. Harris early discovered that some material and opinions which would not have been tolerated if presented in standard English were acceptable when written in dialect. It is extremely possible that had he lived longer and had he been able to settle on his journal's form, he would have become a major voice rather than a regional curiosity. He was one of the first writers in Chicago to discover the appeal of material written in a foreign dialect. While he was not the first to use this altered speech pattern, he was decidedly the first to use it as a means of gentle humor rather than ridicule. That he was able to survive during a period when the city's anti-German attitude reached a level of hysteria suggests that Carl Pretzel may have been instrumental in calming some fears among the non-German-speaking population. Ultimately, he provided a base for the type of humor associated with Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley.

More in keeping with the immediate life of the city was the work of Ten Eyck White whose *Tribune* columns once were considered a popular selling device for the newspaper. In fact, in the late 1870s and early 1880s "Lakeside Musings" became as popular—if not more so—than the letters of Peregrine Pickle. Written by Ten Eyck White, about whom there seems to be little known, they dealt with the pretensions of Chicago society often as seen through the eyes of the earthy journalist known as "the horse reporter," who alone among Chicagoans seemed to understand

so much of the futility of modern life. Eventually many of these popular columns were collected in 1884 in a volume entitled *Lakeside Musings* published by Rand, McNally. Thus, it was that the pseudo-sophisticated life of the nouveaux riches, the aspirations of young shop men looking for rich wives, and the general moral tone of the city were burlesqued and lampooned before Eugene Field startled the city with his irreverent "Sharps and Flats" which ignored the traditional sacred cows. But given the subsequent popularity of both Ade and Dunne it is interesting to note that White used Bridgeport, the Irish settlement, for many of his sketches and often utilized the fable as the vehicle . . . as his narrative device. While he specialized in the short tale or sketch, there were many instances of his use of humorous verse. Very much as Field was to do later, White frequently used the surprise ending which—if taken literally—presented a rather grim conclusion for a verse which probably was not too funny in the first place. White's prose sketches are better than his poetry, but the following two examples are adequate illustrations of his technique.

A dashing young man in St. Paul
Loved a maiden exceedingly tall;
  Two nights in the week
  He would muster up cheek
And make the fair creature a call.

One day her pa shouldered his gun
And went to discover the son
  Of a sea-cook who would
  On a young heart intrude
And say he was only in fun.

He met the young man in a store,
And blew him out through the front door;
  A father-in-law jury
  Let him off in a hurry,
But the boys shunned that girl evermore.

* * * * * *

Get out mamma's rubber boots
  And a hose;
She will wash kitchen windows,
  Though half froze.

Do not let her catch a cold,
For our parent's getting old;
We don't want her to be talking
Through her nose.

With the arrival of Eugene Field from Denver in 1883, nineteenth-century Chicago humor reached its finest hour. He held a mirror to the community and recorded—sometimes with a deadpan seriousness—the foibles of the Chicagoan's pretentious "high culture." Always aware of the West's attempt to imitate the East, Field pointed out with absolute clarity that the Chicago businessmen and their women were foolishly trying for a life which was foreign to them. His columns spared no segment of the city's life. At the same time he was concerned about the growing rise of the so-called realistic method of American writing and cited Howells and Garland and culprits.

One of the key elements in the production of American humor is the combination of the absurd surprise with the straight-faced narrator so well demonstrated in the storytelling techniques of Artemus Ward and Mark Twain. Incongruity was piled upon incongruity and audiences literally howled with glee. Much of this humor had no purpose other than to be entertaining. As much depended upon who told the story and how it was told as upon what was told. Much also depended upon the brevity and the absence of intervening details. For example, the squib of Eugene Field followed an interesting form and represented an abbreviated syllogism.

[Major premise]: Willie Jones loaded and fired a canon yesterday.
[Minor premise]: Missing or unstated.
[Conclusion]: The funeral will be tomorrow.

By omitting what in essence would be the minor premise Field omitted the details which would perhaps add realism and a transition from the major premise to the conclusion but would—in the process—eliminate the surprise element as well as the incongruity of placing the conclusion immediately after the major premise.

As early as 1884, a year after Field's arrival to work at the *Daily News*, Reginald DeKoven (a scion of an old Chicago family) and Harry B. Smith, who was to become an outstanding librettist,

issued *The Rambler*, a journal devoted to satiric comments about life in the city. By 1887 they found the difficulties of maintaining the journal too difficult and split their partnership. This was the same year that Opie Read moved his *Arkansaw Traveler* to Chicago. Although primarily devoted to humorous tales and character sketches from southern life, *The Arkansaw Traveler* depended upon rail travelers for its public, and what better center than Chicago, the rail capital of the nation?

In spite of the increasing number of humorists whose work was becoming well known, the history of humor magazines suggested the difficulty of these periodicals to survive over a long period of time. Beginning with the publication of *The Wang Doodle* in the late 1850s, comic papers and journals of humor have not fared well in Chicago. So much of their material is ephemeral and of little value to later readers other than to give some indications about what made a community laugh at a given period in its history.

By the time of Field's death in 1895 there had been established a series of comic writers in the city. Some were a sophisticated breed like Harry B. Smith who wrote for the vituperous journal, *America*. In fact, his short poems and squibs helped to neutralize the anti-immigrant diatribes of that magazine. The following is not his best verse, but it is an example of the type of work which he produced in the late 1880s for *America*.

HONEST AND NON EST

An honest man, his neighbors stated,
He was, and honesty is rated
A highly estimable trait,
Albeit somewhat out of date,
As *policy* too much inflated.

Therefore when people of him prated,
His many virtues they collated,
Pronouncing him both "square" and "straight,"
An honest man.

But he became infatuated
With Wall Street. Now he is located
In Montreal, and people wait
At home in a revengful state

For funds that he appropriated—
A *non est* man.

By the time of the World's Columbian Exposition there had been produced in Chicago a wide-range of comic and humorous offerings. That much of it should be political satire should not surprise anyone familiar with the city's history. Because of the serious nature of much of this work, there is not a strong tradition of unrestricted laughter in the city's humor. Oddly there developed a grim sense of the comic during the Civil War and continued to the end of the century. The parody of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" first appeared in the antagonistic *America* and gives some notion of how blatant was the anti-immigrant spirit which prevailed during the late 1880s.

AMERICA

MY COUNTRY—that's if I
May use the pronoun "my"
Of what's not mine—
Land where my fathers died
(To make more room inside
For aliens to ride
Upon my spine!)

My "native" country, thee—
Where Clan-na-Gaels are free
And boycotts thrive—
I love thy stocks and bills,
Thy Goulds and D. B. Hills;
My heart its rapture spills
In blocks of five.

Our Country's God, to thee,
Oh, thou Almighty D.,
To thee we sing.
Long may our flag be green,
Our patriots unseen
And our Four Hundred mean
Great Gold Our King.

At the turn of the century, the work of Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, and Ring Lardner—as well as a host of lesser journalists—helped to make Chicago not only a literary center but also a mecca for the nation's humorists. Nothing was sacred as they created swaggering urban characters and recorded speech patterns which all too often have been copied successfully. Even the history of American literature would be incomplete without references to such works as Ade's *Fables in Slang* (1899), all of Dunne's Dooley books, and Lardner's *Gullible's Travels* (1917).

As the story of the development of Chicago's humor continues into the twentieth century, one sees a repetition of many of the patterns which had already been established in the nineteenth. Given the fact that historians have made much of the city's relationship to the western tradition of American culture, it is of interest to realize that seldom did the city's humor show a dependence upon the frontier with the exception of the urbanization of the tall tale in such a way that the form became part of the tradition of historic writing and not of humor *per se*. The simplicity often associated with western comedy is missing in Chicago's observers, many of whom used a wit whose base was rooted in what appears today to be the obscure.

But not all of Chicago's humor suffers from vague references to local conditions. Throughout the nineteenth century the humorists—like so many others in the city—viewed the development of Chicago as a unique opportunity to create a more or less ideal community. Anything or anybody who seemed to hinder that possibility was subject to attack and ridicule. Corrupt politicians, selfish businessmen, and foreign immigrants were just a few of the targets. The latter provided the base for the development of an ethnic humor in the city. By the time of Mr. Dooley, there had already been produced in Chicago not only such bitter satires as *The Holy Coat* which appeared in an early issue of *The Watchman of the Prairies* and Robert Peattie's "Nightmare of a Teutonized America" but also the lighter work and genial humor of Charles Harris's Carl Pretzel. In a city which was growing as rapidly as Chicago, each national group was selfishly trying to protect its staked-out urban territory, and the insecurity of each group is apparent in the bitter indictments made against each other. It was only when there was a growing sense of community that these ethnic jokes and observations could become "funny."

As the city grew in the nineteenth century, the doctrine of "upward mobility" was literally a cardinal principle. While most

took seriously their own attempts to rise in the world, they found the antics of their neighbors amusing. When "upward mobility" became synonymous with trying to imitate the imagined eastern standards of gentility, it provided another entire area of humor for such observers as Eugene Field. Chicago humorists, like those of other ages and places, have traditionally served as critics of the city's social and political order.

By the time of Royko's creation of Slats Grobnik in the mid years of the twentieth century, Chicago's humor had turned once again to the bumbling, observant character whose perceptions of life are often more clear than those of the more sophisticated urban dweller. Slats grew up in the tough section of the city and as a youngster questioned the pretensions and empty forms of life around him. But his inquiries arose not out of a desire to change life but simply to understand his environment. As Slats becomes enlightened, Royko—like other humorists—holds up the mirror so that the reader can come to terms with some ordinary elements of modern life. Yet, underlying Royko's Slats Grobnik is a basic cynicism which has always been part of the humor of Chicago. If we laugh at Slats, we laugh at our own bumbling stupidity. And like Slats, we are also caught in the urban milieu with little hope for escape. While the probable optimism of the nineteenth century has been replaced by a more pessimistic view of life, Chicago's humor still contains a defensive element and owes its transmission to journalists who—like Mike Royko—not only have captured the city's character, speech patterns, and irreverences but also have made them part of our national character.

Duke University

MIKE ROYKO: MIDWESTERN SATIRIST

Paul P. Somers, Jr.

Mike Royko is a nationally syndicated newspaper writer whose columns first appeared in the Chicago *Daily News* in 1966 and continued there until the paper's demise in 1978. They are now featured in the Chicago *Sun Times.* Selected columns have been reprinted in three books: *Up Against It* (1967), *I May Be Wrong, But I Doubt It* (1968), and *Slats Grobnik and Some Other Friends* (1973). Although his 1971 book, *Boss: Richard J. Daly of Chicago,* was widely acclaimed—outside the mayor's office—this study will concern itself with Royko's reprinted columns, considering him as a Midwesterner, an American humorist, a satirist, and, finally, as a moralist who is outraged by the world as he sees it.

Writing within the confining genre of the daily—thrice weekly during most of his years at the *Daily News*—newspaper column, Royko has created some memorable characters, especially Slats Grobnik, whom we'll discuss later. Royko's persona is not rural, like Kin Hubbard's Abe Martin, and, while it is emphatically urban, neither is it ethnic like Finley Peter Dunne's Irish Mr. Dooley. As a matter of fact, Royko doesn't seem to have had to create a persona at all. From all accounts, he really *is* overworked and irrascible, and he has been aging ungracefully for the past ten years. In the introduction to *Up Against It,* Bill Mauldin wrote: "Royko is like his city. He has sharp elbows, he thinks sulphur and soot are natural ingredients of the atmosphere, and he has an astonishing capacity for idealism and love devoid of goo." Royko himself affirmed: "like many Chicagoans, I grew up with a distrust of most things and creatures."

The following reply to a letter from "A Good Teen-ager" succinctly identifies Royko's point of view, which he had established as early as 1967, two years before this column appeared:

> Dear Good Teen-ager:
> I received another one of your letters today. You are getting to be a pain in the neck. I wish your mommy and daddy would take your personalized stationery away from you.

After asking why Good Teen-ager doesn't thank him for being a Good Adult, working and paying the taxes for Good-Teen-ager's schools, Royko concluded:

> And don't try that other tricky one on me—that business of the Good Teen-agers being the Generation of the Future. I used to be a Generation of the Future myself. And now I've got a thirty-seven-inch waist and a couple of kids who think it's funny to punch me in it.[1]

As for his own generation, "the group that was born just before and after the Depression began," Royko can't even give it a name. In "Who Actually Creates Gaps?" he wrote: "Half the kids born in my generation were accidents. That's a hearty welcome for you." His generation's war had been Korea: "Coming back from Korea, and expecting people to be interested, was about like coming back from a Wisconsin vacation with color slides."[2] He did, however, rally to claim for his generation Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy, Lenny Bruce, and Malcolm X.

In a *Playboy* poll, Royko was one of twenty celebrities asked: "Has your sex life been affected by women's liberation?" Expressing fatigue and resignation rather than self-righteousness, he replied: "Well, I'm a married man, so I don't even think about things like that. I don't even have lust in my heart."[3]

In "Acute Crisis Identity," he made fun of those who question their role in life: "As for myself, I haven't had an identity crisis. I have always known who I am, which, while deeply depressing, saved me a lot of running around looking for me." (192)

It is essential that a satirist know who he is, and, as he stated above, Mike Royko certainly does: he is the everyday, working citizen, living in a far from perfect urban society. It might be stretching matters to describe him as a cracker barrel philosopher, but he definitely represents common sense and the common man, the shot and beer bunch as opposed to the manhattan or martini set.

His identity is Midwestern, too. Although Jimmy Breslin praised *Boss*, Royko's collections don't receive much attention nationally, for reviewers tend to label, perhaps dismiss him as "regional." His life and career are bound inextricably with Chicago, and at times he takes on a big-city callousness, as in his 1968 column, "Shock Proof," in which he scoffed at the notion that the hippies would be able to shock Chicago.

"Shocked? A city that has had Capone and Accardo, dead bodies and dead alewives, Calumet City and Marina City, Lar Daly and Mayor Daly, beer riots and race riots, isn't going to be fazed by a horde of kids with long hair and beads." And, by the time the city's "jackrollers and assorted creeps," not to mention its teen-age gangs, get through them, "all that will remain of the sweet young things is a tuft of hair and a bead or two."[4]

Royko's ruthlessness, even brutality, here is appropriate to a citizen of the Hog Butcher to the World.

Indeed, in a column from the same period, "San-Fran-York on the Lake," he lashed his city and its citizens for turning soft, scornfully contrasting the brawling Chicago Sandburg had praised to the pampered metropolis of today:

> CHICAGO
>
> Hi-Rise for the World
> Partygoer, Stacker of Stereo Tapes,
> Player with Home Pool Tables and the Nation's Jets;
> Dapper, slender, filter-tipped-
> City of the Big Credit Card:
>
> . . .
>
> And having answered so I turn once more to those who
> sneer at this my city, and I join in the sneer and
> say to them:
> Come and show me another city with razor-cut head
> singing so proud to have a Mustang and a white
> turtle neck and reservations for dinner.
> Fierce as a poodle with tongue lapping for dog yummies.
>
> Giggling!
> Giggling the silly giggle of the fourth martini
> at lunch; half naked, but not sweating, and if
> sweating, not offending; Proud to be Hi-Rise

for the World, Partygoer, Stacker of Stereo Tapes, Player with Home Pool Tables and Jet Handler to the Nation.[5]

His satirist's blood has been heated to the boiling point by the sorry spectacle of the Midwest's greatest city giggling as it emulates the effeminate decadence of the East and the West coasts.

If Royko is identified with the Midwest and with Chicago, he also exhibits many characteristics of American humorists in general: he plays the Innocent Abroad; he exaggerates and boasts; he deflates the pretentious and brings us back to reality.

As the Innocent Abroad, he entered a Munich beer hall: ". . . it sounded as if a basketball game was in progress, with everybody shouting and cheering. As far as I could tell, they were cheering themselves for being drunk. . . . Some say it is beneficial for Bavarians to remain indoors and groggy because that makes them less likely to march across somebody's border." (242-243)

In Paris, he greeted the maitre d' at Maxim's with a "hiya," and, the classic provincial, asked the waiter if he had ever tried the whipped cream at the Buffalo, at Pulaski and Irving in Chicago. The waiter was disdainful, but our Midwestern traveler had the last laugh: he didn't leave a tip. (250-253)

Of the famous Casino in Monte Carlo, he observed: "I've seen more action at church carnivals on Grand Av. The famous Monte Carlo Casino is a dump." (252)

The only place he really liked was Oberammergau, as described in "Rumble in Bavaria." A confrontation between some old men with a German Shepard and several young motorcyclists whom Royko immediately identified as "punks" was broken up by the sound of police sirens. ". . . I decided I liked Oberammergau. It's a place where a Chicagoan won't feel homesick." (257)

Like most urban comedians, he occasionally portrays himself as the "little man" popularized by such humorists as James Thurber and Robert Benchley. Even though he made fun of Monte Carlo, Royko compared himself to James Bond in *Casino Royale*: "whereas 007 has slipped on his light chamois shoulder holster and .25 caliber Baretta automatic, Agent Royko slipped his Dr. Scholl arch supports into his shoes." (260-261)

His column, "Bugs in the Bug," began: "My car hates me. It is trying to destroy me and has been doing so for at least three years." This saga of man's uncontrollable mechanical "servant" ended with the demonic vehicle sprouting deadly toadstools with six-inch stems from its front seat. Royko subdued them with his shoe and took the bus to work.[6]

He also utilized comic exaggeration, a typically American device going back to the frontier, to Mike Fink and Davy Crockett. In "Has Pinochle Lost Its Whack?" he lamented a pinochle tournament which had too little knuckle-whacking and too much politeness. In this tale tall enough for a riverboatmen, he averred: "The proper competitive spirit in pinochle was epitomized by a man I read about who was in a game in a Gary tavern one hot night. His partner make a serious mistake, so he leaped up, shouted: 'You should have led him in trump,' and shot him." (47)

Even in a story about a penny-pitching tournament, Royko made a boast becoming a native of the City of the Broad Shoulders: "Being champion of Chicago is as good as being champion of the world."

"In some endeavors such as groin-kneeing, eye-gouging, ear-biting, dollar-hustling, or penny-pitching, being champion of Chicago is being champion of the world. New York is a rube town in such sports." (143)

Comic exaggeration is a good classification under which to consider Slats Grobnik, Royko's most popular character. The Huck Finn of the alleys, Slats is a juvenile anti-hero, the boy your mother didn't want you to play with, an unwashed, untanned street kid. Before Slats' baby brother, Fats, swallowed his shooter, Slats used to be a champion at marbles. He exercised until his thumb muscles got bigger than his biceps. In the finest tradition of the Ring-tailed Roarer, Slats, upon hearing the story of David and Goliath, shrugged and said: "I could of done the same thing with a marble." (62)

Slats excelled at sports like knuckle-cracking: "The first time Slats Grobnik cracked one of his knuckles, dogs all over the neighborhood began barking, and a squad car came to see who had been shot." (48)

The Grobnik family itself is a link with an older, ethnic America. Mrs. Grobnik offered this bit of old-country wisdom about banks: "A good bank should look like a jail, except the bank's walls should be thicker." (42) Watching the movie *Frankenstein*,

she saw the mad scientist constructing the monster and said: "See? Doctors, they're all the same." Mr. Grobnik, meanwhile, had identified with the monster. (27)

In addition to his comc exaggeration, another thing Royko does that American humorists have always done is to recall us to reality, to deflate the over-inflated. An uncollected column from 1978 pointed out the hypocrisy of Jane Fonda's lament that the trouble with Hollywood is that its writers are too money conscious—they should be willing to work for $100 a week. He suggested this is unappropriate coming from an actress about to make one million dollars for appearing in a movie written by that "capitalistic running dog" Neil Simon.

When we consider Royko as a bubble-burster, we run into several anti's; he is anti-sentimental, anti-romantic, and anti-intellectual. His anti-sentimentality often has an urban slant, as he works variations on the "tough childhood" theme, (often sentimental itself), of so many urban comedians, from Sam Levinson to Rodney Dangerfield to Richard Pryor to David Brenner.

Young Slats recalls us to reality with his observaton about the Easter bunny: "No rabbit would come in this neighborhood, He'd be run over by a beer truck. . . . Anybody who can get in and out of that many houses without being seen is going to take stuff, not leave it." (58-59) We laugh because we know that, alas, Slats is right.

And Christmas with the Grobniks is not exactly material for Currier and Ives: "In the morning the stockings would be loaded to the brim, and by the time they sat down to Christmas dinner, so would Mr. Grobnik." (37) (Slats' father is one step removed from Royko's — and our — father, so he can write and we can laugh.) Slats catches his dad putting out the presents and immediately assumes he is stealing them.

Royko elsewhere mocks the sentimentalization of family ties, as in the time Mr. Grobnik ran amok and struck Slats and his mother with Slats' cymbals. Mrs. Grobnik took the children and left. "At first, Mr. Grobnik could not believe they were really gone. To make sure, he changed locks." (78) This reversal of expectations is not at all unexpected to anyone who knows the Grobniks.

At times Royko goes beyond anti-sentimentality, as in the gleeful cruelty of "Save a Kitty from Extinction." To get rid of an unwanted cat, he threatened to drop it into a tank of piranhas unless children reading the article tell Mommy and Daddy to "do something to save the nice little calico kitty from the mean man in the newspaper." Otherwise, it will be "snap, snap, gobble, gobble, right down to his curly tail." (125)

This is perhaps an understandable reaction to the sentimental excesses of Walt Disney. Nevertheless, it is mild compared to some examples from the *Tribune Primer*, written by Eugene Field in 1882 for the Denver *Tribune*. Field urged children to drink concentrated lye, play with lobsters and loaded guns, and kill a cockroach by biting it in two. Later he, like Royko after him, would become identified with Chicago.

Of course, romantic love is too fat a target for Royko to pass up. What could be more ludicrous than the spectacle of Slats in love? "The Day Slats Fell for a Girl" began: "Valentine's Day was never one of Slats Grobnik's favorite events. He was just a toddler when he saw a card with a drawing of a heart, pierced by an arrow, but his reaction was 'Good shot!'" (54)

Using his own voice in "Marriage No Field of Daisies," Royko wrote: "For every young fool who runs through high humidity in a field of daisies, you'll find fifty wise older men in air-conditioned bars." (151)

Others of Royko's assaults on pretension come under the banner of anti-intellectualism, as he usually honors his alliance with the shot-and-beer crowd. "It is a strain for local newsmen, being interviewed by visiting writers, especially the scholarly ones. They always ask if the mayor has charisma. In the mayor's neighborhood, they could get punched for talking dirty." (115)

When *Time* referred to a yellow two-piece bathing suit connected by a gold-link chain as "anything but deja vu," Royko scratched his head and wrote: "I don't know what deja vu means, but when a writer is afraid to say something in English, that's always a tip off that it's pretty wild." (11)

A related element of humor in our democracy has been anti-respectability, slob appeal if you will. And what better spokesperson than that "well known social arbiter, Slats Grobnik," who,

according to Royko, was the author of the best selling book, *My 30 New Years Eves Without an Arrest?* Here are samples of Mr. Grobnik's advice:

> What to drink: Select one favorite beverage and stay with it all evening, and all the next day if you wish. I recommend the always-festive boilermaker. (Recipe: Pour one shot of whiskey down your throat. Follow with one glass of beer.) After midnight, the ingredients can be mixed in a glass, vase, or pot.
>
> At midnight, the traditional drink is champagne. But remember, never drink it straight from the bottle unless the hostess does so first. (40)

While we must grant that there is some narrative distance between Royko and the low brow advice of Slats, grown here to a disreputable maturity, the opening line from "Mrs. Grobnik a Checker-Upper" is worthy of Archie Bunker: "A Chicago bank has hired a creature named Gucci to design arty new checks and checkbooks." (42) "A creature" veritably drips contempt.

Deflation and bubble-bursting are, of course, expected of the satirist, and Royko often uses his wit to point out the folly of human nature, and, most frequently, the folly, the injustice, the corruption of the Daly Machine, which has been his Moby Dick. In his *Glossary of Literary Terms* M. H. Abrahams defines satire as "the art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or scorn." This Royko does frequently.

On the subject of human nature, he told of Slat's uncle, Beer Belly Frank, who held an annual garage sale of merchandise his relatives and neighbors thought was stolen. When they eventually learned he had purchased it legally, they were angry at him for only pretending to be shady. (82-85)

And then there was the theatre owner who, in response to great public outcry, switched from X-rated movies to family films. He soon had to return to pornography, however, for so few decent citizens patronized his decent movies that he was going broke. "What do people want? I think they want you-know-what," Royko commented sardonically. (176)

Moving on to Royko's nemesis, the Daly Machine, let's consider Leonard Feinberg's assertion in *Introduction to Satire* that "satire appeals to the sense of superiority."[7] Many of Royko's columns are devoted to Mayor Daly and his minions, and it is gratifying to the reader to be able to feel superior to them. In "Alinsky Not in Their League," for example, Royko wrote: "The City Council paid a great tribute to the late Saul Alinsky a few days ago. It refused to name a park after him." (222) He then went on to tell of the notable public servants after whom parks *had* been named, men such as former sheriff William Meyerling, who was the guardian of Cook County's law and order in the days when Al Capone was its most famous citizen.

Other columns tell of the vice squad's heroic raid on a senior citizen's penny ante poker game (126-130), a peddler who was harrassed even though he has a permit (207-211), and so forth. Not surprisingly, Slats Grobnik's hero was a certain Chicago alderman, because he had heard Mrs. Grobnik say he had never worked a day in his life. (79)

It has been said that satirists seldom if ever succeed, and Royko would be the first to concede that Richard Daly was Mayor of Chicago until he died, and that his Machine lives on. [In a front-page question and answer column in The Detroit *Free Press* for July 9, 1979, Royko admitted "I suppose I miss Daly."] According to Feinberg, one reason for satirists' failure to achieve important results is that they rarely attack the fundamental political and economic structures of their societies.[8] Royko certainly doesn't suggest that Chicago be reorganized under Marxist principles.

Perhaps Royko's most admirable characterstic is his sense of outrage. In "Laugh? I thought I'd Die," he told of going to see a movie the day after Robert Kennedy was shot. Inside, some 300 ordinary, middle class men were watching an exploitatively violent film and laughing at the murder and the torture.

> Outside, people were asking what is wrong with this country, why it kills the way it does. The world was asking if the United States is that sick and corrupt.
>
> Inside the United Artists, and in theatres across the country, guns were barking, blood was flowing—and people were laughing.

> They laughed and laughed and laughed. And by then the plane carrying the Senator's body had landed. Now, his family would bury him.[9]

Similarly, he abandoned satire in his outrage and dismay at the assassination of Martin Luther King. In "Millions in His Firing Squad," he wrote: "We have pointed a gun at our own head and we are squeezing the trigger. And nobody we elect is going to help us. It is our head and our trigger."[10]

Thus, we have seen that Mike Royko is firmly anchored in his city, his region, his nation, and his generation (even if it doesn't have a name). He utilizes many of the devices typically associated with American humorists and emerges as a rather grumpy urban Everyman. Occasionally satire fails him as a weapon against human folly and the Daly Machine, and it is at these times when he is most effective: If his writing can't change this world, at least it will remind us that justice and decency exist and that they should be heeded.

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NOTES

1. Mike Royko, *Up Against It* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), pp. 6-8.
2. Mike Royko, *Slats Grobnik and Some Other Friends* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973), p. 106. Page numbers of following citations appear in the text.
3. Robert Kerwin, "Symposium: Women's Lib and Me," *Playboy*, May 1978, p. 230.
4. Mike Royko, *I May Be Wrong, But I Doubt It* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1968), p. 93.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
6. Royko, *Up Against It*, pp. 13-15.
7. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
9. Royko, *I May Be Wrong*, pp. 199-200.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

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