

MIDWESTERN
MISCELLANY XIX

*being a variety of essays on
Midwestern writers and writing
by members of*

The Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature

edited by
DAVID D. ANDERSON

The Midwestern Press
The Center for the Study of
Midwestern Literature and Culture
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

1991

in honor of
Don Robertson

Copyright 1991 by
The Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature
All rights reserved.

PREFACE

The contents of *Midwestern Miscellany XIX* are as varied as the Midwestern landscape, literal, literary, or metaphorical; the essays range in content from Arctic exploration to Washington espionage, with incisive looks at Willa Cather's Nebraska subjugated, at Theodore Dreiser's Carrie Meeber metamorphosed, and at the wide-ranging Midwestern vision of contemporary poet Dan Stryk.

That this issue is inscribed to Don Robertson, novelist, journalist, and observer of the American landscape, is particularly appropriate. Winner of the Mark Twain Award for 1991, his work ranges in setting from Civil War battlefield to nineteenth century Ohio town to modern megalopolis to memory-strewn neighborhood; like those whose essays appear in this issue, Don Robertson portrays in his work the unity of vision that lies beyond the apparent diversity of people and place in the American Midwest; he and they know, too, and show in their works the complex oneness that makes up both the literary Midwest and the literature that defines it.

October, 1991

DAVID D. ANDERSON

CONTENTS

Preface	5
Vilhjalmur Stefansson: North Dakotan in the Arctic Robert D. Narveson	9
Placelessness Against Place: Willa Cather's Nebraska Novels	William Barillas 20
New Lives, New Names: Dreiser's Carrie	G. T. Lenard 29
The Cosmopolitan Midwesterner	Janet Ruth Heller 37
John Herrmann, Midwestern Modern, Part II: The Alger Hiss Case and the Midwestern Literary Connection	David D. Anderson 42

VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON:
NORTH DAKOTAN IN THE ARCTIC

ROBERT D. NARVESON

Being partly of Norwegian descent, I grew up taking pride in the great Norwegian polar explorers such as Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, and I allowed Vilhjalmur Stefansson, as an Icelander and therefore descendant of Norwegians, a place in their company. Among Stefansson's notable achievements as an explorer were the first detailed reports of the Copper Eskimos of Victoria Island north of the Canadian mainland, the sounding of hundreds of miles of the Beaufort Sea off the coast of Banks and Prince Patrick Islands, the discovery of the four last unknown large islands in the Canadian Arctic, and (what made all the rest possible) the adaptation of Eskimo techniques that allowed him to travel light and to live by hunting seals, polar bears, caribou, and musk oxen. Even as he brought the method of dogsled travel to perfection, he predicted (with more eagerness than regret) its replacement by submarine, airplane, and motorized vehicle, and lived to see those developments take place.

I first heard about Stefansson from my Uncle Joe Krbrechek, a northern Minnesota farmer. Many people besides my uncle Joe were readers of Stefansson. According to one recent biographer, more people have learned about Eskimo life and customs from Stefansson than from any other source (Hunt 19). Certainly his two major books on his experiences in the Northland, *My Life with the Eskimo* (1913) and *The Friendly Arctic* (1923), circulated widely in the decades after they were published and still are found in private and public libraries of the Midwest. For forty years after the last of his Arctic explorations, Stefansson (1879-1962) was a prominent lecturer and writer on the Arctic regions. The extensive library of materials on the Arctic that he

collected, now housed at Dartmouth, is one of the principal research collections in the world on the subject.

Stefansson, though indeed of Icelandic descent, was born in Manitoba to immigrant parents. The Stefansson family moved to a farm near the Icelandic community of Mountain in north-eastern North Dakota in 1881 when the future explorer was two years of age. There Stefansson had spent his childhood and adolescence, not so far across the Red River from my Uncle's Minnesota farm. Living in a frontier community, the young Stefansson had little formal schooling, but early developed a taste for reading and a desire for further education. He rode a train for the first time when he traveled to Grand Forks to study at the University of North Dakota. His career there and at the University of Iowa is the stuff of legend. He was expelled in the spring of his junior year from UND as a trouble-maker. Fearing blacklisting, he entered the University of Iowa the same fall as a freshman, collected four years' worth of credits in one year, and graduated at the same time as his former classmates at UND. From Iowa he went to Harvard and became a graduate student in anthropology. In his three years as a student at Harvard he made two anthropological trips to Iceland and wrote his first scientific and popular articles.

Stefansson never did receive an advanced degree from Harvard. In 1907 a group planning an Arctic exploration on a shoe-string budget asked one of his professors to recommend an anthropologist they could afford. The professor recommended Stefansson, and Stefansson, impatient of formal academic studies, accepted the group's offer. He traveled overland across Canada to the mouth of the MacKenzie River on the Arctic Ocean. The rest of the party traveled by ship around Alaska, encountered heavy ice, and did not arrive, leaving Stefansson stranded with little equipment beyond his summer clothing and a rifle. Stefansson, as an anthropologist, saw this as an opportunity to learn the culture and language of the Eskimos. Much to the disapproval of the whites in the area, he lived with an Eskimo family in its native-style dwelling, adopting Eskimo clothing and diet, though one biographer gleefully notes that he stockpiled a supply of white man's food just in case: "If these supplies were not often used, it was still very comforting to know that they were there" (Diubaldo 22). From the beginning of his Arctic career he took

calculated risks which others considered reckless, though he did not. Fish being the staple food of these Eskimos, he showed his adaptability by learning to like fish, for which he had always had an aversion. In later years he saw this beginning as the key to his successful career as an explorer, for no other explorer of his stature had bothered to learn the language and culture of the Eskimos.

The expedition that Stefansson came to join having failed him, he returned south the following summer to put together an expedition of his own. His articles describing his experiences with the Eskimos gained him the confidence of sponsoring institutions, which especially welcomed his assurance that by living as the natives lived he could cut the costs of an expedition to a fraction of the usual. He recruited zoologist and fellow University of Iowa graduate Rudolph M. Anderson to complement his own anthropological work by collecting zoological specimens. Their expedition lasted four years, from 1908 until 1912. Its success led to another, much more ambitious and costly expedition (nearly \$500,000 as against \$13,600) sponsored by the Canadian government. This, his third and final expedition to the Arctic, lasted from 1913 to 1918. At age thirty-nine he had reached the end of his personal explorations in the Arctic.

Stefansson's career as an explorer fed into his developing career as a writer. Diubaldo in his biography observes: "Stefansson's flair for style produced well-written and lucid prose and that, in itself, made for fascinating and enjoyable leisure reading. The chapters of most of his books, however, manage to convey a self-indulgent, a paternalistic impression, vividly emphasizing the bizarre for his comfortable Canadian, American, and British audience, while at the same time portraying it as something very common, very ordinary, very 'humdrum'" (28). In other words, he came across as a lively writer of readable, informative accounts of interesting subjects, and in these accounts he created himself as an intriguing character who attributed ordinariness to his extraordinary exploits. What he did (he seemed to say) anybody sensible enough to follow his practices could also have done. No reader, of course, believed this, but most readers (apparently not including Diubaldo) found it charming that Stefansson did seem to believe it. This easy competence gained

him the confidence not only of the public, but also of officials in positions to assist his plans.

Stefansson was delighted to learn how easily an expedition to the Arctic generated publicity. He wrote to his future partner Anderson: "You would have to go many times to South America before your work would command the public attention that the north trip would" (Diubaldo 41). "The simple act of returning would belie all the myths and erroneous assumptions about the north which had been conjured up by imaginative reporters." But in these words written to persuade a future partner, Stefansson oversimplified his accomplishment. Another biographer, William R. Hunt, remarks: "Men do not necessarily achieve a public reputation simply by venturing into the Arctic, whatever their purpose may" (56). "Stefansson knew that telling what he had learned was important. He could foresee that his abilities as writer and lecturer would enable him to interpret the Arctic more effectively than other, less articulate explorers. And, unlike many others, he knew he did not need to depend upon a particular feat to capture public interest; rather his strength and appeal would lie in the range and depth of his knowledge" (55).

Stefansson seems to have concluded early in his career that to succeed one must assume that one will succeed and then act accordingly. His experience had turned him into something of a gambler, a confidence man of sorts. A talk with a Canadian official about one of his projects produced this bit of practical wisdom on which he was to stake the success of many of his future projects: "He says he can get \$10 to continue the thing more easily than \$1 to begin a new work" (Diubaldo 38). For a time, this view of realities proved sound. He and his partner Anderson did achieve funding for two lengthy expeditions. They began their first expedition with a commitment from the American Museum to spend at most \$2,300; before it was over they had cost the museum almost \$13,600. Several times Stefansson was sent instructions to end the expedition; several times he managed to get his support continued. "This experience, with its reversal of fortunes, may have given Stefansson the notion that publicity was the key to success, be it scientific or popular" (Diubaldo 52). Stefansson's flair for effective publicity, for which Anderson had neither the temperament nor the talent, was later, however, to be a source of conflict between the two men.

Each of these major expeditions became the subject of a book by Stefansson. The titles reflect the changing focus of Stefansson's efforts as he exploited his advancing knowledge and experience of the Arctic: *My Life with the Eskimo* (1914) focuses on his response to finding a people adapted to life in the Arctic. *The Friendly Arctic* (1923) focuses on what he accomplished by adaptation of Eskimo methods of hunting, clothing, and travel in order to reduce the difficulty and expense of exploration in the Arctic. A third book, *The Northward Course of Empire* (1922), focuses on the Arctic as a frontier for future economic development.

The first of these, *My Life with the Eskimo*, while mostly a travel narrative recounting adventures over a four year period, has as its recurring subject what Stefansson learned from the Eskimos. To emphasize that their survival is a matter of cultural adaptation, Stefansson remarks, "The Eskimo, although physically no better fitted for withstanding cold than we, know so much better than most of us how to deal with cold that they give the uninitiated the impression of greater hardihood, but a white man who keeps his eyes open soon acquires all the winter lore that is of great value and becomes quite the equal of the Eskimo in taking care of himself" (*Life* 79).

Stefansson was sardonic about the efforts of whites to get the Eskimos to adopt the white style of housing "presumably on the basis of their experience in the climate of Virginia and Maryland" (*Life* 299). He admired the Eskimo's physical adaptations, but he admired the success of their social arrangements equally as much. He wrote:

These are people among whom you might possibly have enemies and among whom you were certain to make friends; people very much like you and me, but with the social virtues developed rather more highly than they have been among our own race. In a difficult struggle for existence under hard natural conditions they have acquired the ability to live together in peace and good will (*Life* 2-3).

Americans then as now admired iconoclasts who tried to persuade them that old ideas were mistaken. There is a tradition in American letters of playing on the common reader's suspicion of received wisdom. We are all advised practically from birth to apply pragmatic tests to ideas, and we applaud spontaneously

those whose eloquence convicts an old idea of error. Professor Dudley Bailey of the University of Nebraska told recently how he exploited this dependable American trait of mind in his students:

"Nothing," I would tell them, "is so wonderful as to discover that the ideas you have are wrong and to experience the marvelous freedom which comes when you can say, 'I don't have to believe *that* anymore!'" (Narveson, *Olio* 1).

Stefansson heard the same message from Professor Samuel McChord Crothers at Harvard in 1900:

Doctor Crothers said that this and other lands are filled with schools and colleges engaged in teaching us things that are not so, and it would be a highly desirable thing if there could be established in each country at least one well-known institution where you might go and unlearn a few of them. This he proposed to call in each country the National University of Polite Unlearning (*Northward* 21).

Stefansson wondered in 1922 whether his hearing this was a turning point in his life. Possibly it was, but even before his Harvard years Stefansson had begun a career of rejecting received wisdom. As an undergraduate he was expelled from the University of North Dakota because his defiance of university rules of decorum set an intolerable example for his fellow students. Officials at the University of Iowa found to their consternation that in one year he earned enough credits by passing examinations, a procedure (he had to remind them) that their rules allowed, to complete four years of work. When he was a graduate student at Harvard, an unconventional professor encouraged him to question the value of advanced degrees, and he left Harvard without one. He was thus well-prepared, and probably pre-disposed, to find on coming to the Arctic that his head was full of erroneous notions about the region and its people. For the rest of his life he delighted to write and lecture about all the ways in which his experiences contradicted ideas widely held by both experts and laity.

Learning what the Arctic is really like according to one who has been there, and in the process learning how much nonsense one has been told about coping with the cold, is one central pleasure of reading Stefansson's accounts. As a child I was told

that I should treat frostbite by rubbing snow on it. This must be an ancient bit of folklore. Stefansson has an eloquent passage denouncing it. Another of his favorite examples is the supposed unhealthiness of a meat diet high in fat. On the contrary, Stefansson says, the Eskimos thrive on it, and besides enjoying general good health have neither cancer nor tooth decay. But quotation is necessary to illustrate the tone of Stefansson's debunking passages, as in these examples from *My Life with the Eskimo*:

A belief that has in the past handicapped polar explorers is that when you are lost in the Arctic you must not go to sleep. It is said that if you do go to sleep you never wake. . . . As soon as one brings common sense and experience to bear on a situation of this sort it becomes evident how dangerous is the ordinary procedure of trying to keep awake at all costs. . . . Through a semi-panic brought on by the fear of freezing, these men have walked faster than they should, becoming gradually more fatigued and frequently perspiring violently enough to make their clothes wet. . . . It is under such circumstances that a person may go to sleep never to wake again. But he who lies down without panic as soon as he feels tired or sleepy and especially before his clothing gets wet with perspiration is safer and better off the more naps he can take" (455-6).

The men took the sled along the land, as usual, while I traveled overland looking for caribou and learning what I could of the country. I have known since I first began to travel in the North that this method of advance is not customary, but it is only since my return from this expedition that I have come to realize fully how severely a method which appeared to me logical and indeed the only sensible one has been condemned by many explorers. . . . A dozen other members of my party at different times have left the sledges along the coast and have hunted inland, perhaps as much as as thousand different times all together, and often towards midwinter when there is little daylight even at noon and the temperature falls to thirty or forty degrees below zero. And yet nothing serious has ever happened to any of us" (549-50).

Nor was this iconoclasm an attitude Stefansson expressed only for public consumption. Harold Noice, who traveled with Stefansson on a later expedition, recalled: "[Stefansson] certainly came near being a crank on the subject of keeping one's clothing

dry on polar exploration. On that point he had little charity for explorers we read of in books about the North, who were always soaking wet and always telling what a hardship it was to be wet" (75).

In a foreword to *My Life with the Eskimo*, a Canadian official named Reginald Walter Brock observed that "Mr. Stefansson adapted himself perfectly to the conditions obtaining in that Region, which made him the outstanding traveler and hunter of all who have worked in the Canadian Arctic, and furthermore he has presented to the public the most vivid and readable description of the country, of its inhabitants, and of life within the Arctic" (xiii).

In his autobiography written shortly before his death in 1962, Stefansson recalled that *The Friendly Arctic*, his description of his final expedition, sold well and "seemed to be constantly out of stock as a result of the cautiousness of the publisher" (*Discovery* 245). Even here, writing at the end of his career, he maintains the stance that established opinion—in this case the publisher's lack of faith in popular response to a book on Arctic exploration—was in error. He wrote *The Friendly Arctic* during a period that he called "the transition from my life as an explorer of unknown Arctic territory to a new life as an explorer of human error" (243). But clearly, explorer—and exploder—of human error was a role he enjoyed before, during, and after writing this book. In it, the correction of human error is certainly a recurring theme, and perhaps gains a new prominence. The very name of the book was an affront and a target of ridicule to many other writers on the area.

Here, from just a brief section of the book, are examples of Stefansson's gleeful revision of what he saw as false notions about the Arctic:

It is curious that even zoologists have fallen into the notion that ovibos [musk-oxen] live on lichen and moss. . . . Any good anatomist should be able to tell by a glance at the mouth of an ovibos that he is a grass-eater (584).

I know of no Arctic explorer who has recorded temperatures as low as are found within settled portions of the United States and not nearly as low as those of certain farming districts in Siberia (602).

After describing the severest cold encountered in the Arctic, Stefansson quotes the answer given by an acquaintance when asked how he could stand the dreadful cold: "Madam, we do not endure the cold; we protect ourselves from it" (606).

"Our whole work goes to emphasize . . . that men who understand conditions can travel almost if not quite where they like and stay as long as they will in the Arctic with safety and comfort" (668).

Even Stefansson's admirers and backers regarded the optimism of his title as more a reflection of his own character and temperament than as a generally accurate description of his subject. One, the president of a sponsoring museum, wrote:

Stefansson had made one of the most interesting discoveries in the whole history of polar exploration—a discovery reflected in the title of his later book—the *friendly Arctic*, signifying that to those who know how to live there, to those who keenly enjoy life there, this region of the long Arctic night and of the bitter cold is not hostile but friendly (*Life with the Eskimo* viii).

Every Midwesterner and Westerner reacts in some manner to the misinformation so confidently asserted by Easterners about other regions of the country. The young North Dakotan who went to Harvard for his graduate study surely was accustomed to encountering human error about the area in which he grew up. Like all of us, he must have been used to hearing from those who had never been there of the cold, dry, barren, and inhospitable conditions there. By the time Stefansson came to write *The Northward Course of Empire*, he had lectured extensively all across the United States. No doubt he was responding to reactions from his audiences when he began consciously exploiting the analogy between misconceptions about the American West and about the Canadian North. In his new book he joked about the notion that temperatures became colder the farther north you go. He cited records showing that the extremes of temperature are greater in Manitoba, in Montana, and in North Dakota than in the Arctic, and concluded: "Accordingly, if you happen to be living in Manitoba or Dakota or Montana and want to become a polar explorer, about all you have to do for a proper outfit when you start north is to leave at home a few of your clothes" (*Northward* 26). Similar examples recur throughout the volume:

After spending twenty years in North Dakota and ten north of the Arctic circle, it is my best opinion that at least one blizzard which I remember from North Dakota was worse than any that I have yet seen in the Far North. This is testimony amply confirmed by the men from Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba who now live in northwestern Alaska or northern Canada (*Northward* 76).

"The main obstacle to the development of the North is ignorance, or rather positive misknowledge—the belief in difficulties that do not exist. In that the present situation of the North is analogous to the case of the prairies of the western United States and Canada a century ago" (*Northward* 205).

The sudden development of the North [corresponding to the development of the Midwest prairies] will come when we at length realize that the very qualities which we had supposed to be its worst drawbacks are really advantages once their true meaning is understood (*Northward* 211).

Sometimes he employed the analogy not to minimize the physical handicaps to settlement but rather to emphasize the psychological ones. When immigrants from Illinois and Iowa tried to bring along their farm methods to North Dakota, they failed:

Broken in fortune and broken-hearted, many of these colonists returned to the corn lands with tales of the inhospitality of the Dakota prairie, and cattle ranches spread over the abortive corn fields. . . . But North Dakota had colonists from Ontario as well as from Illinois. . . . In the main, it was these northerners that revived the fortunes of Dakota and brought the tide of immigration back again, so that after a decade or two of abandonment the prairie farms were re-homesteaded, this time by a successful people because they were not trying to gather grapes from thorns. (*Northward* 235-36).

Stefansson's conclusion: "The immigrant from Dakota would find near the Arctic circle in Canada or Siberia many conditions to which he is used—the hot summers, the cold winters, and the treeless plains. He might, therefore, approve the scenery and find the climate tolerable. But he would try to cultivate cereals, build barns and milk cows. Thus he would be as unfit for the North as the cotton planters were for Illinois" (*Northward* 237).

A reader who comes to Stefansson after a reading of Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, as I recently did, will

perhaps be struck as I was struck, by the difference in their treatment of the Northland. Then, especially if that reader is from Northern Minnesota, as I am, he or she may be led to wonder how much of that difference is the difference between the California boyhood of the one and the North Dakota boyhood of the other. It is as unthinkable that Jack London would entitle a work of his *The Friendly Arctic* as it is likely that Vilhjalmur Stefansson did so with writers such as Jack London in mind.

The general testimony of both friends and foes of Stefansson as well as the impression left with most readers is that his books are made attractive and readable because they bear the impress of a powerful personality. It is a personality displaying some of the traits that Americans in general admire—an independent spirit, an empirical attitude, a will to succeed despite obstacles, a tendency indirectly to underscore one's own competence by minimizing the difficulties one has had to overcome. No one factor accounts for the character and mindset of Stefansson or of any human being. One takes note of Stefansson's Icelandic heritage and of his education as an anthropologist. It is also clear, however, that a North Dakota boyhood on what was still the frontier of settlement was no insignificant factor in the shaping of Stefansson's response to the Arctic.

University of Nebraska

WORKS CITED

- Diubaldo, Richard J. *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1978.
- Hunt, William R. *Stef: A Biography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*. Vancouver: British Columbia U.P., 1986.
- Lebourdias, D. M. *Stefansson: Ambassador of the North*. Montreal: Harvest House, 1963.
- Narveson, Robert D., ed. *An Olio of Notions: Concerning the Politics of Writing Instruction*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska English Department, 1987.
- Noice, Harold. *With Stefansson in the Arctic*. New York: Dodd, Mead, [1924].
- Stefansson, Vilhjalmur. *Discovery*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964.
- _____. *The Friendly Arctic* (New Edition with New Materials). New York: Greenwood Press, 1969. Originally published in 1923.
- _____. *My Life with the Eskimo*. New York: Macmillan, 1951. Originally published 1913.
- _____. *Northward Course of Empire*. New York: Harcourt, Brace 1922.

PLACELESSNESS AGAINST PLACE:
WILLA CATHER'S NEBRASKA NOVELS

WILLIAM BARILLAS

In three novels, *O Pioneers!*, *My Antonia*, and *A Lost Lady*, which critic Susan J. Rosowski has termed "a brilliant trilogy of place" (Rosowski, 81), Willa Cather evoked the early days of settlement in Nebraska through the fictional lives of characters whose fundamental task was to become physically and emotionally attached to the landscape. This attachment is necessary for both financial and spiritual fulfillment in the new, wild land, which as Alexandra Bergson, heroine of *O Pioneers!* says, "pretended to be poor because nobody knew how to work it right; and then, all it once it worked itself" (OP 69). Rosowski aptly describes these novels as a "literature wedded to geography, [the work of] a creative artist considering how to establish a spatial context within which society might operate and using her art to make the terms of that struggle" (Rosowski, 83). Whereas Cather's heroes are those characters, Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!*, Antonia in *My Antonia*, and Mrs. (and perhaps more, Mr.) Forrester in *A Lost Lady*, who are "wedded" to the land, much of the dramatic tension of the stories derives from the presence of characters who are either displaced from their original homeland, and miss it, or are by reason of occupation or inclination physically or emotionally unattached to the Nebraska setting. Though Cather celebrates a sense of place unique to Nebraska's early homesteaders, she posits an opposing placelessness as a force pulling those of the rural society both back in time to origins in Europe and forward into the materialistic modern world.

Alexandra of *O Pioneers!* receives control of the family homestead upon the death of her father, who requests of his

two sons on his deathbed that they "keep the land and be guided by [their] sister" (OP 16). Though he had never been able to make the land productive, Mr. Bergson senses that his intelligent, hardworking daughter will succeed where he failed. Even before Alexandra was twelve years old, Mr. Bergson had begun to "depend more on more upon her resourcefulness and good judgement" since it was she "who read the papers and followed the markets, and who learned by the mistakes of their neighbors." Her brothers, Lou and Oscar, are good workers but are neither clever nor imaginative. Mrs. Bergson contributes to the household, but is of a rather nostalgic mind: Mr. Bergson tells his sons not to grudge her nonessential work, "plowing her garden and setting out fruit trees, even if it comes in a busy season" (OP 14-15). While reasonably well adjusted to life in Nebraska, Mrs. Bergson misses her old land, Sweden; she "had never quite forgiven John Bergson for bringing her to the end of the earth; but now that she was there, she wanted to be let alone to reconstruct her old life in so far as that was possible." Her gardening and gathering is an attempt to create the old world in the new, even though the "insipid ground-cherries," "garden tomatoes," and "the rank buffalo-pea" do not make the best preserves (OP 17-18). Of all the family, only Alexandra has the courage and "a new consciousness of the country" (OP 41) which can make the prairie bloom.

The first conflict Alexandra must deal with is the initial opposition of her brothers to her plans to invest in the farm after Mr. Bergson's death. Lou and Oscar fear the risk of a new mortgage, and wish to leave the Divide. Alexandra must take pains to convince them that "the right thing is usually just what everybody don't do," which is to note changes in agricultural methods and economic trends and predict what actions will succeed in investment and planting (OP 39). Because they accede, though reluctantly, to her plans, all three become well-to-do farmers, among the richest in the Divide. But only Alexandra is "wedded" to the land; Cather's description of her home contrasts strongly to the early "dwelling-houses . . . set about haphazard on the tough prairie sod" that we saw in the novel's first paragraph (OP 3). Alexandra's farm, two decades later, is the very picture of a well-ordered space, distinguished by "the

beauty and fruitfulness of the outlying fields . . . [and] a most unusual trimness and care for detail" (*OP* 49).

Oscar and Lou, though successful, lack Alexandra's love for the land, and instead are concerned with conspicuous consumption ("the general conviction that the more useless and utterly unusable objects were, the greater their virtue" {*OP* 58}) and politics, for which Lou "neglects his farm to attend conventions and to run for county offices" (*OP* 59). In their placelessness, Oscar and Lou represent the new materialistic spirit, and are suspicious and unaffectionate toward their sister, who prefers to live simply, in close contact both with nature and with those in her employ, including the old man Ivar, who for years has lived in a wild, unproductive but beautiful place on the prairie that he loves for its wildness. Whereas Alexandra is thought odd for her individualism and place-attachment, Ivar is believed by some to be certifiably insane for his completely natural way of life—he fears that Oscar and Lou might have him committed, and as he complains, he would have been sent away long before had Alexandra not been so successful and thereby able to protect him. Spiritual, place-centered people are at risk in the commercial society developing on the prairie.

A second conflict between place and placelessness in *O Pioneers!* is between Alexandra and Carl Linstrum, a childhood friend with whom she always has a close relationship that seems to promise romance. But Carl's family took the route that Lou and Oscar had nearly taken, selling their farm when times were rough, and moving to town. While Alexandra makes the decisions and sees to the work that will make her and her brothers wealthy, Carl works but fails as an engraver in Chicago, before briefly visiting Alexandra on his way to try his luck in Alaska's goldfields. At the age of thirty-five, he is a displaced country person, "homely and wayward and definitely personal," who found some pleasure in city life but could never truly adjust. In a conversation about the advantages and disadvantages of a mobile, unattached life, like his own, and of a settled, grounded existence, like Alexandra's, this would-be couple express envy of the other's lot. When Carl expresses his sense of failure, Alexandra tells him "I'd rather have had your freedom than my land." But Carl reminds her of how being attached to place brings greater happiness in the long run, beginning with the

epigrammatic statement that "Freedom so often means that one isn't needed anywhere":

Here you are an individual, you have a background of your own, you would be missed. But off there in the cities there are thousands of rolling stones like me. We are all alike; we have no ties, we know nobody, we own nothing . . . We have no house, no place, no people of our own (*OP*, 72).

But Alexandra notes how a country life can stultify the spirit if one comes to feel isolated:

We grow hard and heavy here. We don't move lightly and easily as you do, and our minds get stiff. If the world were no wider than my cornfields, if there were not something beside this, I wouldn't feel that it was much worth while to work (*OP* 73).

But Alexandra's characterization of country folk as "hard and heavy" holds truer of her brothers and those of their commercial bent than of herself. She mentions Carrie Jensen, the sister of one of Alexandra's farmhands, who became depressed and suicidal, but who became happy and productive once she had traveled, if only so far as over the Platte and Missouri rivers to Iowa. Alexandra, too, would benefit from the experience of travel, that like Carrie she can become "contented to live and work in a world that's so big and interesting," because "it's what goes on in the world that reconciles [her]." At the novel's end, when Carl has begun to succeed in Alaska, and returns to Nebraska again after the tragic murder of Alexandra's beloved younger brother Emil and his lover, Alexandra is presented with the opportunity to broaden her horizons, to travel with Carl to Alaska. This they plan to do, and to marry, with the understanding that they will return to the farm, which after all is Alexandra's supreme marriage partner—the place where, even after tragedy and loneliness, there is, as Alexandra has learned, "great peace . . . and freedom" (*OP* 178). As Rosowski notes, the marriage of Alexandra and Carl "will be distinct from the union Alexandra has with the land, and Carl is a fit human spouse because he recognizes that difference" (Rosowski, 87); Carl must give up his wanderlust, if not become a creature of place, to be Alexandra's husband.

Rosowski observes that Cather "associates with her male characters an impulse to conquer space, to chart it and move

inside it" (Rosowski, 89). In *My Antonia*, Cather's second Nebraska novel, the narrator and central character Jim Burden shares with Carl of *O Pioneers!* the tendency Rosowski notes for Cather's men to travel *through* space rather than dwell *within* it. The introduction to the novel introduces Jim through the voice of a friend from the same Nebraska town; both men had long before left their place of origin to gain their fortunes in New York, Jim being a legal counsel for a great Western railway. The text of the novel is his memoir of Antonia, a Bohemian girl both men had known in their youth, and with whom Jim had only recently renewed his friendship after many years of travel and work either away from Nebraska, or in the region assisting in the development of railroads to strengthen the state's connection with the larger world.

As a youth, Jim came to Nebraska when his parents died in Virginia. He rarely mentions his family or experiences back east, and from the start is concerned with telling how he came to Nebraska and became a native. In the train moving west, he experiences a sense of dislocation—after crossing so many rivers, he feels that the "only thing very noticeable about Nebraska was that it was still, all day long, Nebraska" (MA 5). The land is still being settled, becoming a place in the human sense for the newcomers, for whom it is "not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made" (MA 7). The prairie's outstanding characteristic is the sky, "the complete dome of heaven, all there was of it." Looking up at this unfamiliar expanse, Jim believes that his dead parents are not watching him in Nebraska; their spirits, so inexorably linked for him to places in Virginia, "the sheep-fold down by the creek, or along the white road that led to the mountain pastures" (MA 8). He surrenders himself to the place that he has yet to become of.

Cather devotes Chapter Two to Jim's exploration of place in his grandfather's farm—"down to the kitchen," which contrasts with his experience of "out in the kitchen" back in Virginia, the cellar, and the landscape outside, which has more variety than he had first thought. The chapter concludes with one of Cather's many memorable epiphanies of place, when Jim sits in his grandmother's garden, "left alone with this new feeling of lightness and content," observing all the plant and insect life about him, and delighting in the experience of coming to feel at home,

being "something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins . . . not want[ing] to be anything more . . . entirely happy" (MA 18). From that point Jim is centered in his adopted landscape.

Antonia, from the moment Jim meets her, is characterized as a human embodiment of the land itself, a child coming out of a home dug into the earth, who grows into a woman who cares for each individual tree in her garden as if it were a child itself. She is the one character who develops such a complete attachment to the place. Jim leaves to study at Lincoln and Harvard and Antonia's girl friends Lena and Tiny find their fortune elsewhere—Tiny in Alaska, like Carl Linstrum in *O Pioneers!*—taking their fortunes, and futures, to San Francisco. Antonia's father, Mr. Shimerda, shot himself to death when she was still a girl because he was so homesick for his native Bohemia: he shared his daughter's attachment to place but was unable to develop a sense of home in the New World. Jim's Russian neighbors, two men named Pavel and Peter, were practically banished from their homeland because they were known to have sacrificed two people to save their own lives—they were riding in a sleigh in the forest, and in being chased by a large pack of wolves, were forced to throw a newly wedded couple off the sleigh to lighten the load. The friends came to America, where they hid their terrible secret, never able to live better than in a dugout hut. Pavel tells the terrible secret on his deathbed, and Peter leaves to work in a railway construction camp—the railroad again becoming a symbol of motion and placelessness. At the novel's end Jim returns to visit Antonia after twenty years absence, and finds her prematurely aged but happy, with many children and a husband, who as was her father, is a city man who misses the old country. Unlike Mr. Shirmerda, Mr. Cuzak has adjusted to life; his relationship to Antonia strongly resembles that of Carl Linstrum to Alexandra Bergson—a man who has led another life elsewhere who accepts his wife's primary marriage, to the prairie land-scape in all its natural splendor.

The final novel in Cather's trilogy of place is *A Lost Lady*, in which the displacement of people by the developing commercial world dominates the course of the characters' lives. We witness in the novel the childhood and young adulthood of Niel Herbert, the son of a smalltown Nebraska judge who is be-

friended by an attractive lady, Marian Forrester, and her older husband, Daniel, or Captain Forrester. Mr. Forrester is not a pioneer homesteader like Alexandra Bergson or Antonia Shimerda, but a wealthy eastern railroad man who settled in the prairie not to farm but to enjoy the property he had chosen for its natural beauty. He and his young wife live a luxurious life, dividing their time between the idyllic country retreat and soirees with their society friends in Denver.

Since Niel lives in town, his experience of nature and significant place occurs on the Forrester property, where the story proper begins in chapter two, when Niel and his friends are out on a picnic. The friends play around the marsh, which is, as Rosowski describes it, "a major symbol of the story: its delicate ecology suggests a fragile beauty that is all the more precious because it is so easily destroyed by change" (Rosowski 90). That change finds its embodiment in the character of Ivy Peters, a boy about six years older than Niel, nearly an adult at the time the story begins. Ivy interrupts the boys at their picnic, taunts them for enjoying nature ("I thought girls went on picnics" [LL 15]), and expresses his disregard for the forresters and their protection of the marsh. In a shocking dramatization of his callous placelessness, Ivy uses his slingshot to stun a woodpecker, which he claims is damaging the trees, and slits its eyes with knife. After it flies blindly about, "whirling in the sunlight and never seeing it, always thrusting its head up and shaking it," the woodpecker manages to find its way to its hole (LL 20). Niel climbs the tree to try to catch the bird so he can euthanize it, but he falls and breaks his leg. His friends take him to the Forrester home to be cared for; thus his friendship with that couple begins, and thus Ivy Peters is recognized as the story's villain—indeed, as the snake in the garden of Eden, with physical ugliness to match his spiritual wretchedness, with eyes that are "very small, [with] an absence of eyelashes [that] gave his pupils the fixed, unblinking hardness of a snake's or a lizard's" (LL 16).

Whereas Mrs. Forrester is most attractive to Niel for her glamour, fine taste, and uncanny ability to make people comfortable with themselves and other company, it is Captain Forrester who had created the place in which she can showcase her charms. When he dies, the Forrester place is no longer the *Forrester* place—it is not only the late Captain's financial re-

verses which cause Mrs. Forrester to lose control of the property, but her own loss of balance, of proper relation to her home. Without her husband, Mrs. Forrester "was like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind," having "lost her faculty of discrimination; her power of easily and graciously keeping everyone in his proper place" (LL 150). The person who Niel is most disturbed to see leave his proper place is Ivy Peters, who had become a shyster lawyer with more than a passing interest in obtaining not only the late Captain Forrester's land, but his beautiful wife as well. At this Ivy succeeds, much to Niel's disgust. He drains the marsh, rents and then purchases the Forrester home, all of these actions being his obliteration of "a few acres of something he hated, though he could not name it," his assertion of "power over the people who had loved those unproductive meadows for their idleness and silvery beauty." Ivy is the prototype of the new capitalist speculator who will completely commodify the prairie and "root out the great brooding spirit of freedom . . . the space, the colour, the princely carelessness of the pioneer" (LL 102). It is not the place loving people like Antonia and Alexandra who have come to dominate Nebraska society, but a displaced, commercial "generation of shrewd young men, trained to petty economies by hard times" who "do exactly what Ivy Peters had done when he drained the Forrester marsh" (LL 103).

Though *A Lost Lady* ends this trilogy of place on the disillusioned and melancholy note of the land subjugated and the people either uncaring of the place or dispersed, like Marian Forrester in South America, Cather hoped that the kind of topophilia exemplified by her earth-mother heroines Alexandra and Antonia, and displaced but still place-loving male characters Carl Linstrum, Jim Burden, and Niel Herbert, was not entirely lost when the frontier period ended. In a 1923 essay, "Nebraska—The End of the First Cycle," published in *Nation*, Cather criticized "the ugly crest of materialism" that overcame the earlier relation of some strong spirits to the land (Nebraska 238). "I have always the hope," Cather wrote:

that something went into the ground with those pioneers that will one day come out again, something that will come out not only in sturdy traits of character, but in elasticity of mind, in an

honest attitude toward the realities of life, in certain qualities of feeling and imagination. (Nebraska 237)

As Rosowski observes, "Cather's belief in an essential relationship with place remained firm," and it may indeed be said that part of her inspiration in writing this great trilogy was to encourage the kind of place-centeredness embodied by the likes of Alexandra and Antonia, Cather's earth-dwelling heroines of the Nebraska prairie.

Michigan State University

WORKS CITED

- Cather, Willa. *A Lost Lady*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1923.
 ————. *My Antonia*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918.
 ————. *O Pioneers!* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913; paperback edition, 1988.
 ————. "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle." *Nation* 5 September 1923, 236-238.
 Rosowski, Susan J. "Willa Cather and the Fatality of Place: *O Pioneers!*, *My Antonia*, and *A Lost Lady*." *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines*. Edited by William E. Mallory and Paul Simpson-Housley. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1987.

NEW LIVES, NEW NAMES: DREISER'S CARRIE

G. T. LENARD

. . . I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known.
 —Tennyson, "Ulysses"

In the first sentence of *Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser introduces his heroine as Caroline Meeber, an 18-year old girl from Columbia City on a train headed for Chicago. She is leaving home for the first time, and she is embarking on a series of name-changes over the next few years that will mark the direction of her life in this rags-to-riches novel of the Progressive Era in America.

Although Dreiser introduces her as Caroline Meeber, the title of the novel, *Sister Carrie*, has puzzled some over the years. Claude Simpson, in his Introduction to the Riverside edition of the novel, asserts that we may rightly "ask why the emphasis on *Sister Carrie*, when so little is made of her relationship with Minnie Hanson" (vii). Simpson further writes that situations in the novel are "drawn from the life of one of Dreiser's sisters," and that "Dreiser uses *Sister* because he instinctively thinks of the girl as part of a family circle, a context the world tends to ignore in its image of a mistress" (vii). These may be plausible reasons for the novel's somewhat misleading title. Another reason may be that, although we first see Carrie as a member of a family, by the end we see her with no family connections whatsoever; the term "Sister" then becomes a yardstick by which we can measure the various changes she has passed through and the stages and relationships she has under-

gone throughout the course of the novel. Dreiser reminds us in the first chapter that "Sister Carrie" is a "half affectionate" nickname given to her by her family (6). But after the first chapter, Dreiser drops the "Sister."

In the following chapters which deal with Carrie's short and unhappy stay with Minnie and Sven Hanson, we see her acting out her role as "Sister," so there is no need for Dreiser to remind us of the family relationship. After her reunion with the flashy drummer Drouet, after Carrie has lost one job and is looking for another, Carrie ceases to be "Sister" to anyone, at least on one level. Deciding to take Drouet up on his offer of a room all to herself, Carrie leaves a note for her sister, which cuts the Hanson family out of her life entirely. In her book, *Two Dreisers*, Ellen Moers asserts: ". . . it was an important part of Dreiser's purpose to establish that his heroine is the sort of person for whom family ties, indeed human ties, are light and easily broken" (101). Carrie's note is short: "Dear Minnie: I'm not going home. I'm going to stay in Chicago while I look for work. Don't worry. I'll be alright" (66). The last time we see Minnie, she is dreaming of Carrie falling into a pit. For all Carrie knows, the Hanson family might well have fallen into a pit. They disappear from her consciousness entirely. When Carrie moves in with Drouet, he begins to call her "Cad" and the neighbors know her as Mrs. Drouet. When Carrie begins a new life, she has a new name to live with. This is a pattern that Dreiser sustains throughout the novel. Carrie is "given" her names by the people who effect the changes. In this case, Drouet has moved her out of her sister's flat and into his own, so he names her. Carrie does not in any way protest her new name or her new identity. If anything, Carrie would like to legitimate her "alias" by legalizing the name she has assumed with Drouet. She constantly asks the drummer when they will be married, and Drouet constantly promises that they will as soon as some big business deal of his comes through. Although Carrie does not choose her new name, or even consciously plan her new identity as Cad Drouet, she plays the part easily and well—which can be seen as a foreshadowing of her acting career. Whatever part Carrie finds herself playing, she acts it out with a natural facility; Dreiser has already informed us that Carrie is not much of a thinker, and she certainly is not a good talker, but she instinctively knows

how to play a role with ease and charm. In his essay, "Fortune's Wheel: *Sister Carrie*," Philip Fisher has remarked on Carrie's names through the novel. He writes: "A device that marks the self in relation to the future or the past in selective ways is the mobility of names and epithets in Dreiser's novel" (264). This early marker, then—the end of *Sister Carrie* and *Carrie Meeber* and the beginning of *Mrs. Cad Drouet*—illustrates how Carrie's life has changed since she came to Chicago.

The next name that Carrie acquires also is given to her by Drouet—Carrie Madenda. This new name is a "temporary" one—at least at this particular point in the novel; it is supposed to serve only for the program of the amateur lodge production of *Under the Gaslight* in which Carrie plays a character named Laura. Fisher has noted the irony of Carrie's name-change so that she may play another character. Carrie's stage name enables her to play a dramatic character. Carrie, then, assumes a role in order to assume yet another role. Although Carrie's "alias" is brief in this part of the novel, her identity as Carrie Madenda will take on an even greater importance in the last part of the novel; it will be the final name by which we know her.

In the meantime, though, Carrie will undergo two more name changes. Although the scene at the safe at Fitzgerald and Moy's saloon is usually considered (and rightly so) to be the turning point for George Hurstwood in the novel, it is also one for Carrie Meeber Drouet (Madenda). Simpson explains that this particular incident is important for her because "it rescues her from the dead-end of the Drouet affair, even though she is tricked into leaving by Hurstwood" (xiv). Hurstwood *does* trick Carrie into leaving, but once she is conscious of the deceit, she is free to return to Chicago; Hurstwood has given her that option. Ellen Moers sums up the train ride out of Chicago when she writes:

Carrie herself is making an important crossing from one lover to another, and from obscurity to celebrity; Hurstwood is crossing from success to failure. They are crossing over from Chicago to New York, from a human to an impersonal city, from the old days to the new. (158)

This crossing is a deliberate one on Carrie's part. Once she has recovered from the shock of Hurstwood's deceit, she decides to

go on with him. She also breaks all ties with Drouet the moment she makes her decision to go to Montreal and then New York. She relinquishes any feelings she may have had for the drummer, and indeed all thoughts of him, when she makes up her mind. With Carrie on the train to Montreal, in fact, at the start of Chapter 29, Dreiser writes:

As Carrie looked out upon the flying scenery she almost forgot that she had been tricked into this long journey against her will and that she was without the necessary apparel for travelling. She quite forgot Hurstwood's presence at times, and looked away to homely farmhouses and cosy cottages in villages with wondering eyes. It was an interesting world to her. Her life had just begun. (233).

For Carrie, a new life requires a new name. Her temporary name in a Montreal hotel becomes Mrs. G. W. Murdock. That name will not last long, though. Carrie tells Hurstwood that he must marry her if he expects her to stay with him. He promises to do so, saying that he will get a license that same day under a name other than "Hurstwood." He opts for Murdock. Carrie does not like that name, but approves the suggestion of Wheeler, and in a sham ceremony Hurstwood and Carrie become Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Wheeler and strike out for a new life in New York.

For a while, all is well for Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler; the "new life" seems satisfactory for Carrie Meeber Drouet Madenda Murdock Wheeler. As time passes and Hurstwood declines professionally, physically, mentally, and emotionally, Carrie goes out again on her own to become Carrie Madenda, chorus girl and future theatrical star. Philip Fisher writes that in this part of the novel

Proper names multiply until they vanish. As the newspaper reports, "the part of Katisha the Country Maid will be hereafter filled by Carrie Madenda." She in turn is only playing the part of Carrie Madenda in the theater. In the neighborhood, she is Carrie Wheeler. . . . Beneath the layer of the neighborhood, she is unmarried. . . . The theatrical language invites us to consider all social life as "parts" and "roles." (265)

Indeed, Carrie has been playing various roles since she left Columbia City. But those roles are not played, on her part, with

any intent to deceive. She slides into these parts through circumstances and by instinct. By her nature, Dreiser tells us, she is not an intellectual, thinking person but an emotional one. She becomes a celebrated actress because it is her nature to play roles; she lands bigger and better theatrical parts not because she constantly strives to be a great actress, but because she simply happens to *react* properly to whatever happens on stage. She does not consciously set out to become the hit of the production by playing the Frowning Quakeress. And she manages, through sheer instinct, the "right" ad-lib to the actor-comedian in the comic opera who asks: "Well, who are you?" and she replies, "I am yours truly" (357).

Once Carrie begins to earn her own money in the theater, she resents her husband's unemployment. She wants to spend her money on clothes, not on G. W. Hurstwood Wheeler and the apartment and its maintenance. Her "real" life as Carrie Madenda begins when she leaves Hurstwood. Her departure from his life is much like her earlier leave-taking of her sister. She walks out, leaving Hurstwood a note. The note is somewhat longer than the one she left for Minnie, but it is similar in tone. Carrie does leave Hurstwood twenty dollars (interestingly enough, the same amount Drouet had given her during their chance reunion on the Chicago street) and the furniture in the flat. She quickly forgets Hurstwood, just as she had forgotten Minnie and Drouet. Chapter 43 opens with Carrie's vague fears that Hurstwood will seek her out at the theater, but after time passes, she loses her anxiety on that front, and Dreiser writes: "In a little while she was, except for occasional thoughts, wholly free of the gloom with which her life had been weighted in the flat" (365). Carrie's leaving Hurstwood gives her the freedom of a new life and a new name—actually, an old name that now stands as a professional name. The first time, in Chicago, that she had used the name "Madenda" she was praised for her acting. The name acquires a kind of symbolic quality for Carrie, though she may not be conscious of it. And although it was Drouet who originally gave Carrie the name "Madenda," this is the first time Carrie has chosen a name for herself.

In the Book of Genesis, God allows Adam to name the animals of the earth. In naming the animals, Adam has power over them. In naming herself, Carrie gains as much power over

herself as is possible in a Dreiser novel. When Carrie lived through the names given to her by others—her family, Drouet, Hurstwood—she also lived through those who named her. Now, living and working under a name she has given to herself, Carrie is free to live as she pleases—to have her beautiful hotel suites, her clothes, her material things. She may not be happy, but her longing is no longer for the material things she thought were the key to happiness. She does not forsake her possessions, but begins to learn that her things will not provide what she longs to have. In *Five Novels of the Progressive Era*, Robert Schneider asserts that at the end of the novel Carrie's "sense of isolation and discontent was as strong as it had been when she first entered the city" (164). While few would disagree with that remark, it is worth remembering that Carrie has, if nothing else, penetrated the walled city and become a luminary within the fortress. Her decision to find work and to name herself has allowed her the power and means of admission. The name "Madenda" became like a charm; when Drouet gave it to her, she became a one-night wonder in an amateur theatrical and, more important to her at that time, felt the wholehearted devotion of the two men in her life. Now, as Carrie gives the magic name to herself, she receives the admiration of thousands of nameless strangers. For all her isolation and discontent, Carrie at least has a name and an identity (even if that identity is an assumed one).

And it is interesting to remember that George Hurstwood has lost everything in his life, including his name. He gave up his last name in Montreal after his crime and became G. W. Murdock temporarily, and G. W. Wheeler thereafter. In his suicide, he loses even that.

Of Hurstwood's death [Carrie] was not even aware. A slow, black boat setting out from the pier at Twenty-Seventh Street upon its weekly errand bore, with many others, his nameless body to the Potter's Field. (417)

Because Hurstwood had lived so long and so well with his own name, and because he locked himself into the identity his name gave to him, his name change is woven tightly into the fabric of his decline and his suicide. His death is his release from the imprisonment the name "Wheeler" has become for him. It is

just as well that Hurstwood-Wheeler dies nameless. Hurstwood has ceased to exist when he left Chicago, and Wheeler deteriorated into a twisted shell of a man who was refused entry to the walled city. Hurstwood's anonymity once he becomes Wheeler makes it all the more poignant and appropriate that he should die nameless.

Don M. Wolf has written: "Dreiser's contribution . . . is to be found . . . in his massive and powerful record of American men and women struggling with forces they do not understand" (336). This is particularly true of Carrie in this novel; she cannot understand her own inner workings as she struggles to find her happiness in the material things the world has to offer, thinking that they will bring fulfillment. At the end of the novel, she knows that they do not, yet she is no closer to the key to happiness than she was at 18. At least at 18 she thought she knew what would grant her what she wanted. She has gone through many phases, changes, poses, and identities within the time span of the novel, though. And she does understand, whether consciously or not, the power of the names she has used. A name with the title "Mrs." in front of it can bring her reputability in the neighborhood. A nickname like "Sister Carrie" or "Cad" is the sign of affection. And a stage name can grant her power. Carrie is able to slip into her many names as easily and as instinctively as she slips into her characters on stage.

Critics often remark that Carrie has a keen eye for her own self-interest; a representative remark is that of Robert Schneider, who writes: "Carrie was, or at least appeared to be, interested solely in the welfare of Carrie Meeber" (164). She allows others to name her, to grant her an identity, because she feels it is in her own best interest—at least for the moment. Even when she takes her own name, it is a "recycled" one from her past, one that has brought her a measure of fulfillment and esteem. Through her names, through the identities she is given through the novel, she passes through life cycles and is allowed to play temporary roles—leisured wife, actress, housewife. Carrie is granted the opportunity to test certain roles that are usually considered permanent. She is granted a whole new life with each name she receives. She may not find happiness, but Carrie is able, at a young age, to live a number of lives by going through a series of "beginnings."

The fact that Carrie is able to break ties so easily and so completely has a basis in the names she acquires throughout the novel. At the start, she is a "sister"; at the end, she is alone in her rocking chair, pondering the source of happiness and fulfillment. In the meantime, she has been allowed to role play both off and on the stage. Dreiser's series of names for his title character is a foreshadowing of Carrie's successful acting career. From the time she came to Chicago at 18 to her admission into the walled city a few years later, Carrie has lived out various roles and rejected most of them. Dreiser uses the names of his heroine to mark the start and finish of cycles and passages in her life. And if Carrie Meeber Drouet Madenda Murdock Wheeler Madenda has not been permitted a lasting identity in the novel, at least she has been granted the chance to play various characters in her personal and professional life.

Stockton State College

WORKS CITED

- Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. Ed. Claude Simpson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside ed., 1959.
- Fisher, Philip. "Fortune's Wheel: *Sister Carrie*." *American Realism: New Essays*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1982.
- Moers, Ellen. *Two Dreisers*. New York: The Viking Press, 1969.
- Schneider, Robert W. *Five Novels of the Progressive Era*. 1965. Bowling Green: The Popular Press, 1978.
- Simpson, Claude. Introduction. *Sister Carrie*. By Theodore Dreiser. Boston: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside ed., 1959. v-xix.
- Wolf, Don M. *The Image of Man In America*. 2nd ed. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970.

THE COSMOPOLITAN MIDWESTERNER

JANET RUTH HELLER

Dan Stryk, *The Artist and the Crow*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1984. 75 pp. \$5.25.

The "artist" and the "crow" are two sides of poet Dan Stryk's experience and personality. On the one hand, he is a simple Midwesterner who feels at home in a cornfield, but on the other hand, he is a sophisticated man with a doctorate who is equally comfortable in a European art museum. *The Artist and the Crow* moves from the dichotomy in the title to the gradual merging of the two points of view.

This book is divided into four sections: "Cornlands," "London Poems," "Scenes from a Tragicomedy," and "Of Blight and Faith." The first section portrays the land, the people, and the flora and fauna of the rural American Midwest. Nature and the changes in seasons are emphasized. A central image of "Cornlands" is that of crows clinging to a tree branch on a sub-zero winter day, an emblem of survival and perseverance in the face of hardship. Like the crows, the people in this book must encounter life's trials with bravery in order to reach the peace and fulfillment of spring.

Stryk's poems are primarily descriptive and meditative, with occasional transcriptions of dialogue. Stunning, original images characterize many of these pieces. The descriptions of Midwestern landscapes and cityscapes are precise and evocative, as in "Illinois Towns" and "Cross-Country Skier." Scenes of the Midwest in winter predominate.

Related to the theme of survival of hardship are the poems that concern the life cycle. Stryk introduces birth imagery in the first few poems of the "Cornlands" section with the references to the fetal "caul" in "Midwest Farm Triptych" and "a

babe's fuzzy head" in "Pigeons." These metaphors and later references to pregnancy (see "Mulberries," for example) foreshadow the emphasis on Stryk's baby son in the final section of *The Artist and the Crow*.

Stryk often repeats sounds in order to stress a concept or to create onomatopoeia. In "Barnmen," the farmers "clomp the hardwood ramps," and in "Midwest Farm Triptych," midsummer "makes confluence of sweet communal 'gold.'" Stryk finds "a skeletal rattling constant" in the leaves near a cornfield ("Pigeons"). When his little son rows, the oar "springs out in spray" ("Bird Island, Grey Light"). Stryk's language often moves toward synesthesia. I especially like the image of the winter's "shrill light" in "Snowblindness."

Unlike "Cornlands," the second section of *The Artist and the Crow*, "London Poems," features people and art, not nature. Stryk emphasizes the city of London, where he was born and spent time as an adult. This portion of the book is more miscellaneous than the first, and no unified view of London emerges.

Many of these poems concern art museums in England, which Stryk visited with his artist wife, Suzanne. In "The Copyists," he turns from an unsympathetic portrayal of the art students copying Rembrandt's *Adoration* to a more interesting speculation about the herdsmen in the painting: are they watching swaddled baby Jesus or Mary's matronly "beauty"? "Sketching the Assyrian Reliefs with My Wife at the British Museum" is Stryk's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." He ends with a modification of Keats's famous last stanza: artists and poets are "hunters" who are "stalking the/ beautiful, found rarely,/ never uncombined/ with pain." This insight is very well put, but the rest of the poem, with its many embedded clauses and phrases and awkward line divisions, is hard to follow.

Stryk shares the British romantics' interest in using the sympathetic imagination to help the poet to identify with the lives and troubles of people of different ages, in different social classes, in different occupations, from different countries, and of different sexes. "The Perfect Love" reflects Wordsworth's "The Idiot Boy" in its fascination with retarded children who can express "perfect love." Stryk also empathizes with farmers in "Barnmen," a street musician in "Jazz Man," a crippled employee of a doughnut shop in "At Winchell's," the survivors of an earth-

quake in "Quake in Turkey," street urchins of Bogotá, Columbia, in "Gaminos," and an Italian visiting America in "Mulberries." Stryk is concerned about the boundaries that separate people. In "Bicycle," middle-class Stryk and a retarded former classmate with odd jobs are separated by "hedgerows." Most citizens ignore the retarded worker, but the poet describes the man in tender detail. The intensity and sincerity of Stryk's empathy make these among the best and most moving poems in the collection.

In an earlier book, *To Make a Life* (Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence Press, 1980), Stryk had some trouble sympathizing with women, especially those who were old or fat. However, the poems of *The Artist and the Crow* reveal a new understanding of women's struggle to survive and a new perception of the relationship between the sexes. "Bag Ladies" is an example of this growing sympathy for women. Instead of dismissing them, he finds that his memories of the bag ladies "haunt" him. Similarly, he admires the poise and alertness of a young whore in "Soho Prostitute." "The Female Cardinal" is not just about birds: the poem develops Stryk's appreciation for the "gentler" subtlety of female beauty, which he contrasts to the "shrill" nature of masculine pretensions.

Stryk's poems have a dense texture because he eliminates most articles, *to be* verbs, and other function words. This condensation helps the reader to focus on the precise images. But sometimes this technique creates confusion between possessives and contractions, as in ". . . the warm glow's/ touched their hearts" ("The Copyists"). The telegraphic style also requires distracting footnotes, as in "The Perfect Love," where Stryk must clarify the meaning of "QE2."

The poet's opening lines usually contain an effective metaphor or simile. However, the middle and ending of the pieces are not always as arresting. Some of the opening stanzas might be isolated as finished haiku or quatrains. For example, the first segment of "Nocturne" is complete in itself:

Voices rising from the trees . . .
Those taut and brittle bows
that brush against the wet chord
of my small son's nasal sleep.

Similarly, part two of "Chicory" merely elaborates on the beautiful images of part one. The poem should end with the striking

simile that concludes the first portion, "taut corollas/ spread like icy stars." Sometimes, Stryk is tempted to add one image too many to the endings of his poems. "Midwest Farm Triptych" concludes with three lines about a dying horsefly, instead of stopping after the unique image of summer sweat "wound about us like a caul."

The third section of *The Artist and the Crow*, "Scenes from a Tragicomedy," merges the idea of the artist with American settings. The tone is seriocomic: the poems are simultaneously humorous and sad. In "Mulberries," Stryk tries to integrate the travel poem and the domestic meditation, a difficult fusion. The first part is the most successful: a former resident of Milan celebrates "the ripeness" of an Italian spring. The stanzas are full of erotic imagery and lyrical metaphors for pregnancy. However, the rest of the poem makes meditative leaps that the reader cannot follow. In the segment entitled "The American Who Listened," Stryk does not clarify how the Italian and he are "risking" their lives by eating mulberries from a "public tree."

Many of the best poems in this section explore the relationship between humans and animals, especially humans who sympathize deeply with the animal kingdom. In "Hawk Eye," Stryk imagines his ornithologist friend imitating the redtail hawks that he watches, unsure of his own identity. The poet portrays this negative capability well: Stryk writes that his friend has "not been/ truly certain if he's watcher, watched/ or mate." By the end of the poem, the ornithologist has even developed the "distant feral eye" of the hawks. In "Pet Shop," Stryk describes his own delight with the animals in the local pet shop and his interaction with the parrot-like owner. The poet even identifies with his tropical fish and dreams about being swallowed by a whale like Jonah (see "Fish-Bowl" and "Whales"). Stryk could explore the roots of this attraction more: why does the animal world appeal so strongly to him?

The animals' struggle to survive parallels that of humans. "Inertia" conveys the guilt that we feel for our inactivity during the coldest days of the year. The persona fails to respond to a freezing tomcat wailing at night. A few hours later, "All's silent in dawn's ache," and the speaker is full of "remorse."

The final section, "Of Blight and Faith," reveals the comingling of poverty, calamity, and despair with new life and hope. Some of these poems are international in scope, a good

contrast to the more personal emphasis of "Cornlands." The tone is more serious than in "Scenes from a Tragicomedy," and the poems feature paradoxes and social issues. In "Gaminos," the young street boys of Bogotá vary their pilfering with a visit to the church's soup kitchen. The survivors of Turkey's earthquake endure cold weather and personal loss to "rebuild" and continue the timeless agricultural cycle ("Quake in Turkey," p. 63). Similarly, a crippled man who works at a doughnut restaurant relished his job and the customers and touches his wife tenderly ("At Winchell's"). Stryk respects all of these survivors for their courage. Similarly, he celebrates the grace of a raccoon who raids "moon-glazed" garbage ("The Scavenger").

Many of the finest poems of this section celebrate family life and the birth of the poet's son, Theo. In "The Warm Head of Our Son," Stryk associates his child with the spring thaw and compares the parents hovering around the stroller to "wakened bees." The spring makes even the cemetery "glistening/ soft." Note that this poem juxtaposes birth and death without a hint of the macabre. *The Artist and the Crow* concludes with this family enduring the hardships of another winter, which recalls the imagery of "Cornlands." Even babies must fight for survival in Stryk's world. In the moving second section of "Birth-Rite," entitled "Glass," the poet and his wife watch their coughing baby son struggle for breath inside a hospital incubator. Stryk emphasizes the parents' helplessness and frustration.

Some of the final poems combine the worlds of art and nature. For example, tree branches silhouetted against the snow are "delicate/ as tapestry" ("Branches"). Similarly, branches rubbing together resemble "taut and brittle bows" for sting instruments, and the child's snoring is a "wet chord" ("Nocturne"). The last poem in the book also concerns the intersection of art and nature. In "The Chimney," the building of a half-finished chimney represents both the middle-aged poet's life and his writing. The work is "lonely," yet it is the "way to heaven." The persona is surrounded by animals—loons, owls ("frozen sculpture in the trees"), rabbits—and the sand and rocks that he uses to construct the chimney are the remains of "generations of small things." This affirmative poem is an appropriate conclusion to *The Artist and the Crow*: winter is approaching, but man keeps working during the long "wait for spring."

JOHN HERRMANN, MIDWESTERN MODERN,
PART II: THE ALGER HISS CASE AND THE
MIDWESTERN LITERARY CONNECTION

DAVID D. ANDERSON

On August 3, 1948, an obscure senior editor of *Time* magazine, a self-confessed former member of the Communist underground in the United States, accused the president of the Carnegie Endowment, a former high-ranking official of the State Department and organizer of the initial United Nations meeting in San Francisco in 1945, of having been, while a member of the government in the 1930s, a member of the Communist underground organization in Washington known as the "Ware Group." The setting was an open hearing of the Republican controlled House UnAmerican Activities Committee as one of a series of such appearances by former Communist Party members. The hearings were clearly the preliminary skirmishing of the 1948 Presidential campaign, and thus far they had attracted little public or media attention, but on August 4 the charge was in headlines. On August 5 the accused denied the accusations and any knowledge of the accuser with ringing conviction, while an obscure California Congressman listened skeptically and made notes.

The senior editor of *Time* was Whitaker Chambers, the president of the Carnegie Endowment was Alger Hiss, the obscure Congressman was Richard Nixon, and the results of that initial charge and denial were to result in headlines for the next three years, detailing even more bizarre charges, counter-charges, allegations, and denials that included conspiracy, espionage, perjury, stolen papers hidden in attics and hollowed-out pumpkins, alcoholism, homosexuality, and forgery by typewriter and otherwise; there were distinguished supporters and

denouncers on both sides, liberals and conservatives on each side, impressive character witnesses, powerful legal batteries, a grand jury hearing. Eventually Alger Hiss's first trial for perjury resulted in a hung jury, and the second resulted in conviction on January 21, 1950. Alger Hiss was found guilty of perjury on two charges, for denying under oath that he had known and met with Chambers in 1938 and further that he had given secret government papers to Chambers during that time. The statute of limitations for espionage charges for peace-time offenses had expired, but the implication was clear in the charges, and Hiss was sentenced to two five-year sentences in a federal penitentiary, to run concurrently.

Some contemporary observers saw it as a modern Dreyfus case; others saw Hiss as a modern Benedict Arnold; there were alleged suicides, apparent accidental deaths, and suspected murders as the case unfolded, and almost immediately it divided Americans, particularly intellectuals, as no other case has, before or since; facts were lost sight of or obscured as Chambers and Hiss quickly became symbols and heroes, the former as either a courageous patriot dedicated to the truth or an unprincipled scoundrel; the latter, as either an intellectual martyr to a mindless witch hunt or an unprincipled traitor. The obscure young Congressman went to the Senate, the Vice Presidency, and the Presidency and then on to disgrace, with echoes of the Hiss case raised in accusation and defense. Chambers, after writing *Witness* (1952), an eloquent apology, is more than thirty years in his grave, and Hiss, nearly ninety, paroled after three years and eight months in Lewisburg Prison, wrote *In the Court of Public Opinion* (1959), his apology, and after a series of jobs, lives on in retirement, in bitterness and hope. And those of my generation remember the intensity and passion of our convictions, still evident after forty years. For more than thirty of those years I was convinced that Hiss had been framed.

In the dramatic intensity of events occurring, of what is to become history, the role and the fate of some participants are inevitably lost, insignificant by comparison, distorted or denied, ignored in the record, or lost in a fog of frustration, misguided loyalties, fear, or even the haze of chronic alcoholism. Yet these participants, leading actors or not, not only are inevitably lost to history, but their testimony, if forthcoming at the appropriate

time, might have clarified, confirmed, or disproved some of the great issues of their time. Much such evidence was neglected or hidden or denied or falsified throughout the Hiss case, and it remains confused today. Yet out of the haze of time and distortion it is at last possible to reconstruct some roles and to recover, consequently, some of the testimony that might have been.

Such testimony belongs to two Midwestern writers, both of them promising in their day. One eventually was to gain a measure of prominence and notoriety before dying in 1969 at 77; the minor achievement of the other, together with the promise, has been buried for more than thirty years in an alcoholic's grave in Lansing, Michigan.

The writers are Josephine Herbst of Sioux City, Iowa, author of nine novels, including a remarkable autobiographical trilogy, and dozens of stories, whose ashes were returned to Sioux City after a long life full of productivity and pain; and John Herrmann of Lansing, Michigan, who published three novels and some distinguished short fiction, almost all before he was thirty-five, whose body was returned to Michigan in 1959 after a decade of exile and death in Mexico.

For more than a decade, from 1926 to 1940, Herbst and Herrmann were married, the last six years separated. In the twenties they had been literary expatriates, both of them determined to be writers, both of them part of the exciting—and in retrospect romantic—literary movements and experience of their time, a period and relationship I have covered in an earlier essay. They knew and enjoyed the company of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson, William Carlos Williams, Edward Dalberg, and the other young writers of their time who have become part of literary legend. John, the more promising of the two, published short fiction in *transition*; his first novel, *What Happened?*, was published by Robert McAlmon's Contact Press in Paris in 1926 and banned in New York in 1927; in 1932 he shared the Scribner's Prize for distinguished short fiction with Thomas Wolfe; and in 1932 he also published, to good reviews, his second novel, *Summer is Ended*.

But already they had been caught up in the turmoil of the times. When they visited their Midwestern homes in the late twenties and early thirties—usually separately; (neither was considered respectable enough for the other's middle-class, small-

city Midwestern family)—they were both shocked by the deepening farm crisis; in 1930 they traveled to Russia to participate in the International Congress of Revolutionary Writers in Kharkov, although neither was a revolutionary, except against what they saw as the middle-class Midwestern morality of their families. They were shocked by the poverty and chaos they saw in Warsaw and Vienna but moved by the promise of Moscow. Josephine was impressed, but John was converted. In the jacket of *Summer is Ended*, his second novel, he wrote, "I was in Russia last year and found the rest of the world dead compared to it." At the peak of his promise and success he joined the Communist Party. Two years later Malcolm Cowley encountered Herrmann at the May Day parade in New York. He looked, Cowley recalled, "pale, shabby, and, I thought, exalted." His talk was not of Paris or writing or friends but of Russia and the coming revolution in America.

The record of those years—the crises, the personal soul-searching, the commitments made and broken—has been written many times in fact, fiction, and memoir, but curiously, except for a few articles on the farm crisis, it appears only by indirection in the fiction both Herrmann and Herbst wrote at the time, most obviously in John's Scribner's Prize novella "The Big Short Trip." But by 1932 their marriage was strained; each had a brief affair, and it appeared doomed, although they travelled together to farmers' strikes in Iowa and Nebraska. They marched in protests of the United Farmers' Protective Association in Pennsylvania, where they lived, and John was sent, as a delegate, to the Farmers' Second National Congress in Chicago in November, 1933. Josephine went along to write an article for *The New Republic*—which was later rejected by that magazine as too radical and finally published in *New Masses*.

It was during this period that Josephine and John met one of the most interesting and least known of the prominent American Communists of the period. This was Harold Ware, whose shadow fell over the later Hiss case as head of the mysterious Ware Group of the early 1930s. Ware was born in 1890 and died in 1935 in a traffic accident in Pennsylvania while enroute to New York on Party business. The son of the notorious Mother Bloor of Party history and folklore and a cradle Communist, he was personally as well as ideologically committed to farming

issues. An intellectual, he advocated farming mechanization, spending most of the 1920s in Russia in an effort to organize and make efficient practices that were archaic and had become chaotic. In 1922 he received a commendation from Lenin. In 1932 Ware established what was called "Farm Research" in Washington to support farm action and publications. In late 1933 or early 1934 he invited John Herrmann to join him in Washington. John was a Party member; Josephine was not; John had become an activist; Josephine was determined to return to her writing. John's move to Washington effectively ended their marriage although they visited each other and corresponded, and they were not to divorce until 1940. Much of what we know about the Ware group, John's role in it, and what would have confirmed Whittaker Chamber's testimony to the detriment of Hiss's comes from this correspondence, later correspondence, and Josephine's later contradictory statements to the FBI and to Hiss's attorneys, as well as the statements of Chambers and other witnesses at the hearings and trial.

Perhaps at this point a summarizing clarification is in order. In Washington in the early years of the New Deal, Communists and Communism were almost fashionable, perhaps enjoying what we would call "radical chic" today. The USSR was recognized officially, and an embassy was opened. On December 15, 1934, John wrote to Josie that "[I] was invited to the Sov. Embassy last night for buffet supper and to meet Ossinsky head of state planning board there in Russia . . . the entire new deal was there with the exception of the president. Tugwell, Frank, Howe and etc. . . ." The Soviet experiment was, for many of the New Dealers, Communists or not, the wave of the future, the first major attempt to reorder and revitalize a moribund economic system, and they could learn if not emulate. This was the age, too, of intellectual and literary support of that Party as well as the growing working class commitment seen in such works as Jack Conroy's proletarian novel *The Disinherited* (1933). It was the age, too, of the wavering and indecision reflected in Sherwood Anderson's *Beyond Desire* (1934). However minor his role may or may not have been, John Herrmann was at the committed center of it all.

But there was another, secret side to Communism in Washington on the 1930s, a side attested to, to be believed or not, by

Chambers, Elizabeth Bentley, and others who had broken with the Party and later made public their experiences. This was the side attested to also by the letters and statements, unknown or unused in the years between 1948 and the mid 1970s, of John Herrmann and Josephine Herbst.

This secret side of the Ware Group—later dismissed by some of its members as a study group for farm problems—consisted in securing government papers from its membership and transmitting them, either microfilmed or copied, by courier to New York. Indeed, John Herrmann described such a trip he made to Josephine Herbst. Although Whittaker Chambers later insisted in *Witness* that, strictly speaking, this was not espionage but simply stealing documents for Party use—as opposed to the later transmission through him of documents from the State department, allegedly supplied by Hiss, to Soviet military intelligence—he emphasized the major purpose of the group was to recruit young, ambitious, gifted future leaders to the service of the Party and ultimately of the Soviet state. (One can hear echoes here of Cambridge University during the same years and the recruitment of Maclean, Burgess, Philby, and Blunt). Among the members of the group were Nathan Watt, Lee Pressman, John J. Abt, Charles Kramer, all young government lawyers; Henry H. Collins and Victor Perlo, economists; and the young lawyers Alger and Donald Hiss, most of whom, with the major exceptions of the Hiss brothers, later admitted membership in the group and/or the Party, either publicly or privately.

Chambers insisted that fund raising was an important dimension of the group's activities, and each of the members contributed generously. Curiously, although Chambers testified privately at length on the role of John Herrmann, to whom he had become close as a member of the Ware Group, he did not mention him in *Witness* except obliquely and almost wistfully, when he wrote,

. . . I have reason to believe that there is still another witness with first-hand knowledge of the Group. At least like Hamlet, I see a cherub who sees one (347).

According to Elinor Langer, Herbst's biographer, Ruth Herrmann, John's second wife, said that John had introduced Hiss to Chambers at a Chinese restaurant near Dupont Circle in

1934. Chambers was known as Karl or Carl in the underground. Hiss later admitted knowing him as George Crosley.

Herrmann's letters to Josephine, especially during his first year in Washington, throw light on both their personal problems and deteriorating marriage and, cryptically, on his work in the Group. At one point in early 1935 he wrote that "It has percolated through the whole organization by now thanks to your girlfriends and Hal, K and plenty of others think I am what you tell me I am." In the same letter he gave a new address: an apartment rented by Henry Collins, which Chambers was later to name as a place where the group met and where documents were photographed.

In another letter (June, 1934) he wrote that "I am still seeing the same people and getting material but have got to whip it into shape. Otherwise the stuff I do will certainly not amount to what it should." Again, when Josephine was going to Havana as a reporter, he wrote, "Larry Duggan from the State Department . . . will look you up, very liberal, but not entirely of a mind to come with us," thus anticipating Duggan's later insistence that he knew little of any conspiracies, just before he died in a fall from the sixteenth floor of a New York office building on December 20, 1948, four days after Hiss's perjury indictment.

Although the Ware Group continued after Hal Ware's death in 1935, its function and membership changed. Hiss moved from Agriculture to State, and, according to Chambers, his secret role changed from group member to underground member and procurer of documents for Chambers to transmit to Soviet military intelligence, both of which roles Hiss continues to deny. By 1938, however, John Herrmann had drifted from Washington to work with a Party center for sharecroppers and transport workers in the South, and that same year Chambers made his dramatized if not dramatic break with the Party to begin his conscientious career with *Time*, to create a new life and new friendships, and, most importantly, to determine to warn others of what he knew of the Communist underground. His first attempt was in 1939; it was filed and forgotten until another, more receptive age.

During the rest of the decade Josephine and John remained apart, and gradually they lost touch. Her career continued its slow, steady pace in spite of personal unhappiness; she was in Spain during the revolution, and she continued her association

with radical politics, which was to result in her being fired from the Office of Facts and Figures, a forerunner of the OSS, early during the war and refused a passport in 1951 and again in 1954.

John, meanwhile, published his last novel, *The Salesman*, in 1939; he apparently broke with the Party at about this time, after the Hitler-Stalin pact of that year; he divorced Josephine and married Ruth Tate, his second wife, in 1940; he operated a furniture-making shop briefly in Manhattan; he enlisted in the Coast Guard when the war broke out, serving in the North Atlantic; and apparently during all these years he was drinking heavily. In the late 1940s, as the hearings began their enquiries into Communist activity in Washington in the 1930s, John, Ruth, and their small son moved to Mexico, where he was to remain for most of the rest of his life.

On February 6, 1949, Josephine Herbst was interviewed by F.B.I. agents to determine what, if anything, she knew about the Ware Group and the Hiss-Chambers-Herrmann relationship. Already the subject of an F.B.I. investigation in 1942, which declared her a Communist Party member, she proved seemingly straight-forward, contributing bits of innocuous information, but little of specific use. Almost immediately afterward she wrote John, in care of his family in Lansing—she had no idea where he was, but her concern and caring are evident—to warn him. She wrote:

They are looking for you in connection with the business in Washington in the thirties. What they want is information about Hal's group and it is to throw light on the Alger Hiss case. . . . They will probably succeed in finding you. I have given them no information as to your present whereabouts as I don't know.

I did have to make some explanation of facts that they had already got hold of. My explanation was this. . . . I said you were writing at the time. . . . That you had gotten interested in farm problems in the fall of 1932. . . . That you were tinkering with various ideas for a play, for a novel based on the farm situation and that you were in Washington for some research. That you had got in touch with Hal Ware basically for that reason in connection with his farm research program and magazine. That you were writing in Washington. They knew that Carl had visited that apartment and I admitted that I had seen

him there. My explanation of it was that you probably knew people that he would like to know. I admitted that I understood he was working for CP but did not know in what capacity. . . . Said that your connection with Carl or Chambers had been for the purpose of getting material, in my opinion. . . . I said I had not tried to find out anything about Carl and did not attempt to question you and did not know whom you saw in Washington. Said to my recollection you had known Ware but it had come about through your interest in farm problems.

I did not give any names. I did not identify any of the people named. I did not name names when Hiss's lawyers saw me but did try to give them information about the period. Told them in my opinion a man like Chambers could have stolen material. Thought Hiss not guilty as charged. . . . I would have said about you that I knew nothing if I could have got away with it. I do not believe in this wholesale naming business that has been going on by the repentant sinners.

It is probably to your advantage not to avoid seeing these people. You may want to say something about Hal's activities if you knew. Anyhow he can't be hurt. He's dead. . . .

But Josephine had already contacted Hiss's attorneys, Edward McLean and Harold Rosenwald, offering her assistance and if necessary her testimony. Her depositions, recorded by Rosenwald on January 8, 1949, and later by McLean, tell a different story.

In the first she describes the Ware Group of which her husband was a member as "a group of people holding small and unimportant positions in various branches of the government . . . organized for the purpose of collecting information for the use primarily of the Communist Party in New York City;" she could not verify Chamber's statement that the documents were photographed in Herrmann's apartment, although she saw some of the documents, which she described as "thoroughly innocent and innocuous;" she said the group's members "took great pride in their sense of conspiracy," that the Party had set up the Group as a cell in "an organization capable of using influence and obtaining information in the event of a world or national crisis;" that she had met "Carl" in the summer of 1934 and she became friends; that she knew he had great underground responsibilities; that she knew others but would not name them, that "Alger Hiss did meet 'Carl';" that "Carl told me of such a meeting and

said Alger Hiss was a 'very cagey individual'" and that he and Mrs. Hiss were quite charming.

In the McLean deposition Josephine described the Ware apparatus and function in detail, attributing to its secrecy the breakup of her marriage, and described her last meeting with Carl in New York in April 1935, at the home of a mutual friend from the *Daily Worker*. She said that she immediately recognized his photos in the newspaper accounts of the hearings thirteen years after having last seen him—a recognition Hiss persisted in insisting was impossible for him, until his later admission that he had known Chambers as "George Crosley" was too late to repair his credibility.

Perhaps most tellingly she turned to her knowledge of Hiss: she had never met either Alger or Priscilla, but she had heard Carl and John Herrmann discuss him as an important potential source of papers. While Herrmann was engaged with Ware in organizing other cells in government, Carl continued to solicit Hiss. John Herrmann, she said, perhaps in a last effort to shield him, was not important enough to deal with Hiss. From that point, as her relationship with John continued to deteriorate, she related, she had no more connection with the group. Neither the prosecution nor the defense called her as a witness, the latter because her testimony would have been explosive.

The F.B.I. later found and questioned John in Mexico in 1950, after the Hiss case had run its course. He denied that he had ever been a Communist, that he had belonged to the Ware Group, that he knew any of its members, that he knew either Chambers or Hiss, that he knew Ware more than casually as a farm editor, that, indeed, he had any knowledge of any of the circumstances that had made so many headlines for so long, and he returned to his silence.

At that time the Midwestern literary connection with the Alger Hiss case had run its course, although the Hiss affair can still strain friendships and raise tempers among those of us who remember our convictions and continue or have changed them. In her last two decades Josephine Herbst found a measure of modest literary fame, published a last book in 1954, and found new admirers among such young writers as Saul Bellow and John Cheever; she became a fixture at such literary establishments as Yaddo, and she finally, quietly succumbed to cancer in

1969. She was eulogized by Alfred Kazin in the *New York Review of Books* even as her ashes were returned to Sioux City.

John had remained in Mexico, where he died in 1959, a decade before Josephine, his obituary in the *Lansing State Journal* attributing his death to poor health that had begun during his military service. Only casually did it mention that he had once worked as a writer. Both that and the *New York Times* obituary ignore his connection with the crises of the 1930s and the scandals of the 1940s. Perhaps his most complete memoir is in the files of the F.B.I.

One footnote remains. "John was the big person in my life and to lose him was the most crushing thing that ever happened to me," Josephine wrote at his death. And shortly thereafter she visited Lansing to stand silently at his grave, as she did again not long before her own death a decade later. Perhaps Edward Dahlberg expressed that moment most clearly when he wrote to Josephine of other times and people: "All fallen now," he said, "them and us."

Michigan State University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, David D. "John Herrmann, Midwestern Modern, Part I," *Midwestern Miscellany XVIII* (East Lansing, MI: The Midwestern Press, 1990).
- Chambers, Whittaker. *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952).
- Cowley, Malcolm. *The Dream of the Golden Mountains* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1980).
- Herbst, Josephine, Herbst Manuscripts, Yale University.
- "Herrmann Rites Set," *Lansing State Journal*, April 17, 1959.
- Hiss, Alger. *In the Court of Public Opinion* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).
- "John Herrmann," *New York World Telegram*, Sept. 22, 1932.
- "John Herrmann Dies," *New York Times*, May 19, 1959.
- Langar, Eleanor. *Josephine Herbst* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1984).
- McCann, William. "Lansing's Forgotten Novelist of the Lost Generation," *SSML Newsletter XI* (Summer, 1981), pp. 43-46.
- Weinstein, Allan. *Perjury* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978)