MIDWESTERN MISCELLANY XXIX

Spring 2001

being an archival issue
from the files 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 48824-1033
2001

In memory of
Clarence Andrews
and
Ray Lewis White

PREFACE

One of the real pleasures of my more than thirty years of association with the Society, especially pleasurable as I remember them from the earlier years, is the influx of the myriad letters, notes, comments, remarks, and brief essays that have come into my hands, amused and informed me, and taken their places in the society's archives. With the founding generation rapidly passing, I want to share some of those items by that generation with their successors. I hope you enjoy them. Most of the contributors are now dead. All were important names in our literary and critical past, and three were recipients of the MidAmerica Award.

Suitably, this compendium of the early years of the Society is dedicated to two early members who gave much to the Society and received the MidAmerica Award. We regret their recent deaths. Clarence Andrews and Ray Lewis White are missed.

October 2002 DAVID D. ANDERSON

CONTENTS

AN INVITATION

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

NEWSLETTER

Volume I, Number I
March, 1971

240 Ernst Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

As a result of an idea, a letter of inquiry circulated among a few scholars, and with a consensus that such an organization was both desirable and feasible, the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature is now unofficially and informally a reality.

This Society will be dedicated to the study of the rich literary heritage of the area that Sherwood Anderson call "Mid-America" - the land between the Appalachians and the Rockies, the Canadian border and the Ohio River Valley. The Society will first of all recognize the fact that much of the literature in the mainstream of the American literary heritage is Midwestern in its influences, inception, origin, and /or subject matter; and that the relationship between the works and the region is both real and significant.

With this principle as a point of departure, the Society will exist to encourage and assist the study of that literature in whatever directions the insight, imagination, and curiosity of the members may lead.

The Society can assist this study in many ways. First of all, we hope to develop an organization that, while as informal as the region out of which it comes, will be permanent and self-maintaining. This means, of course, that we will need an organizational framework,

dues, a journal, meetings, and whatever other ways we can devise for encouraging the study of Midwestern literature, both by scholars and in classrooms, and for disseminating the results of that study among those who are interested.

The members of the organizing committee feel that we should move promptly to insure the success of the Society and begin what we feel is a worthwhile cause. The Department of American Thought and Language and the University College of Michigan State University have generously agreed to absorb initial clerical and supply expenses, but we feel that the organization should become as self supporting as possible as quickly as possible. Therefore, we must begin by soliciting memberships and ideas, and then by providing for a permanent organization.

This historical document is, then, your personal invitation to join us by payment of $1.00 as initial dues for 1971, to supply us with suggestions for making the organization permanent (we hope to plan a meeting for Fall, 1971), and to provide us with items of news, bibliographic items, and other comments for the next issue of this newsletter, tentatively planned for late Spring, 1971.

C. Merton Babcock, Michigan State University
Bernard Duffey, Duke University
Robert C. Hubach, Bowling Green University
William McCann, East Lansing, Michigan
Russel B. Nye, Michigan State University
William B. Thomas, Ohio State University
David D. Anderson, Michigan State University
(Acting Chairman)

Enrollment Form

Enclosed is the payment of $1.00 for 1971 membership dues in the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature (checks payable to the Society).

Name _____ Affiliation _____

Address _____

Suggested Members:

A RESPONSE

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for the invitation, which is accepted with alacrity. I probably will not be able to attend too many meetings, but membership in such a Society constitutes support of sorts, and this I am eager to do.

The dollar is enclosed. If you can tell me how you keep an organization going on such a nominal fee, I will broadcast the intelligence to the politicians and bureaucrats who read my column in self defense.

Anyhow, good luck, to you and my appreciation for being accepted into the Society, sight unseen.

Cordially,

Judd Arnett
The Detroit Free Press

GREETINGS

Route 4
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
April 2, 1971

Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
240 Ernst Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dear Friends:

As the founder in 1915 of *The Midland, A Magazine of the Middle West,* and its editor until the depression killed it in 1933, I am indeed much interested in your *Newsletter* which I have received today. I think your idea is sound and that there is a truly valuable potential in the directions it proposes. Over the years (I finally retired from teaching at the State University of Iowa last June) I have found students very generally attracted to and interested in a regional approach to American literature and emphasis on mid-western writers.

May I suggest that in the follow-up mailing which I hope you will be making, you mention the fact that *The Prairie,* by Walter J. Muilenburg, certainly one of the best Midwestern novels, has recently been reissued in paperback by the Popular Library. I retired from teaching as of June 1, 1970; otherwise I would certainly be using this book as an assigned text this semester.

My wife and I had lunch yesterday with James Hearst and his wife of Cedar Falls, where he is teaching. He is in my considered judgment the best Midwestern poet. I included his work in the anthology called *Out of the Midwest,* published by Whittlesey House (McGraw Hill) in 1944. It has steadily increased in range and power ever since.

I hope that you will let me know what response your proposal receives.

Sincerely,

John T. Frederick

ON LOUIS BROMFIELD

David D. Anderson
c/o Twayne Publishers, Inc.
31 Union Square, West
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I ran across your book on Louis Bromfield today in the Arlington public library, and your reference in the chronology: "1920 - Worked as reporter for the New York City News Service" immediately brought back a few vivid memories that I thought might interest you and Mr. Bromfield's family. First, a couple of facts:

I joined the New York City News Association (I think it was Association rather than Service) in 1919, as one of three rewrite men: I sat in the first desk, a fellow named Berman sat behind me, and a fellow named Louis Bromfield sat at the rear desk. Each of us earned $3 a day, and if you wanted to work 16 hours straight through you could earn $6, and then you could sleep, fully clothed, on one of the desks. The office was in the old Hudson Terminal Building as I recall, I think at Broadway and Church Street, near Wall Street. It's probably still there.

I don't recall Louis going out on any stories, although he probably did, but he was busy as a bee all night long at his typewriter - even at times when nothing much was going on. I was busy at my typewriter, too, at the time, but mostly, instead of doing rewrite, I was busy writing poetry. A half dozen of my poems were published at the time in *The Little Review*, which made me very proud because the principal contributors were James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, William Carlos Williams and many others whose names are now bywords. At any rate, when reporters phoned in, most of the calls were taken by the fellow in the

middle, Berman, yet Louis and I were always pounding at our typewriters. After a while we must have become curious over the fact that each of us was busier at his typewriter than the fellow who was doing all the work and, one thing leading to another, I showed Louis some of my poems and he showed me some of what I believe to be his first novel, *The Green Bay Tree.* He said nothing as I recall about my poems - they were kind of crazy and I thought he was wasting his time writing novels. I had joined the Industrial Workers of the World (better known since then as the I.W.W. , or Wobblies) the year before, when I was 17, and I talked quite a bit about them, and Louis asked if he could go to one of our meetings. (At the moment, Louis was spending most of his off time somewhere on Park Avenue, and I was spending mine in The Purple Pup or Romany Marie's, etc., in Greenwich Village.) The I.W.W. headquarters in 1919 was on East 4th Street, and we'd often have a singing evening, and I took Louis to one of those meetings. It must have been in the wretched basement, because I recall there was hardly any room over our heads. At the end Louis looked at me compassionately, and said he hoped I would learn to take it "easy." I suppose I must have seemed like a wild-eyed radical Bolshevik - but it was probably more my age - I was 17 or 18 and Louis was five years older and a man of the world who had been in the war. I thought a great deal of him. He seemed a very fine fellow indeed, but he didn't seem to understand - as I did, so very clearly! - that the world was about to blow up. It was just a matter of weeks, even days. Hell, in November of 1919 the world, in a way, did blow up. I was in the I.W.W. headquarters when a bunch of war veterans, stimulated by Attorney General Palmer's "Red Raids," bore down on the little building, threw all the records, typewriters, chairs, etc., out into the street as the police smilingly looked on, and left the place a shambles. I guess I wasn't much either of a rebel or a poet, because a few weeks later I got a reporter's job in Florida, went quickly to Havana, staying in Cuba about a year and having a glorious time - and didn't give the revolution or poetry another thought for many years until now, at age 70 - as you will judge from the enclosed letter in *The American Scholar* - I think I have found what I was driving at when I was 17.

But Louis has always remained in my mind as one of the finest people I have ever met. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that he was more an artist than a writer, and that if he could have seen his way clear to expressing himself non-verbally he would have been

among the great men of his era. I have never read any of his books, although I did dip into *The Farm* some years ago, but I don't suppose I've read any fiction since Horatio Alger some 60 years ago, so I guess I am not a judge of what's good or not in fiction. But I am very happy to learn that Louis Bromfield, a great guy, has been remembered.

Regards,

Robert Reiss

ON *THE LITTLE REVIEW*

Dear Dr. Anderson:

Here's something else that may or may not interest the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature:

Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap - as far as this admittedly prejudiced observer is concerned the greatest editors in the history of American magazines of the Arts - brought *The Little Review* from Chicago, where as you doubtless know better than I, they started it, to a fourth or maybe fifth floor - of a brownstone house on West 16th Street, near Sixth Avenue, New York City, around 1915. These two great Midwestern women, whose comprehensiveness of intellect I believe to have been superior to that of their contributors (oh I know one shouldn't make these sorts of unnecessary comparisons) who included Wallace Stevens, Wyndham Lewis, Hart Crane, May Sinclair, James Joyce, Djuna Barnes, Sherwood Anderson, William Carlos Williams, and those other Midwesterners (?) Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, etc., etc., set me afire in August 1916 (I was 15) when Jane Heap wrote in that issue: "I loathe compromise, and yet I have been compromising in every issue by putting things that were 'almost good' or 'interesting enough' or 'important.' There will be no more of it. If there is only one really beautiful thing for the September number it shall go in and the other pages will be left blank." And the September number - at a time when all those now celebrated writers were clamoring to get into *The Little Review* - except for the letters to the editor sort of thing consisted of 30 or 40 absolutely blank pages! The finest issue of an American arts magazine ever published! So ...

Of course I decided to rescue these women from the torrent of worthless stuff they were receiving from Joyce, Pound, etc., so one day I took a fistful of poems from my yards and yards of them I had been writing since about 13 or so, climbed to the top floor of West 16th Street and knocked on the door. It was opened by Jane Heap,

rather short, blocky as a fullback, close cropped hair - the same figure as Gertrude Stein's. At a window, looking out and gorgeous was Margaret Anderson, in a great flowered hat. But what really fixed my attention was the room itself. If it had any chairs I didn't see them. Nor did I see any tables, or any other furniture in this great room that occupied the entire floor except, right in the center, hanging from heavy chains, without legs, an enormous bed! It was the most amazing scene my teenage eyes had ever run into. (Guess I was sexually immature!) I couldn't take my eyes off the bed until I heard Jane Heap (the whole thing must have taken two seconds but it seemed a lifetime) say "Yes?" I can't recall responding except by thrusting a half dozen poems in her hand and plunging back down the stairs.

That bed!

(They did publish the poems over the next three years, four under my own name and two with a pseudonym I was fond of - John Ketch, a celebrated British hangman of some centuries ago - just the kind of person who would appeal to a teenager.)

Regards,

Robert Reiss

P.S. It occurs to me that anybody connected with something called "Department of American Thought and Language," particularly somebody who wrote such a fine book on Louis Bromfield, should be interested in how we celebrate the Bicentennial of the Declaration. I'm now busy reviving the Committees of Correspondence that did so much in the 1770's to bring on the great events of 1776. If you're not interested yourself (although I hope you would be), how about some of your associates?

THE MIDWEST AS HEARTHSTONE

WALTER HAVIGHURST

In accepting this award I share your belief that the Midwest has a rich cultural tradition, and I'll briefly suggest two dimensions of that heritage that to me seem inexhaustible.

Ever since John Smith wrote his *True Relation* in Virginia there have been books by Englishmen about America. Among the best is a fairly recent one, a book by Graham Hutton entitled *Midwest At Noon*. It begins: "In the middle of the journey of my life and by the accident of war, I came to live in the Middle West. It was a region of America that I had always liked best, where I felt most at home... The longer I lived there the more I became convinced that the Midwest and its people were largely unknown, widely misinterpreted, and greatly misunderstood."

One of the misunderstandings is that Midwesterners are a uniform and monotonous people. They have never seemed so to Midwestern writers - to Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis. For them the Midwestern background contained all the varieties of human nature.

Let me recall one other statement by Graham Green. "It surprised me when I first became fascinated by the Midwest that there were few books by Americans, or anyone else, that told about the region, its history and its way of life." Mr. Hutton would find some such books now, though the record has only begun. And there are difficulties in writing about this region.

Because of its open terrain and its generally happy history, the Midwest may seem devoid of character. Except for its great lakes and great rivers its landscape is undistinguished. Though immensely pro-

ductive it appears monotonous - no barriers, nothing hidden, few contrasts, no difficult or dangerous places. The level land casts no shadows. All its horizons look alike.

Yet I remember from my youth Vachel Lindsay reading a poem in an Illinois high school, a poem about Springfield and the prairie grass.

> In this city of my discontent
> Sometimes I hear a whisper from the grass
> Romance, romance is here
> No Hindu town was quite so strange
> No citadel of brass by Sinbad found
> Held half such love and hate.

While he chanted those lines I listened closely, because Springfield was, secretly, the city of my discontent; and it surprised me that this poet, pacing the platform and tossing his head like a Shetland pony, should feel that way. Still more it puzzled me that he found it romantic. I remember looking out the window at the familiar dome of the Illinois capitol and hearing the clangor of a train on the Chicago and Alton Railroad. Where was the romance?

For these reasons the Midwest puts its writers at a disadvantage. It seems to offer little for them to work with. But there have been writers anyway. Of course the material is always in the writer than around him. There are many towns like Clyde, Ohio, and Petersburg, Illinois, but we do not have a Winesburg or a Spoon River until a writer with startling awareness has wondered about the familiar scene. The literary imagination sees meaning where it was unexpected: in Main Street, in Raintree County, in a ragged boy and a runaway slave drifting down the Mississippi. The imagination rests on place but not in it. In the particular it sees the universal.

Yet locality is important to the writer. It provides the air he breathes, the currents of life he feels, the traditions he discovers. From it he draws impressions, attitudes, even the language he uses. So it is pertinent to ask, as some of our students do, where should a writer live? There is no single answer. James Joyce lived in an old military tower on the Irish coast within sight of the roofs of Dublin, the weathered city whose life he was passionately recording. Robert Louis Stevenson lived in a sequence of romantic places - the Alps, the Adirondacks, the coast of California, the islands of Somoa; he said "The countries ill health sends one to are nearly always beautiful." Stephen Crane, escaping comfort and convention, went to live

in a New York slum where people knew the cutting edge of life. A few years later at a garden party in London an English matron asked where he had received his artistic education. Crane answered: "In the Bowery." "Oh, really," she remarked, "I did not suppose there was an academy of fine arts there." "Yes," said Crane, "the only one in America."

But these are special instances, and for most writers the best place is not exotic or extreme; it is the place they belong to, the background they best understand. In France and England every writer feels the pull of Paris and London; but continental America has various concentrations of culture, and writers should feel at home in many places between New York and Hollywood. Said Robert Frost, "I always suspect a writer who disowns his background" That background need not make him provincial any more that Thomas Hardy was provincial in Wessex or Frost in Vermont. It should not limit him so much as set him free. Mark Twain was a Missourian who wrote about Joan of Arc, the Prince and the Pauper, and Captain Stromfield's visit to Heaven. On a hill above Hannibal stands the Mark Twain memorial, his life-size figure forever looking off toward Jackson's Island in the curve of the river. But he looked farther than that. From Missouri his imagination went to the ends of the earth.

If the Midwest deprives a writer, it also gives him something. Having no ready symbols it has no stereotypes - no Southern mansion decaying amid the magnolias, no lone cowboy riding over the sand hills, no oil-rich Texas farmers, no beach colony simmering with pseudo-philosophy beside the the Pacific. Midwestern fiction has the greatest variety of characters: Jennie Gerhardt, Carol Kennicott, Thea Kronborg, Studs Lonigan, Bigger Thomas, Jay Gatsby, Augie March, Windy McPherson. See the ethnic backgrounds there: German, English, Swedish, Irish, Negro, Danish, Yiddish, Scotch. On a summer day in 1832 a young Maine Yankee traveling down the Ohio River reflected on the fortuitous invention of the steamboat at the very point in history when multitudes were migrating to new lands. Then he made a sharper observation. Standing at the rail he heard the mingled tongues around him. He counted the nations represented there: English, Scotch, Irish, Welch, French, Dutch, German, Swiss, and off to one side a group of seven black-robed priests from Austria.

A second gift of the Midwest to its writers is a past that reaches back to the beginnings. In Kilkenny County, Ireland, the famous old

Kilkenny School has recently added a new building named for an 18th century philosopher who was one of its graduates. Berkeley Hall replaced an abandoned almshouse, which rested upon the floor of a ruined courtroom, which occupied the site of a former monastery, which is said to have replaced an ancient market house. In that sequence - college, almshouse, courtroom, barracks, monastery, market house - the past fades back till it is lost to recollection. In another world we think of our own country; at Kilkenny I thought of an Ohio college that is built on the site of an Indian burial ground.

But if our past is brief, none of it is lost. We can look back to the beginnings - to the first landfall, the first river passage, the first ax thudding in the woods. Who discovered the Rhine River and the Danube? Who knows? The literature of Europe has no "landlookers," no search for a Northwest Passage, no trail-breakers in the wilderness. But in America we know how DeSoto discovered the Mississippi below its present Memphis, and Marquette discovered it at Prairie du Chien, and Schoolcraft found its source in Itasca Lake; and we know what each of them did and said at the moment of discovery. We can recall the first blacksmith in a township, the first circuit rider in the forest, the first peddler on the road. Our past is all recoverable.

A Peace Corps teacher in Africa writes that in Nigeria, America means two things: skyscrapers and wagon trains. In the mass media the old America persists alongside the new. A few years ago a handsome new restaurant was opened on the shore of one of the Italian Lakes. For an international clientele an Italian baritone sang "Old Man River." Outside the moonlight glimmered on Lake Como and the snows of the Swiss Alps gleamed in the distance. But in that room people from five countries saw the legend-haunted Mississippi rolling through the heart of America.

Old Man River ... The land was old but the human enterprise was new. In 1818 when Illinois became a state, when the Cumberland Road reached over the mountains to the Ohio River, when the first steamboat churned the waters of Lake Erie, when George Rogers Clark died beside the Ohio River in Kentucky and 9-year-old Abe Lincoln whittled pegs for his mother's coffin, a land treaty was signed by three Indian chiefs at St. Mary's, Ohio. The treaty surrendered a big tract of central Indiana, and at the same time a village site of the Mumsey tribe was sold to a land speculator by the half-breed daughter of William Wells who had been killed in the massacre of

Fort Dearborn at the mouth of the Chicago River. The next year that site was plotted as the town of Muncie, Indiana, which a century later was described by two famous sociologists as Middletown, the typical American community. They could tell its whole story.

While history is a writer's resource, it is not his subject. History is the record of people; literature is the life of persons. Literature is always individual; it cares nothing for data and statistics; it looks only at one at a time. "Arms and the man, I sing" Vergil began his epic poem of ancient arenas. Centuries later Walt Whitman wrote: "One's self I sing, a single, separate person."

Robert Frost told how a census-taker came upon an empty lumber camp in a New Hampshire valley. In a half-sad humor he began picturing the vanished woodsmen. He counted nine of them in his dreamy unofficial census before he got back to business and declared the place deserted. There are four billion people in the world census, and also some other, more lasting, who don't get counted. These are the people of fiction: Martin Arrowsmith, Nick Adams, Sayward Luckett, Alwyn Tower, Walter Mitty, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. They never lived except in the imagination, and they never die. They become the heartbeat of our cultural heritage.

Late Miami University of Ohio
Recipient of the MidAmerica Award, 1979

THE BELLMAN

JOHN T. FLANAGAN

On July 21, 1906 William Crowell Edgar published in Minneapolis the first issue of *The Bellman,* a weekly magazine which for its thirteen years concerned itself with current events, history, literature, the theater, and the arts. It survived for twenty-six volumes and 676 issues, published news commentary, articles, essays, verse, short fiction, and book reviews, and attracted national attention. In the final issue, 28 June 1919, Edgar, the sole editor during the magazine's life, calculated that he had received 43,000 unsolicited manuscripts, the vast majority of which were returned to their senders. At best he claimed that *The Bellman* could print only two such items a week.

Edgar's failure to continue his journal was purely a personal decision. Professional and business engagements demanded more of his time and energy than he could afford. He proudly pointed out that the demise of *The Bellman* involved no financial loss for anyone. The original capital stock of the Bellman Company was $25,000; this was shortly doubled to create a satisfactory sum for publication. During the thirteen years stockholders had received dividends annually and in 1919 *The Bellman* had no liabilities. Edgar asserted that the total income from advertising and subscriptions was $457,000 and the total expenses $427,000. Surely not many magazines have reached the end of their longevity in total solvency.

Edgar was not a journalistic neophyte when he decided to begin *The Bellman* although he had only limited experience with a general magazine. He was born in La Cross, Wisconsin, in 1856, was a businessman in St. Louis from 1874 to 1882, and in the latter year moved to Minneapolis where from 1886 - 1924 he was associated with the *Northwestern Miller.* In addition to his editorship of a trade maga-

zine, he was author of a book published by the S.S. McClure Company in 1909 called *The Story of a Grain of Wheat.* And sixteen years later his volume entitled *The Medal of Gold* gave the history of the Washburn-Crosby milling company of Minneapolis, creator of Gold Medal flour. Edgar died in 1932.

Edgar set a high standard for *The Bellman* and maintained it with considerable success although he could not pay competitive rates to his contributors. The masthead of every issue of the magazine included the following paragraphs:

> The Bellman absolutely excludes advertisements of patent nostrums, bogus remedies, bucket-shops, quacks, frauds and the horde of vulgar and mendacious rogues who prey on the public through the media of the press
>
> The Bellman believes those advertising in its columns to be thoroughly trustworthy. No others will be knowingly advertised by it.
>
> The Bellman will not accept passes to the theatre or to any other form of public entertainment. Its writers pay the full regular price for tickets and are not under the slightest obligation to managers or actors.

In the beginning *The Bellman* was sharply departmentalized, but Edgar eventually realized that this plan deprived him of flexibility and consequently reduced the number of departments. Early issues carried "The Bellman's Sermon" by Milton O. Nelson and "The Village Gossip," the latter devoted to social news not only about Minneapolis and St. Paul but also about neighboring communities. These were shortly eliminated. Each issue, which averaged about twenty-two pages exclusive of advertisements, began with a long editorial section or news summary, unsigned but generally the work of Edgar himself. Occasionally the managing editor, Henry Adams Bellows, or the editor's son, Randolph Edgar, contributed material. The scope was wide, ranging from international news and world affairs to local topics. Since World War I was fought during a third of *The Bellman's* existence, war news often dominated an issue.

"From the Belfrey" was a single page of isolated items again unsigned. "Exchanges" reprinted selected comments from the world press, even translations from other languages. "Over Pipes and Ale"

brought together jokes and witticisms, brief and often tart but always in good taste. "The Bellman on the Bourse," written by William Justus Boies, was dated New York and dealt with Wall Street and financial news in general. Many issues included "The Bellman's Tale," a short story running about four pages. Short and mostly lyric verses appeared consistently. "The Bellman's Notebook" was given over to familiar essays usually contributed by Charles M. Flandrau and Richard Burton. Burton also served as the magazine's dramatic and literary critic. His theatrical commentary dealt chiefly with stage productions in the Twin Cities. "The Bellman's Bookshelf" generally provided one long review with brief notices of several books and a list of titles received. Reviewers besides Burton included Bellows, Hardin Craig, Carl Becker, Carroll K. Michener, and James Thayer Gerould, the librarian of the University of Minnesota.

Occasionally space was allotted to longer articles dealing with travel, art, and the national theater. Life in Geneva, Venice, Seoul, the reconstructed Lille, and certain war torn towns of Europe was described and photographs were liberally used. Reproductions of four of the paintings of Charles M. Russell enriched the evaluation by Estelline Bennett of the work of the Montana cowboy artist. Montrose J. Moses, later a nationally known dramatic critic, wrote frequently about the New York stage and provided excellent photographs of such actors as William Faversham, Henry Miller, and the Barrymore brothers John and Lionel. An article by Eugene Parsons about Eugene Field in Denver included a picture of the poet and columnist as well as several satiric paragraphs from the notorious *Tribune Primer.* William Stanley Braithwaite, recognized for his annual anthologies of American verse, contributed an essay on the work of the poet and sculptor William Wetmore Story. The magazine also carried drawings of the epigonous colonial bellman, complete with bell and script, in the earlier issues.

Toward the end of his editorship Edgar decided that it might be desirable to collect some of the contributions to *The Bellman* in book form, perhaps in the hope that they would thus acquire greater durability. Apparently he planned to publish three volumes devoted seriatim to verse, short stories, and essays or articles. Only two of these volumes appeared.

In 1919 the Bellman Company of Minneapolis published *The Bellman Book of Verse* with a preface by the editor. Edgar pointed out that he had always intended to include poetry in the magazine and

that the first manuscripts purchased were the work of a local Minneapolis poet, Arthur Upson, who died in 1908. Little poetry appeared in the early issues, however, as Edgar felt he could not afford to pay for "really high-class poetry and certainly did not desire to print any other." Subsequently he found that he could compensate poets modestly and certainly had no dearth of verse to choose from. Some of the poetry he published brought the authors celebrity so that the editor could conclude: "The Bellman may justify claim to have been of some small services to American poetry during his thirteen years of life."

The Bellman Book of Verse included 255 poems in its 225 pages, the work of ninety poets in all with forty-one of them represented by a single poem. Four of the authors were members of the faculty of the University of Minnesota: Joseph Warren Beach, Richard Burton, Ruth Shepard Phelps, and Arthur Upson. Some others were local figures: Lily Long, a St. Paul journalist, A.J. Russell, a Minneapolis editor, and Bellows. Madison Cawein and Bliss Carman belonged to an earlier period. Clinton Scollard and Odell Shephard were academic poets of no great distinction. Louis Untermeyer became better known as an anthologist of British and American verse than as a poet in his own right. Arthur Guiterman built a reputation for humorous verse and Charles Macomb Flandrau of St. Paul was well known to readers of *The Bellman* for his familiar essays and his sketches of Mexican life. The remainder never achieved a substantial reputation.

On the whole, the stories reveal a surprising competency and considerable variation in setting and time. They are localized in France, England, Mexico, New York City, and California. They are plotted tales rather than formless sketches and stylistically they are superior to the verse, which was often full of cliches. *The Bellman's* fiction seemed to have a legitimate place in the magazine whereas the poetry like so much light verse was often used to fill gaps in the columns.

The Bellman was a well edited and attractive magazine, certainly in its time the best literary journal published in the area which it basically served. A reader paging through its back issues today would find some of the editorial matter prolix or redundant with an overemphasis on topical matters, but he would be pleased by the variety and sometimes sprightliness of the departments. Richard Burton in an emotional farewell to the journal (28 June 1919), which he had supported for much of its life, emphasized its devotion to art and tradition and observed that it was never offensive nor tolerant of experimentation. *The Bellman*, he thought, had ideals. He might have added that journalism suffered a loss when the symbolic Bellman ceased to clang his bell.

Late University of Illinois
Recipient of the MidAmerica Award, 1977

ON THE MIDWESTERN IMAGINATION

BERNARD J. DUFFEY

Regionalism, as such, has seldom been more than a temporary phase in the development of writers or their magazines. At the same time, however, it has led to one particular kind of distinction in American writing, so it might be profitable to follow, at least a little ways, an analysis of its particular kind of contribution. Abstractly put, regionalism in its day created a literary opportunity which otherwise did not exist. Concretely, and as an instance, the farm boy could become a writer by the almost simple expedient of writing about the farm. He might stop there and so, like Hamlin Garland perhaps, be remembered for a few brilliant pages recording the hardness, the genuine anguish, of middle border life. Other instances come to mind. In the considerable bulk of Edgar Lee Master's poetry and prose, it is the single volume of Spoon River poems which are remembered - not honored-, I am afraid, but remembered because of their complete absorption by the village life they described. Unless one is more impressed by the muzzy idealism of Carl Sandburg than I must confess myself to be, much the same might be said of Sandburg. It is his smoke, steel, and slabs of the sunburnt West which retain their authenticity, not the vaguely conceived and sentimental populism which always threatens to overwhelm his work.

I don't know what significance the fact may have, but it seems true that regionalism outside the Midwest, and in New England and the Southeast particularly, has more famously than our own found it possible to move on to the next stage of development, - the continued use, that is, of regional materials, but their shaping by something different from a reportorial imagination. Robert Frost or William Faulkner cannot conceivably be divorced from their regions yet neither can be talked about as though he were only a regionalist. The

mere regionalist finds his work determined by its subject. The work is held to be valuable and interesting because of its revelation of subject. The difference in a Frost or a Faulkner is that the writer, his mind still possessed by the significance of his regional subject, is still able to rise far enough above that subject so that he dominates it, finally extracting from it a universality which makes it of significance to all who can and want to read him. During the past year I had what was for me the unique experience of teaching Faulkner to classes composed largely of southern students, and I must say I entered upon the task with a good deal of nervousness. They, I was sure, should be instructing me in Faulkner. Something of the sort did, as a matter of fact, happen. But a greater revelation lay in the degree to which all of us, northerners and southerners, turned that corner quickly to consider Faulkner yet once more, not as a Southern, not even as an American, but as a major writer whose imagination brought us all quickly to grips with realities which we, at least, could feel to be important because of their reality to all of us. At the same time, Faulkner's South (I don't know really whether it is the South or not) remained as the term through which this general reality had to be felt and discussed.

Much of this kind of regionalism seems to me not only to persist in but in a decisive way to account for a good deal of American writing. The great names of New England, including Henry James as a New Englander only very slightly removed, certainly continue their transcended regionalism in the work of such later figures as T.S. Eliot and Robert Lowell. A characteristic preoccupation with ethical religious matter, a fondness for allegory continually verging upon indistinctness, and a commitment to what are called the higher values of life as opposed to its more mundane realities - these I feel constitute a regionalism as distinct in its way as that of any Midwestern writer. Of course, it is a regionalism of the imagination, of particular ways of thinking and feeling rather that of landscape, weather, occupation or economic struggle. Certainly landscape and weather were no less real in New England or the South, but they have somehow given rise to our imaginative regionalism, one able to perpetuate and develop itself in creative terms rather than one that found itself played out once the local flora and fauna had received their just descriptive due.

All this, I'm afraid, is leading me on to that rather chimerical entity, the Midwestern mind. Either Midwestern regionalism is dead, or else, I think, it must be found perpetuating itself as a fact of spirit,

related to geography but not exhausted by it. Who, in this connection, suggests himself as a promising candidate for a creatively Midwestern regionalism? Not too many names come to my mind but there are two men, both now dead, who perhaps show some possibilities for a Midwestern regionalism which might be something different from a simple recording of Midwestern life. The two are Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway. Different as they became from each other, both suggest clues to the reality of what we might now call not Midwestern regionalism, but Midwestern regional imagination.

Last, but of prime importance, is the strong Midwestern drive to use colloquial language, sometimes to imitate it literally, sometimes to convert it as Hemingway most famously has done into a personal idiom so that the reader is not urged by the style to move into a world of literary reference but is rather referred to his own obsession with the actual, language being only a necessary mediating device. This kind of style is, I feel, demonstrated in the words of both writers and could, *mutatis mutandis*, be found as an important component of Midwestern writing. Again, James, or Eliot, or Faulkner suggest the contrast at its extreme and so, perhaps in this matter of style as in those of direct vision and a nostalgic idealism point the way to a programmatic definition.

What is indicated, finally, is the literary reality of regionalism. The living continuance of a point of view and a method which, strictly considered, is of little more that historical importance, but which, extended as I have suggested, may constitute a renewing and vitalizing force in regional literary achievement and, by that means a contribution to American literature as a whole.

Late Duke University
Recipient of the MidAmerica Award, 1981

THE COUNTRY IN THE BOY - MANUSCRIPT TO PRINT

WILLIAM THOMAS

I began to work with the country material many years ago, shortly after the Second World War. My first intent was to preserve something of a way of life that disappeared with the mechanization of farming in the Midwest, which was accomplished largely within the decade of the 1930s. My treatment was a sober one; in the beginning I was determined to make everything reveal itself to the reader exactly the way it was. The result was longwinded exposition so dull that I couldn't get through the manuscript myself. (That is saying a great deal, for there is nothing I like better to read than my own stuff.)

All my effort to breathe life into it accomplished nothing; it remained inert, tedious, commonplace, dull; true, but utterly without vitality. Magazine editors left no doubt that they responded to it as I did. Eventually I was made to see that this descriptive exposition had to be narrative. I constructed some episodes, they seemed to move pretty well, and I went on writing thus till I had nearly all the pieces that assembled themselves into the manuscript that eventually became a book. In their final form, achieved over a long time, structure and diction were refined, but most of them varied little from their original composition.

Publishers, however, could not see this loosely structured collection of essays as a book. Those who took time to say more than no pointed to its lack of "unity" - a criticism I could not admit, because the protagonist, Willie (I), grows a little older all the time, and his activities correspond to his age. The chronological progression, I would have insisted, made a unity that was inherent and not imposed. Possibly a serious disadvantage lay in the fact that I had kept my original title, *Scioto Farm*. Then one morning I awoke with the inspiration for the present title, obviously derived from the adage "You can

take the boy out of the country, but...," and I toyed with the idea of having that adage precede the title page, abbreviated as I have written it here. In the end, I decided to let the reader supply it all for himself. I am no longer sure that was the wise decision.

Finding the proper title, however, did not improve the manuscript's reception among editors. Agents were equally cool to the suggestion of their handling it. One wrote to me: "This is delightful Americana; I enjoyed every page of it. But I couldn't possibly sell it." Nevertheless, I kept on submitting it and didn't lose confidence in it. With an interval of four weeks to three months between submissions, this went on for years. The count was 33 submissions to 31 publishers (Knopf and Viking each saw it twice) before it went to Thomas Nelson in November 1973.

Long ago at Bread Loaf a now-famous novelist told me: "Get a lot of things going, so that you don't think so much about a particular one" - sage advice, and I didn't hold in mind the fact that I had sent out *The Country in the Boy* a 34th time. But in April 1974 it occurred to me that it was being held inordinately long. So I sent off a note nobody could be offended by, asking merely "Did you get it?" The reply, handwritten on my note, came at once: "Yes, we did, and think it has possibilities for us. We expect to make a decision within three weeks."

The three weeks stretched out to ten - normal on a publisher's calendar - and I prepared myself for a 34th rejection. Then one June morning a telephone call came, and I must have answered rather grumpily, annoyed at being interrupted - I was replacing faucet washers in the kitchen - because the question that followed was "Did I get you up?" Now that question always puts me off - as if an old country boy is likely to be lolling in bed a nine o'clock of a bright June morning. But we got over that hurdle, and the female voice identified itself as a Nelson editor calling to say "We'll publish your book."

Rather than jubilation, my feeling was one of relief that so long a period involving so much effort had ended. I had a publisher, whose first request was to reduce the wordage to fifty thousand. That was easy, and I complied readily, for along the way I had added material solely in order to bring the total to seventy thousand (because I thought, and still think, that less bulk is not giving a book buyer the worth of his money). I had, therefore, only to take out the additional matter I'd put in - and thus enhance the "unity" editors hadn't found. The publisher's next request was to consider changing the title - on

the ground that girls wouldn't be interested. I replied, in effect, that that was silly and said "You can't do better;" after a while they gave up the notion. Then began the protracted waiting period that every author knows, when it seems nothing is happening. But things were going on in Nashville, and in April 1975 - just a year after Nelson's first response - I received galley proof. It was the weekend my daughter was being married. Somehow I managed to deal with the proof and also give a creditable performance at the church.

My feelings are still mixed as a result of the editorial mayhem that was committed on my brain-child. It would be tedious to dwell on it here. I will say only that changing tenses and altering syntax flattens to pedestrian prose the emphases a writer has carefully devised - as if he had not tested every locution a dozen times. Freshness of diction is unrecognized; the plainest words are misread. A small example is illustrative: I had written "I showed them a big blacksnake going into a hole by a gravestone;" the editor made it "a big black snake," and a curtain was drawn between the writer and reader. I won the important issues; there were so many others I gave up on them.

The Country in the Boy was favorably reviewed, and received the Florence Roberts Head Memorial Award of 1976. I went to Columbus, and, along with seven other award recipients, justified my presence there. I told my audience more or less what I have written here, and they seemed to relish what I said. My publishers, uncertain whether I had set down fact or fiction, called the book a "novel," at the same time contradicting themselves on the dust jacket. I had told them the truth: it is fictionalized autobiography. Every episode has a factual basis, it is only slightly heightened reality. Much of the pleasure of reading it, I'm sure, lies in the identification with the protagonist. Various people have told me: "I had a garrulous uncle just like John'"or "I went to country school;" or "I too tangled with a skunk."

It has been suggested (naturally, I suppose) that I write a sequel. But you can be six to seventeen years old only one period of your life, and what follows is decidedly something else. There won't be a sequel to *The Country in the Boy*.

Late Ohio State University at Marian
Recipient, *Ohioana* Award, 1976

THE PLEASURES OF REVIEWING

DAVID D. ANDERSON

Last Tuesday afternoon I sat in my last meeting as chairman of the University Library Committee, and the major discussion was very much like that of my first, two years ago: the growing numbers of books and journals published and the inability of library budgets to keep proportionate pace with them. Many of the suggestions for coping with the problem perhaps were logical from a financial point of view: stop ordering, cancel subscriptions, draw more heavily upon interlibrary loans or library consortia, demand justification for new orders, and dozens of others. Some even suggested the unlikely possibility of increased funds.

As chairman I nodded wisely; as usual, as an editor, a writer, and above all, a bookman, I found all of the suggestions except the latter distasteful. Nor was I surprised when my distaste was confirmed the next day by two new publications delivered to my desk by our somewhat reluctant mail service: a first-class new journal and a new book that is admirable in every way. Both, it was evident immediately, were pleasures to handle, to look at, to read, to own, and certainly to review. I hate to paraphrase Faulkner's comment that a good poet is worth a number of old ladies, but I am tempted to observe that there is a similar relationship between those who limit library budgets and those who produce first-rate, valuable publications such as these.

The new journal is *Studies in American Fiction*, published by the Department of English at Northeastern University in Boston (biannually, $3.00 a year) and edited by James Nagel, a dedicated member of the Society. To those who would say, "Not another journal!" I enthusiastically say, "Yes!" *Studies in American Fiction* is, unlike so many others, unpretentious in its purpose, "to provide a scholarly medium for the professional study of American fiction," and, as the

first issue makes clear, its tastes are catholic but precise: a good idea well presented seems to be the controlling editorial concept, and in an age (and, unfortunately, profession) characterized so often by the opposite, the effect is refreshing. We can only hope that *Studies in American Fiction* will have a long life and that it will continue the same pleasurable approach that marks its first issue.

The book that shared the package delivery last Wednesday is one of those few books that is a genuine labor of love. Even more rarely, the very feel of the book conveys the motivation that brought it into existence. At the same time, the most cursory examination makes clear its impeccable scholarship. The book is *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Bibliography* by Matthew Bruccoli (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972). It is not merely part of Professor Bruccoli's prodigious scholarly output; it is, in my bookman's view, his best work. The format is one of the most attractive that I have ever seen produced by a university press, terms are clearly and carefully defined, limitations are modestly made clear, illustrations are profuse, descriptions are precise, and organization is clear, logical, and usable.

The bibliography itself is, with the two major omissions that Professor Bruccoli makes clear in his introduction, as nearly complete as, to my non-specialists's eye, it is possible to be. It contains nine sections, including all of Fitzgerald's published work, ranging from his books through blurbs by Fitzgerald on the dust jackets of other writer's books and limited items not printed for sale. The last section is a bibliography of publications by Zelda Fitzgerald.

Cross references are precise and abundant, and Bruccoli concludes the bibliography with ten appendices, listing such varied items as English-language collections of Fitzgerald stories published in Japan, Braille editions of the works, and plays, published and unpublished, based upon his works. The only items lacking in the volume are an inventory of Fitzgerald's manuscripts and the growing list of works about Fitzgerald. But Professor Bruccoli promises a later edition that will include these items also. All in all, this work will provide the foundation for work on Fitzgerald as far into the future as it's possible to see.

What fascinates me about the book, however, is not merely its effectively-accumulated data - that could have been presented more cheaply on microfilm, catalogue cards, or computer printouts - but the fact that it is a handsome book that defines the work of a major writer and at the same time has a great deal to say - and teach - about

books and bookmaking in our time. The result is a rare literary experience.

The book is not cheap - I've misplaced the publisher's data sheet - but like *Studies in American Fiction* it literally demands that it be purchased, not merely by those interested, but by any library that does its duty. I'm not unsympathetic to library budget problems by any means, and I believe that librarians, like professors or bricklayers, deserve a living wage. But as a bookman - and more than once I've gone shopping for shoes, only to return home without the shoes but with an armload of second-hand books - I believe that whatever solutions are possible for libraries and their financial problems today, they must not include the rejection and hence the strangulation of the many worthwhile journals and books that, like these, fortunately continue to come off the presses today.

Michigan State University

SHOULD WEST VIRGINIA BE ADMITTED TO THE MIDWEST?

JERRY J. WEST

When he was a young and eloquent campaigner in Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas finished a speech in a small town and began gathering up his notes as the crowd drifted away. A leggy, craggy-faced fellow clambered shyly onto the wooden platform and approached the man who had just spoken.

"Mr. Douglas," said the gawky youngster, "you are a fine speechmaker, but I want to let you know that some day I aim to git up on the platform and debate with you."

Mr. Douglas smiled. "Is that so? Well, young man, I wish to compliment you on being so ambitious, and I hope you achieve your high purpose. Tell me, what is your name?"

"Abe," said the tall fellow.

"Abe what?" asked Douglas.

"Abe Feldpaush."

Actually, Abe just happened to be passing through Illinois at that time, on his way back to Western Virginia. What he hoped to debate with Douglas was whether a state could long exist with fat slaveholders in the southeast and thin abolitionists in the northwest.

Abe was still around when Western Virginia broke off from Virginia in 1861 and became an independent state which supported the Union. Though it was well known that the Indian word *Kanawha* was first proposed as the name of the new state, it is less well known that Abe's suggestion of *Midwest* was considered before the Union admitted the new state in 1863 under the title of *West Virginia.*

All that is recorded of Abe's famous argument in 1862 is that he said, "Dang it, we got us a new state which is the most northern of the Southern States, the most southern of the Northern States, the

most eastern of the Western States, and the most western of the Eastern States. We are the real middle of everything but we ain't Virginians jist because we are west of them varmints."

Abe was so angry with the final name choice that he gave up politics and became West Virginia's first inventor. He is remembered mainly for his long knife which could cut four loaves of bread at one time. Abe called it a four-loaf cleaver.

Recently, Dr. Abe Feldpaush IV, who teaches Stripmine Ecology at West Virginia University, was asked about his great grandfather's famous suggestion.

"Greatpappy was right, of course," said Dr. Abe, "but he had only that limited geographical argument. Today we would add topographically that the hills of West Virginia complement the flatlands of the Midwest. We would point out that Chief Cornstalk was the state's most famous Indian, and there's nothing more Midwestern than corn. The Midwest is an earthy place and it was a native West Virginian, Pearl Buck, who wrote that great novel *The Good Earth.* Finally, the Midwest has the bread and the baskets and we have the broads and the booze and they obviously go together."

When asked if there was any hope that the state would be renamed, Abe IV replied sadly, "Nope, I suppose it's too late. The best we can hope for is that West Virginia will be admitted to the Midwest in the near future."

Abe's wife, Nancy, had the final word: "As we Hanks would say, that's a lot of Feldpaush! The question is whether or not the Midwest should be admitted to West Virginia!"

Late Michigan State University