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PREFACE

It is a given among students of regional literature that place is a crucial factor in determining the ideas and craft of great artists. Could William Faulkner have been William Faulkner had he not sunk his roots deeply into a patch of Mississippi where he was born and that he would re-imagine in his Yoknapatawpha novels and stories? Could we ever think to dislocate the painterly genius of Winslow Homer from the New England that fired his imagination? Would it have been possible for Zora Neale Hurston to have written that wonder, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, had she not been born in a small black town in rural Florida, and had she not returned there as an adult to gather the folklore of that unique place?

As regionalists we all assume, of course, that place, if not quite destiny, at least is a profound influence on our understanding of the world. But what happens when writers who are born and bred in a particular place—say the Midwest—suddenly look to a different part of the world, suddenly find themselves encountering a different landscape, climate, and, most importantly, different ethnicities, folkways, and mores from those with which they have been reared? This question is the starting place for this issue of *Midwestern Miscellany*. In this number, five scholars who have spent much of their careers pondering the cultural and artistic significance of the Midwest engage five Midwestern writers who wander a bit beyond the geographic confines of their home region, who come from out of the Midwest to confront the world.

CONTENTS

Preface	4
A Pilgrim's Progress: Mary Swander's New Mexico	Mary DeJong Obuchowski 7
Africa and Gwendolyn Brooks's America	Philip Greasley 17
"Thinking Small": Sherwood Anderson's South and Modern America	Robert Dunne 33
Exploring Borderlands: The "Strange Geography" of Susan Glaspell's Provincetown	Marcia Noe and Belinda Slocum 45
Long Ago and Far Away: Mark Twain's England	John Rohrkemper 60

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS:
MARY SWANDER'S NEW MEXICO

MARY DEJONG OBUCHOWSKI

On coming to the end of Mary Swander's first autobiographical book, *Out of This World: A Woman's Life Among the Amish*, later subtitled *A Journey of Healing* (1994), the reader hopes and believes that the author has found her way to health among her gentle neighbors in rural Iowa. An Iowa native, Swander was born November 5, 1950, in Carroll. She lived for several years in her grandmother's house in Manning, with an extended family that had deep attachments to their Irish heritage, storytelling, and books. Later, she and her mother moved to Davenport, where she began writing plays for children's theater. Her first major departure from the Midwest came when she attended Georgetown University, and she also lived in Chicago, toured with the Winnipeg Ballet, and taught in various parts of the United States. She returned to the Midwest and currently teaches creative writing at Iowa State University. She has written a number of books of poetry and nonfiction, and regularly reads on Public Radio.

In *Out of This World*, she narrates a series of events culminating in environmental allergies that made her exceptionally sensitive to substances in food, clothing, exhaust, and, in fact, to almost everything in her environment. At its worst, her illness allowed her to eat only six foods, and she often needed to carry oxygen or at least wear a mask to protect her from toxins in the air. Because environmental illness was not well understood or recognized, she despaired of treatment and became increasingly debilitated. However, within commuting distance from her teaching position in Ames, she found a one-room schoolhouse near Kalona, Iowa, home to Amish farmers who refrain from using manufactured fertilizers and pesticides as well as gas-powered equipment. These neighbors became friends and men-

tors to her as she began organic gardening. She found herself strengthened by the changes of the seasons and by the hardships brought on by floods, drought, plagues of insects, and tornados, admiring and partaking of the stoicism she recognizes as characteristic of rural Midwesterners.

Out of This World not only describes physical healing; through the cycle of the seasons, it shows a woman learning to be at home in her ecosystem, sensitive to the sounds and scents of the outdoors and accepted, though an outsider, by the Amish. Exploring the differences between their religion and her Catholic upbringing, she reaches into the stories her family told about a cross burned on her grandparents' lawn by a man yelling, "Papists. Foreigners." (221). When she helps with flood relief in 1993, she sees evidence that such prejudice is not entirely gone but reports being "encouraged that here today, two groups, Catholics and Protestants, whose antipathy runs deep, are working side by side" (233). She also recalls how her grandmother taught her to grow, harvest, and preserve food (160). As she nurses one of her menagerie, a sick baby goat, she chants, "You can do it. You can make it," the same words she has used years before to herself in her worst days of environmental illness (184). Organic food in a minimally polluted area, friendship, an as yet undefined spiritual strength, and the power of memory and storytelling are among the supports that help Swander to regain her strength. At the end of the cycle of the seasons, she experiences the impulse toward the faith of her childhood, as she and her friends reenact the Christmas story. But skepticism remains. It takes the desert of the Southwest and its people to nudge her toward a renewed, if unorthodox, religious belief.

In *Out of This World's* sequel, *The Desert Pilgrim: En Route to Mysticism and Miracles* (2003), it appears she has had to make the journey again, in a different way and through a new territory. Not only are the landscapes wildly divergent, but the concrete pragmatism that appears to dominate the first book gives way to a spiritual confidence that remains with her when she returns home.

In "The Fifth Chair," an essay that first appeared in *A Circle of Healing* (1999), edited by Swander with her friend Patricia Foster and later integrated into *The Desert Pilgrim*, she records the incidence of further anguish in the form of paralysis followed by months of excruciating pain and an inability to move. An accident has damaged a cervical disk that penetrated her spinal cord, allowing a flu

virus into the spinal fluid. The diagnosis, which comes about many months after the incident, is "central cord syndrome and transverse myelitis, the same thing as polio but a different virus" (*Pilgrim* 29). Surgery, which might help, is risky, as is anesthesia, to which she is hypersensitive. Told to accept disability and pain for the rest of her life, she uses a gallows-like traction harness that stabilizes her but helps the pain very little (*Pilgrim* 28-30). Her neurosurgeon advises her to accept a visiting professorship that has been offered her at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Swander decides to go for two reasons. First, her research indicates that only North Dakota has worse winters than Iowa, so almost any place would be more comfortable. Second, her experiences with conventional medicine have disillusioned her. The long process of misdiagnosis before diagnosis and several series of failed treatments have left her still in severe pain and with low energy. Her memories of her mother's drawn-out suffering from cancer and impersonal and thus harmful institutional care reinforce her reluctance to try more of the same. Believing "that New Mexico had a long, ancient healing tradition," she hopes to find help there (*Pilgrim* 32). Undaunted by the fact that she lacks the spiritual belief required for faith healing, she departs in the midst of an Iowa blizzard.

In doing so, she leaves behind, for the time being, a culture that she perceives as relatively homogeneous, the fertile landscape of Iowa, and the Midwestern values with which she has learned to identify. She retains the cluster of attitudes that inform these values: observation of externals, a sense that one must deal with whatever comes along with whatever abilities one has, common sense, and groundedness in daily details. She still identifies with the taciturnity and minimal communication that characterize, for her, Midwestern farmers and gardeners, as well as all of the rest of those who bend and sway with periodic disasters such as tornados, floods, drought, and devastation by insects (see, for example, "If You Can Talk to a Guy" 96-100, *Land of the Fragile Giants* 8, and *Out of This World* 88). However, she moves away from the change of the seasons, emblematic of death and rebirth (*Driving the Body Back*), and the fragility of existence (*Land of the Fragile Giants* 9). She departs physically from the culture that sustains the persistence (*Succession, Parsnips in the Snow*), concreteness, and practicality that accompany these phenomena, though her personality keeps their indelible marks.

New Mexico opens up a dramatic series of contrasts for her. For one thing, she is surprised that people accept her, with her bizarre traction apparatus, so readily. Used to less diversity, where a person with such an obvious difference would stand out, she muses:

Good, I thought. People are going to take my disability in stride. I'd only been in New Mexico a couple of days, but already I'd identified it as a tolerant place with many ethnic groups and cultures blending together. People came to live here from different parts of the United States, people longing for the adventure of the West, or people who had found themselves outside the mainstream in their former lives. I'll fit right in, I told myself, and reworded the state slogan: New Mexico, the Land of Eccentrics. (*Pilgrim* 44)

Physical differences between Iowa and New Mexico are equally striking. Swander explains:

The classic condemnation of the Midwest is the dismissal: It's flat and has no ocean. But I've lived in that so-called flatness long enough to have a feel for the contours, the slight rises in the land, the dips and dives of a place capable of supporting so many living things. In New Mexico . . . the state's high dramas stunned me: the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the north that turned blood red at sunset, the subalpine forests near Cloudcroft that sheltered you from the wind in the folds of their conifers, the White Sands National Monument that blinded you with the stark glare of its dunes, and the Carlsbad Caverns that dwarfed you with stalagmites and stalactites. (*Pilgrim* 98-99)

In the Southwest she searches for succor that may very well not be rooted in palpable elements, especially conventional medicine. Even before leaving Iowa, she has tentatively reopened her exploration of mystics she has previously studied: Hildegard, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and Clare and Francis of Assisi. Her memory brings back the more familiar spirits of the mother and grandmother who had nurtured her (*Pilgrim* 22) and whom she saw through the dark hours of their final illnesses and deaths. Once she settles in Albuquerque, a student of exceptional insight perceives her need for help and directs her to a particular neighborhood (*Pilgrim* 47-48). She goes alone, however, against his warning that drug dealers and crime make it dangerous. Before long, she learns to become comfortable in the barrio, musing:

In some strange way I was slowly beginning to feel at home there and began drifting down to the neighborhood a couple of times a week. . . . Even though the barrio stood in direct contrast to my Iowa landscape and culture, something about the place seemed comfortable and familiar.

Quickly, I discovered that the people of the barrio did not run on standard American timetables. They did not answer to message machines and e-mail

Having lived for years around the Amish in Iowa, I understood how to function in a culture without dependence on technology. The "visit" was a key part of the Amish way of life. The Amish prized these face-to-face meetings with others, which they thought fostered honest communication and community. So I set off to visit the barrio. (*Pilgrim* 99)

There she meets a Greek Orthodox monk, Father Sergei, and without knowing exactly why, she continues to visit him. He mesmerizes her with stories of his family's tempestuous history, telling her about the persecution of his ancestral Spanish Jews and about his own struggle with cancer, only later encouraging her to explain her needs and offer her help. She also meets a *curandera*, a pharmacist and herbalist named Lu. This woman offers her herbs for a tea to strengthen her, saying, "Strain and sip throughout the day, and each time you sip, you say a little prayer" (*Pilgrim* 88).

Swander develops friendships with Lu and Father Sergei, and conversations with them lead her into an examination of her past, her relationships with her mother and grandmother, her ancestry, and the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the healing professions (not always at peace with each other). Her memories of her mother's last months with breast cancer haunt her, and the narrative of their search for a cure is a counterpoint to Swander's own quest. Perhaps unconsciously seeking resolution to her mother's pain, she has already written poems (notably those in *Driving the Body Back*, but also others). She faces her negative feelings toward the church of her childhood that is also an institution that has persecuted Jews like Father Sergei and healers like Lu and at the same time contends with her loss of belief in conventional medicine, which she feels has failed both her mother and herself. Caught between the negativities of the past and the present as well as conflicts between science and religion, doubt and faith, matter and spirit, life and death, suffering and joy, desert and oasis, she absorbs the narratives and counsel that these two

guides offer. She also visits the desert. At an earlier point, she describes it this way:

The desert is at once inviting and threatening. Its landscape is varied with geological formations from plainslike terrain to rock cairns to ancient cliff cave dwellings. Its people are as multidimensional as the landscape Here, I am awed by the sweep of the desert's panorama, the absolute envelopment of its reach. Here, I can feel secure in a land that takes such command of its space. Here, I can also sense the danger of the hard, rocky mountain outcroppings and cliffs, and of the beds of volcanic rock and ash. I can grasp my own insignificance in the grand scheme of the earth and the universe. In that realization, in that sheer expanse of emptiness, I am forced to confront my deepest fears, my aloneness and individuality, and my relationship to the Divine. I am forced to intone my own chants of penitence, forgiveness, and gratitude. (5)

How does this outlook differ from her attitude toward Iowa and the Midwest? She seems to feel that Iowa is more fragile, as in the loess areas (see, for example, *Land of the Fragile Giants: Landscapes, Environments, and Peoples of the Loess Hills*, 1994), and that it is vulnerable to the weather, to floods, droughts, and tornados, and that the people are stoic in response to these threats. In the desert, the land appears strong to her, a threat in itself, but also a source of strength (*Pilgrim* 12). Having found neither recovery nor spiritual peace, she realizes:

I couldn't remain in darkness forever. I realized that my journey from Iowa to New Mexico had become a pilgrimage from one wide-open horizon to another, one level plain to the next, one colder, the other drier. But here in New Mexico I was getting the chance to find an anchor, to find bearings, to find moorings. I tried to imitate what Lu had shown me through example—to reach inner peace through acceptance. Still, I knew that the peace I was seeking, the loosening of the rope, the widening of the thumbscrews of the dark night, could only be achieved through fearless confrontation. (243)

At her lowest point, she drives to the Bosque del Apache, a marshy wildlife refuge in that desert to endure her personal dark night of the soul. She explains:

I walked into the dark night of New Mexico knowing that the only way out of this desert was through it, knowing that the only way out of despair was through a kind of death of the self. That was the true

journey, the true pilgrimage I needed to step away from my needs, worries, and concerns and walk into the spiritual realm. Here on the edge of the water, I needed to surrender to the essence of the void, the knowledge that, yes, I am alone and ultimately unattached to all but one thing: the abyss, the dry desert. (*Pilgrim* 243-244)

She connects present experience with her ancestors, as Lu has advocated, and with the mystics, under the tutelage of Father Sergei. At the marsh, among formerly endangered species of birds, she notes with wonder, "I imagined all the birds who had hunted the marsh before them, all the icons of my ancestors who had shown bravery in the face of adversity, all the saints who had dealt with suffering and illness, cycling back generation after generation" (249). She leaves with some reassurance; she says, "In chaos I hoped to face my own aloneness and connect the threads of existence. In chaos I hoped to connect so profoundly to a higher force that I would never again question its reality" (245).

As she confronts her issues, Swander absorbs the counsel of her new friends. Lu's tea appears to ease her pain and allows her to regain strength. Lu discusses the importance of her links to her forebears and urges Swander to pray, which she reluctantly forces herself to attempt. For several months, Father Sergei has only talked to Swander as she visits, not yet encouraging her to speak of herself. Finally, after her journey to the Bosque, he asks her about herself, and she answers, "I am a pilgrim seeking healing" (267). He appears to read her thoughts, saying, "See, people come here and want miracles but don't really believe. It doesn't work that way. I don't perform the miracles. I do nothing but guide you along your pilgrimage" (269-270). He explains that she needs to deepen her faith, practice prayer and meditation, emulate the Desert Fathers. Here, one is reminded of Kathleen Norris's spiritual renewal on the northern plains, which she calls "a terrifying but beautiful landscape in which we are at the mercy of the unexpected, and even angels proceed at their own risk" (*Dakota* 12), where she found a landscape not unlike that of the Desert Fathers of early Christianity. Father Sergei further instructs Swander, "You not only have to heal your own wounds but, by doing so, you will heal the wounds of your ancestors—injuries that go back for centuries . . . You are all bent and crooked now like one of the junipers in the mountains, blown over by the wind. You

right yourself and you will right all those around you" (277). Then he gives her a "blessing of healing" (277-8).

Ultimately, the parts of her desert experience come together: the healing herbs, a resolution of her memories of her mother, the relationship with her forefathers, and the desert which cleanses her of the emotions, pain, and attachments which distract her mind from the meditation that restores her soul. This convergence, together with the blessing by the monk, allows renewal, healing, and peace. Swander writes, "In chaos I hoped to find inner stillness" (245), and, with the help of her guides, she does. In fact, she finds physical healing as well. On a day of celebration for the barrio, when with the help of Lu and Father Sergei, it has cleansed itself of its own illnesses—drug dealers, criminals, and trash—Swander walks for the first time without a cane.

The lyricism, crafty structure, and humor that run through *Out of This World* are to some extent replaced by suspense, even desperation in *Desert Pilgrim*. Will her body recover? Will she find respite from pain? Will this or that person or place help her? Will she come to terms with the memories and dreams that drain her? These questions keep us going. This is not to say that her descriptions lack music, nor that the more linear structure, intertwined with flashbacks, does not suit the drama of this book. In fact, the book moves from Iowa to New Mexico, where she goes through her darkest time, out into the brightness of the Southwestern landscape, and then, strengthened in body and faith, back to Iowa.

Moreover, the rich imagery of voyage and discovery, of captivity and release, of persecution and redemption, of salvation through suffering runs through the book like living water. Through some of it the humor is dark, as when she jokingly asks a friend to call Dr. Kevorkian on her behalf. However, it lightens with the quirky garden of the earthy monk, who labels the vegetables with the names of the deadly sins (lust for zucchini, for example [221]), and with the *joie de vivre* of the effervescent Lu. As with any true pilgrimage, the quest—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—governs the structure of the book. The form suits the narrative, as the circular movement of the seasons fits *Out of This World*, where the meditative, intertwining themes create almost a stream of consciousness.

Other differences between the books show up in the kinds of awareness the narrator exposes. In *Desert Pilgrim*, her solitude in the desert is an externally imposed one. In Iowa, Swander's illness

inflicts isolation from within her. While she craves it, needs it for reflection, it also leaves her vulnerable to the weakness of her body, the paralysis and pain that immobilize her. The solitude offered by the desert invites her to self-examination. In Iowa, a network of friends and acquaintances support her as well as they can; in New Mexico, she must reach out to strangers for assistance. In *Out of This World*, Swander, having been subjected to wearing masks to filter out allergens or to receive oxygen, plays with the concept of masks in both concealing faces and expressing character, as in ritual and drama. She uses them in her teaching, finding them even liberating a source of powerful identity and metaphor, all in one (110-126). For example, wearing a mask that resembles the face of her dog, she "could feel powerful, angry, affectionate, and loyal all at once" and wishes she "could maintain the same sense of confidence without a mask" (118). In *Desert Pilgrim*, no such props can help her. She echoes Theodore Roethke in "In a Dark Time," who says, "A man goes far to find out what he is" through "death of the self," alone "in the tearing wind" (*Collected Poems*, 239).

In *Out of This World*, Swander proceeds from illness, frustration, and debility, to wholeness, networking, and empowerment, from silence to song, the beginning of a revival of faith. In *Desert Pilgrim*, she begins at a possibly lower point, though still with the will to survive, even to teach, and travels toward healing through wisdom, faith, and compassion. Compassion for her mother and her ancestors and mutual concern with Father Sergei, who has his own illness, show the narrator growing in spirit and breadth of vision.

Nevertheless, though contrasting landscapes and ways of life abound in *Desert Pilgrim*, they also converge, a process that is of a piece with Swander's other works. Themes of ancestry, of healing, of gardening, and of learning through difficult experience permeate her prose and her poetry. She delights in the revealing details and individual voices that characterize the people in her books. The land, in all of its beauty and terror, represents more than itself, symbolizing despair and grace and all that lies between. In this book, the path leads through a literal and symbolic desert that takes her, healed, home to the fertile Midwest.

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AFRICA AND GWENDOLYN BROOKS'S AMERICA¹

PHILIP GREASLEY

References to Africa recur in Gwendolyn Brooks's poetry throughout her long poetic career. These references are thematically important and serve also as markers by which changes in her poetic orientations and approaches to effecting social change can be measured. This essay describes Brooks's references to Africa, explains their function, and uses them to track the poet's evolving poetics, social philosophy, and strategies for using poetry to produce social change.

Brooks's pre-1967 poetry is grounded in European Caucasian poetic norms, Christian and Enlightenment humanistic values, and the American integrationist-assimilationist model for gradual acceptance of blacks into white-dominated society. In a spring 1971 interview with Ida Lewis, publisher and editor of *Encore* magazine, Gwendolyn Brooks reports that during the 1940s and 1950s she "thought that integration was the solution. All we had to do was to keep on appealing to the whites to help us and they would . . . I relied heavily on Christianity. People were really good, I thought; there was some good even in people who seemed to be evil. It's true that I didn't know very much about evil people or who they were. It was a good world, the best of all possible worlds. I believed everything" (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 175).

Her pre-1967 poetry uses traditional poetic language, meter, and rhyme in presenting life in Chicago's segregated black community. In a December 1950 statement in *Phylon*, Brooks had asserted, "The Negro poet's most urgent duty, at present, is to polish his technique, his way of presenting his truths and his beauties, that these may be more insinuating and therefore, more overwhelming" (qtd. in Mootry 9). This early poetic vision and worldview are based upon Brooks's

early personal, family, and community experience. She portrays the dreams and realities of black life and, perhaps naively, appeals for understanding and acceptance across racial lines. Her poetry speaks as one intelligent, caring, right-minded person to another. This early poetry uses direct, realistic portrayal of black poverty, social limitation, and loss. It appeals indirectly, through inference, to audiences dominated by white readers to recognize black humanity, witness white errors and abuses, and assist—or at least support assistance for—blacks whose subordinate position in segregated white-dominated America precludes them from helping themselves.

The rationale for this approach in Brooks's early poetry is clear. In 1971 she commented to Ida Lewis that her early audience was comprised of "Chiefly whites . . . Blacks didn't seem to be buying our people's work in great quantity, not even Langston Hughes's books. It was whites who were reading and listening to us . . ." (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 176).

The attraction of Gwendolyn Brooks's early poetry is aesthetic and contemplative. It relies upon graphic presentation of black life and implicit appeals to white consciences to stop the racial injustice they have created or condoned and to prod whites toward a more equitable multiracial American society. This early poetry seeks to reach white consciousness and conscience and, through them, gradually to effect social change. Brooks's pre-1967 poetry graphically portrays the deprivations and limitations imposed on black life by white racism and its vehicles—racial barriers to jobs, pay, and housing. Objective realistic portrayal is her tool for addressing these abuses in poetry and appealing to predominantly white audiences. As such, Gwendolyn Brooks's pre-1967 poetry parallels that of Carl Sandburg in *Chicago Poems* (1916) in depicting the life and limitations placed on Chicago's immigrant laboring populations. It also parallels Hamlin Garland's graphic portrayal of the terrible constraints experienced by farm families living on the frontier in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891).

Brooks's poetic objectivity consists of graphic depiction coupled with implicit calls for change. Her pre-1967 work offers no direct authorial statement calling on whites to make changes or on blacks to demand it. Instead, her early poetry graphically presents abuses and relies on maintenance of the compelling tone in presenting these situations to create empathy in the hope of increasing white openness to rectifying abuses and fostering social change. A sustained repor-

torial voice elicits the implicit emotion that Brooks relies on to carry her social message. As Maria Mootry said in her introduction to *A Life Distilled: Gwendolyn Brooks, Her Poetry and Fiction* (1987), "Brooks's objective rather than subjective authorial text creates poetry in which her personality seems largely effaced" (4).

Brooks's pre-1967 poetry graphically presents the stories of America's underclass. From her first published work, *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945), onward, she tells stories of straitened lives, dreams deferred, black hopes crushed, black self-image ground into the dust. The African-American speaker in "kitchenette building" in *A Street in Bronzeville* demonstrates black alienation and frustration in segregated America:

We are things of dry hours and the involuntary plan,
Grayed in, and gray. "Dream" makes a giddy sound, not strong
Like "rent," "feeding a wife," "satisfying a man."

But could a dream send up through onion fumes
Its white and violet, fight with fried potatoes
And yesterday's garbage ripening in the hall. (20) ²

Brooks's poetry shows her readers the injuries done to blacks being compounded by the insult of white disdain. In "The Lovers of the Poor," for example, from *The Bean Eaters* (1960), she portrays the emotional pain inflicted by well-to-do white women's self-aggrandizing and emotionally destructive "charitable" excursions into Bronzeville,³ Brooks's name for Chicago's black community, itself a microcosm of black life in urban America. This poem depicts white women ostensibly on a fact-finding trip into poor black homes to determine how best to bestow their inconsequentially small "charitable" gifts. The reality, however, is that they are hypocritically reveling in their perceived personal, class, and racial superiority as they humiliate poor black mothers consigned to live and raise their children in impossible, degrading conditions marked by

The stench; the urine, cabbage, and dead beans
Dead porridges of assorted dusty grains,
The old smoke, heavy diapers, and, they're told,
Something called chitterlings . . . (350)

This early poetry by Gwendolyn Brooks depicts black hopes for the future as massively constrained. In "The Mother," from *A Street in Bronzeville*, we hear, as an interior monologue, the lament of a

black mother who has chosen abortion rather than consign her children to the lives of poverty, humiliation, and despair that she and the black community face daily throughout their lives. Brooks's pre-1967 poetry appeals to dominant white society for change by graphically portraying and thereby bearing witness to flagrant racial crimes. In "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon," "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till," and "The Chicago Defender Sends a Man to Little Rock," from *The Bean Eaters*, her poetry captures white racial hatred, torture, and murder of innocent blacks in what today would be recognized as "hate crimes."

Much of this pre-1967 poetry portrays black pathos, black lives in which everything is to be suffered but nothing can be done. Heroism in Brooks's *Bronzeville* poems and those of the next twenty-plus years consists primarily of witnessing the black community as it seeks ways to bear the unbearable. Her *Bronzeville* portrayal of Satin Legs Smith⁴ in his Sunday respite exemplifies the exceedingly narrow range of physical and emotional relief available to blacks in segregated American society. Satin Legs Smith consciously and self-assertively takes his Sunday, "tawny, reluctant, royal . . . fat/And fine this morning. Definite. Reimbursed. . . ," making the most of his Sunday furlough from his "heritage of cabbage and pigtails, /Old intimacy with old alleys, garbage pails . . ." (43).

Taken as a whole then, Gwendolyn Brooks's pre-1967 poetry presents the naturalistic quality of mid-twentieth-century American black experience. Blacks live in irony and pathos based on their imposed low social level and their limited control over their lives. Naturalism is their mode. Individually and as a people, they are beaten down, their psychic lives twisted, and their anger turned destructively inward upon themselves as is Mabbie's in "the ballad of chocolate Mabbie." In that poem from *A Street in Bronzeville*, Brooks portrays the psychic cost as even blacks are turned against blacks based on their relative shades of skin color. Brooks tells of dark-skinned seven-year-old Mabbie's early childhood crush on "bold Willie Boone" and his rejection of her, choosing instead a lighter-skinned girl, "a lemon-hued lynx/With sand waves loving her brow" (*Bronzeville*, 30). The psychic cost is clear as Mabbie is left with other rejected dark-skinned black children.

. . . Mabbie alone by the grammar school gates.

Yet chocolate companions had she;
Mabbie on Mabbie with hush in her heart.
Mabbie on Mabbie to be. (30)

Gwendolyn Brooks herself gives witness to Mabbie's experience as typical of black society in her intraracial rejection, emotional torment, and diminished possibilities. In her 1971 interview with Ida Lewis, Brooks relates the experience of her poetic creation Mabbie to Brooks's own personal experience: "[T]he color bar . . . was very strong then . . . a dark-complexioned girl just didn't have a chance if there was light-skinned competition. In grammar school I got my first introduction to the fact that bias could exist among our people, too (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 172).

The poems in *A Street in Bronzeville* and Brooks's subsequent pre-1967 collections, particularly *Annie Allen* (1949) and *The Bean Eaters* (1960), include limited moments of joy and respite, but the picture of urban black life presented in those volumes is bleak and overwhelmingly negative. These volumes include a disproportionately high number of funeral poems, poems depicting the soon-to-be dead, the living dead pursuing dry, unavailing lives, and those resorting to desperate, self-destructive acts.⁵ These are the unavailing lives of the black community Gwendolyn Brooks lives amid and captures in her pre-1967 poetry.

The literary anti-types to irony, pathos, and naturalism are romance and epic. Romance sets a continuing pattern of dominance, success, and harmony with surroundings by individuals of high social status and control over events. Epics tell the story of heroic and ultimately successful people who struggle and win against great odds, achieving their collective goals and forging their own identities through their actions. Epic heroes are superhuman, with powers exceeding human limits. They take decisive action to achieve victory. Rather than living lives of naturalistic irony and self-destructive pathos like those of the black community in segregated America, romance and epic characters live primary lives: strong, confident, victorious, unself-conscious.

But what does this poetry dealing with Brooks's perception of the plight of blacks in Chicago have to do with her poetic references to Africa? Throughout her career, Brooks's poetry uses romance and epic motifs and characters as idealized anti-types to the twentieth-century black condition in America. Africa is the mythic land she

associates with black strength, harmony with environment, dominance, and positive identity.⁶ Brooks's poetic Africa is neither the real Africa of the distant past nor the contemporary East Africa that Gwendolyn Brooks visits in an eye-opening 1971 quest to find her spiritual homeland, an antidote to her perceived sense of alienation. In the early 1970s Don L. Lee (later Haki Madhubuti) describes her quest for positive African identity: "Gwendolyn Brooks is an African poet living and working in America whose work for the most part has been 'conditioned' by her experiences in America. By acknowledging her Africanness, her blackness, she reverses the trend of being defined by the negative to her own definition in the positive" (*Report from Part One* 27).

Yet the reality Brooks sees in East Africa is more complex than the poet must have earlier yearned for. While anxious to connect with her African roots and homeland, Brooks sees that working-class Africans perceive her solely as a rich American, a tourist, and an unwanted potential Afro-American competitor for African jobs in the event she should decide to repatriate (*Report from Part One* 88, 90, 129-30).

Rather, the mythic Africa and Africans of Brooks's poetry represent an idealized past Africa as well as an aspirational model for future generations of African Americans, acting successfully and living harmoniously with their environment in the future. Her poetic depictions of Africa portray strong dark-skinned people living in harmony with their natural landscape, dominating their environment and their adversaries, achieving victory and building an enduring noble identity in the process. Her Africans are strong, unself-conscious natural princes and princesses, killing lions and roaring with mastery. Her idealized Africa is her counterpart to the negative, funereal, pathos-filled American death and living-death poems of her first fifty years. Gwendolyn Brooks's poems present continuing motifs of mythic Africa-based dominance, harmony, and epic struggle to victorious self-definition. She contrasts fulfilling African life with the naturalistic pathos of black existence in America.

Brooks's second volume, *Annie Allen*, deals with the constrained, unavailing life of a black woman in racially segregated Chicago. The volume contains a poem, "The Anniad," whose epic-sounding title makes clear the poet's conscious play between irony and epic. In a 1969 interview with George Stavros, Gwendolyn Brooks herself describes her initial impulse in epic, or anti-epic, terms: "[I]t was my

little pompous pleasure to raise her to a height that she probably didn't have. I thought of the *Iliad* and said, I'll call this 'The Anniad'" (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 158).

Annie's story of love and loss also parallels the Dido and Aeneas episode in *The Aeneid*, but in place of the successful epic hero's classic love story told from the dominant male perspective, "The Anniad," tells the story of underclass Bronzeville love through the subordinate woman's eyes in ironic anti-epic language ending with her lover's rejection of her and then his death in war. Its first stanza sets the tone of irony with these words, including the ironically negative racial usage of the normally positive term "chocolate":

Think of sweet and chocolate,
Left to folly or to fate,
Whom the higher gods forgot,
Whom the lower gods berate;
Physical and underfed
Fancying on the featherbed
What was never and was not. (99)

Similarly, in place of *The Odyssey's* section on heroic Ulysses's adventures among "The Lotus Eaters," Brooks plays off the epic expectation by presenting the naturalistic experiences of the black community in her volume entitled *The Bean Eaters* (1960). In each case her parallel is consciously ironic, naturalistic, anti-epic in its portrayal of American black life.

Perhaps Brooks's strongest, most direct contrast of epic strength, self-confidence, dominance, and successful self-definition and the anti-epic pathos of American black life occurs in her poem "Truth" from "The Womanhood" section in *Annie Allen*. There, she quotes and parallels lines from T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem Brooks expressed admiration for (qtd. in *Report from Part One* 156), a poem itself an anti-epic of uncertainty and lost control. Eliot's character Prufrock diametrically opposes the religious heroism of John the Baptist and undercuts even the assumed self-assurance of a British aristocrat in front of servants:

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in
Upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid. (ll. 81-86)

Gwendolyn Brooks's poem, "Truth" reprises Prufrock's words while maintaining his anti-epic tone:

Though we have wept for him,
Though we have prayed
All through the night-years—
What if we wake one shimmering morning to
Hear the fierce hammering
Of his firm knuckles
Hard on the door?
Shall we not shudder?—
Shall we not flee
Into the shelter, the dear thick shelter
Of the familiar
Propitious haze? (130)

Set against all this ongoing state of community-wide black natu-
ralism and incessant irony, Brooks envisions idyllic counter-images
of harmony in her idealized vision of Africa. In "Old Laughter" from
"The Womanhood" section of *Annie Allen*, the speaker asserts an ide-
alized past African time:

The men and women long ago
In Africa, in Africa,
Knew all there was of joy to know.
In sunny Africa
The spices flew from tree to tree.
The spices trifled in the air
That carelessly
Fondled the twisted hair.

The men and women richly sang
In land of gold and green and red.
The bells of merriment richly rang. (124)

By 1963, Gwendolyn Brooks herself is within a few years of
renouncing her early adherence to European poetic norms,
Enlightenment humanistic appeals for acceptance, and naively ide-
alistic integrationist-assimilationist appeals to her predominantly
white audience. Yet in "Riders to the Blood-red Wrath," from
Selected Poems (1963), a poem portraying the Civil Rights

Movement, Brooks's recourse to excessively high poetic language
and contorted syntax makes it difficult for readers to unravel her mes-
sage of social change and connect emotionally with her depictions of
white abuse and black rage.

Through blur and blunder in a little voice!
This is a tender grandeur, a tied fray!
Under macabres, stratagem and fair
Fine smiles upon the face of holocaust,
My scream! unedited, unfrivolous.
My laboring unlatched braid of heat and frost.
I hurt. I keep that scream in at what pain:
At what repeal of salvage and eclipse.
Army unhonored, meriting the gold, I
Have sewn my guns inside my burning lips.

Did they detect my parleys and replies?

.....
They do not see how deftly I endure.
Deep down the whirlwind of good rage I store
Commemorations in an utter thrall. (390)

Brooks's use of extreme poetic diction and syntax here calls to
mind the charges made "against her poetry of the 1940s . . .," charges
including "conventional forms, obscurantism with language, and
perplexing compression . . ." (Bolden xi). Against this aesthetically
muffled expression of contemporary black pain and anger, Brooks
provides clearer, more direct, romance counter-references to the ide-
alized epic African past in this same poem, saying:

I remember kings.
A blossoming palace. Silver. Ivory.
The conventional wealth of stalking Africa.
All bright, all Bestial. Snarling marvelously.
I remember my right to roughly run and roar.
My right to raid the sun, consult the moon,
Nod to my princesses or split them open,
To flay my lions, eat blood with a spoon.
You never saw such running and such roaring!—
Nor heard a burgeoning heart so craze and pound!—
Nor sprang to such a happy rape of heaven!
Nor sanctioned such a kinship with the ground. (390-391)

Against this vision of idealized African experience, the poem presents the degradation of Africans enslaved and carried to America via the middle passage, with its “fragrant hold, . . . retching rampage . . . the guttural chained slime . . . the leash and lash” (391). Brooks makes clear her poetic strategy:

By my detention and my massive stain,
And my distortion and my Calvary
I grind into a little light lorgnette
Most sly: to read man’s inhumanity.
And I remark my Matter is not all. (391)

Brooks uses and capitalizes the word “Matter” here, describing both her poetic subject and the pathos of the African-American condition in opposition to the epic stories of the past, the “Matters” of Greece and Rome. She also uses it as repetition of the ironic lines from “Prufrock.”

Brooks’s increased range of experience by her fiftieth birthday—the 1967 Fisk Writers’ Conference, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the emergence of the black pride movement—combine to produce in her a conscious poetic course reversal. As Brooks told Ida Lewis:

[T]he real turning point came in 1967, when I went to the Second Black Writers’ Conference at Fisk University . . . there I found what has stimulated my life these last three years: young people, full of a new spirit. They seemed stronger and taller, really ready to take on the challenges. . . [Other poets] and I were . . . amazed to see what was happening. (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 167)

Brooks abandons her earlier Eurocentric poetic norms, her aesthetic-humanistic appeals, and her habit of poetic address to white-dominated audiences (*Report from Part One* 19). She recognizes that “the black-and-white integration concept, which in the mind of some beaming early saint was a dainty spinning dream, has wound down to farce, to unsavory and mumbling farce . . .” (*Report from Part One* 45).

She has made her decision not to die a “‘Negro’ fraction” (*Report from Part One* 45). In the place of her old poetics, she substitutes more oral speech patterns, more direct language, stronger, more overt expression of anger, and more direct exhortation to black audiences. In place of aesthetics and contemplative appeal for action by others, she decides to call for and take action herself. She now moves to

speak directly, perhaps exclusively, to black audiences. Of her poetic course reversal, she told Ida Lewis that “[t]oday I am conscious of the fact that—my people are black people; it is to them that I appeal for understanding” (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 177). She follows the line taken by Don L. Lee in his poem “the New Integrationist”:

I
seek
integration
of
negroes
with
black
people (qtd. in *Report from Part One* 45)

She now aims at instructing, inspiring, and leading blacks to take greater control over their lives and futures. She calls them to action, to epic struggle and successful self-definition as African-Americans. She adopts Larry Neal’s refusal “to accept a truncated Negro history which cuts us off completely from our African ancestry” (*Report from Part One* 81).

Gwendolyn Brooks’s post-1967 poetry includes portraits of blacks notable for their intelligence, strength, courage, and dominance in their fields. These African and African-American Family Pictures (1970) provide heroic models for emulation by the black community. Among these leaders are poet and President Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Winnie Mandela of South Africa, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Don Lee. She also affirms black strength and action arising in unexpected places, as in her poem “The Blackstone Rangers” from *In the Mecca* (1968). Brooks finds hope in the gang members’ undaunted spirit and willingness to fight for their lives and dignity:

The Blackstone bitter bureaus
. . . edit, fuse
Unfashionable damnations and descent;
And exulting, monstrous hand on monstrous hand,
Construct, strangely, a monstrous pearl or grace. (448)

Even their deviations from the “fashionable”—that which is acceptable in white circles—are a source of pride to this newly minted black poet.

In her "The Sermon on the Warpland" from *In the Mecca* (1968), Brooks further integrates her previously separate idealized motif of romance and epic African images with direct, realistic calls for African-American strength. The poem's epigraph quotes Ron Karenga's words, "The fact that we are black is our ultimate reality" (451). This poem describes awakening African-American strength and calls for blacks to live and rebuild their temple and identity "[w]ith love like lion-eyes" (452). Yet accompanying the references to love carried by strength, the poet proclaims and appears to endorse the coming whirlwind of social change brought about by black strength—"the whirlwind [that] is our commonwealth" (454). With that, Gwendolyn Brooks, initially a poet of African-American passive resistance, becomes an activist, a revolutionary poet, using the language of American blacks and calling for direct, aggressive action to force social change. She seconds this call to black strength and action in "Riot" from *To Disembark* (1981), where she celebrates

... the 'Negroes' . . . coming down the street.
 . . .
 . . . sweaty and unpretty
 . . .
 . . . coming . . . in rough ranks.
 In seas. In windsweep. . . black and loud.
 And not detainable. And not discreet. (470)

She is ready to move away from the discreetness in language, syntax, and indirect reference that mark her earlier poetry and move toward action and leadership in guiding the black community to reclaim its identity and potential. In 1969, speaking to George Stavros, she recants her 1950 call for emphasis by Negro poets on "polishing . . . technique":

... something different is happening now. Black poets today—when I say black poets I mean something different from the old phrase "Negro poets"—black poets are becoming increasingly aware of themselves and their blackness; they are interested in speaking to black people, and especially do they want to reach those people who would never go into a bookstore and buy a \$4.95 volume of poetry written by anyone." (rpt. in *Report from Part One* 149).

With this change in poetic and social perspective, Gwendolyn Brooks's poetic language and approach become stronger, more direct, and more compelling to black audiences.

Brooks portrays an equally strong but more balanced black hero in "Young Heroes—I." In this poem, references to African and contemporary black life in America merge. She describes the young hero as one who

. . . looks at life—
 Moves life into his hands
 saying
 Art is life worked with
 . . . sees
 Hellishness among the half-men.
 He sees
 lenient dignity. He
 Sees pretty flowers under blood.
 He teaches dolls and dynamite.
 Because he knows
 there is a scientific thinning of our ranks.
 Not merely Medgar Malcolm Martin and Black Panthers,

 He teaches
 strategy and the straight aim;
 Black volume;
 might of mind. Black flare—
 volcanoing merit, Black
 Herohood.
 Black total.
 He is no kitten Traveler
 And no poor Knower of himself.
 Blackness
 is a going to essences and to unifyingings.
 MY NAME IS AFRIKA! (*Family Pictures* 490-91)

Brooks advocates black force to compel white America to stop subjugating and victimizing blacks. Her direct language and her authoritative call to heroic black action in America connect directly to her idealized epic Africans with their decisive strength and unself-conscious action leading to victorious self-definition. Her poem, "Young Afrikans," from *Family Pictures* (1970), celebrates and bestows the name "Afrikans" on African Americans:

. . . the furious
 Who take Today and jerk it out of joint

.....
 knowing where whips and screams are,
 knowing where deaths are,

 Taking Today (to jerk it out of joint)
 The hardheroic maim the
 leechlike-as-usual who use,
 adhere to, carp, and harm.
 And they await,
 across the Changes and the spiraling dead,
 our Black revival, our Black vinegar,
 our hands, and our hot blood. (494-95)

For Gwendolyn Brooks, then, Africa is a symbol of Paradise Lost—and Found, or at least called for and glimpsed from a distance. In her mature poetry, the two streams—African and American—merge fully and successfully as poetry and activist black ideology. In the years following 1967, Brooks lives and writes from the belief that black strength, determination, and action are necessary to restore black identity, dignity, and harmony with the world and themselves. Her poem, "Horses Graze," from *Beckonings* (1975), uses horses as a parable of future harmonious life for African Americans and others—a world of harmony and oneness only seen previously in Brooks's allusions to Africa. Her horses

. . . graze

 . . . nobly oblivious
 to your follies,
 your inflation,
 the knocks and nettles of administration.
 They
 eat

 . . . at the crest of their brute satisfaction,
 with wonderful gentleness, in affirmation,
 they lift their clean calm eyes and they lie down
 and love the world.
 They speak with their companions.
 They do not wish that they were elsewhere.
 Perhaps they know that . . .
 earth is anywhere earth,
 that an eye may see,

wherever it may be,
 the Immediate arc, alone, of life, of love.
 In Sweden,
 China,
 Africa,
 in India or Maine
 the animals are sane;
 they know and know and know
 there's ground below
 and sky
 up high. (463-64)

This poem reflects African-American rediscovery of self, healing, strength, and movement toward proud black integration into American and world society—a harmony and integration experienced before only in Brooks's idealized images of Africa.

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NOTES

- ¹ "Gwendolyn Brooks's 'Afrika,'" an earlier presentation by Philip Greasley on a related topic, was published in *MidAmerica* 12 (1986): 9-18. This article concurs with many of the conclusions of that earlier effort but significantly extends the exploration into the meanings of Africa for Gwendolyn Brooks and its use as a marker for Brooks's poetic and philosophical shifts.
- ² All quotations from Gwendolyn Brooks's poetry are taken from her collected volume, *Blacks* (1987). It is much more readily available than Brooks's earlier volumes.
- ³ A full discussion of the nature and geographic limits of Chicago's Bronzeville is presented in Barbara Jean Bolden's *Urban Rage in Bronzeville* (1999) 8.
- ⁴ See Bolden, pages 37 to 51, for a very thorough analysis of the limitations imposed upon Satin Legs Smith as well as of the nature of his evasions in coping with them.
- ⁵ See Harry B. Shaw's discussion of death, death in life, and spiritual death in the black community on pages 48 to 62 of *Gwendolyn Brooks* (1980) for the best treatment of this recurring theme.
- ⁶ See Shaw, pages 84 to 86, for additional comments on Brooks's references to Africa.

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"THINKING SMALL": SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S SOUTH AND MODERN AMERICA

ROBERT DUNNE

Best remembered today as a chronicler of small towns and cities of the Midwest, Sherwood Anderson was no stranger to the American South. As David Anderson has reported (*"Double Dealer"* 96), by the early 1920s Anderson had grown weary of Chicago and begun a personal odyssey that took him through New Orleans, New York, Reno, and eventually, in 1926, to southwest Virginia where he resided for the rest of his life.

During the 1930s, a confluence of events caused Anderson to undertake another odyssey, this time primarily across the South, while he maintained his farmhouse at Ripshin as his home base. The Great Depression was a source of widespread economic and social unrest, causing millions of Americans to be displaced. As the Depression swept the nation, government itself was besieged by political protests to an extent not seen since the Civil War. The South, once dubbed the "Sahara of the Bozart," by H. L. Mencken, had begun its most radical transformation since Reconstruction—what C. Vann Woodward would later describe as a "Bulldozer Revolution" (6). In the midst of so much social upheaval, Anderson married for the fourth time, and his wife, Eleanor Copenhaver, was perhaps the main spark for Anderson's travels throughout the South.

In his early fiction and nonfiction, Anderson frequently wrote about the country's transformation from its small-town agrarian roots into a modern industrialized society, often using Midwestern settings as a microcosm of the nation as a whole. His tortured grotesques who populate Winesburg and other Midwestern towns display a recurring tendency to feel crushed by the changing America: they will not or cannot accommodate a progressively depersonalized, mechanized

way of life. *Poor White* (1920) strikingly situates this dilemma not only in protagonist Hugh McVey but in the entire town of Bidwell, Ohio, as it grows from a quiet, provincial town into a burgeoning industrial city. In many of these early works, Anderson looks back at a turn-of-the-century Midwest: by the time he was writing such works, from the late 1910s to early 1920s, the transformation had already occurred across the region. Touring the South in the 1930s, Anderson found himself witnessing a similar process, but this time it was unfolding in the present day—and magnified as well by the dramatic events impinging on the entire country. The South in the 1930s became for Anderson what the Midwest was for him only a few years earlier: a microcosm of the nation.

In discussing Anderson's works set in the South, I am singling out several of his nonfiction texts from the 1930s: *Perhaps Women* (1931), *Puzzled America* (1935), and the last work he published, *Home Town* (1940). These are very revealing but sadly neglected examples of reportage by Anderson that demonstrate a level of urgency in confronting the nation's ills not to be found in his earlier fiction set in the Midwest.¹ During this same period he produced two novels set in the South—*Beyond Desire* (1931) and *Kit Brandon* (1934)—and a number of short stories, added to those set in the South that he had written in the early 1920s. The early tales are among his most famous: "I Want to Know Why" from *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) and "I'm a Fool" and "The Man Who Became a Woman" from *Horses and Men* (1923). His other tales, eventually collected in *Death in the Woods and Other Stories* (1933), include "A Meeting South," "Another Wife," "Like a Queen," "These Mountaineers," "A Jury Case," "A Sentimental Journey," and "Brother Death." A controversial section of *Dark Laughter* (1925), chapter 10, is set in New Orleans and touts the supposedly carefree lives of African Americans in an unintentionally racist way.

Many of these works, including the two unsuccessful novels, continue to receive the attention of scholars.² What is lacking, however, is an understanding of how his more journalistic writing from the period serves as a skeleton, a core of Anderson's growing concerns, around which he created the fiction. Not lacking in artistry, *Perhaps Women*, *Puzzled America*, and *Home Town* are nonetheless more pared-down, more outspoken, and more urgent representations of Anderson's thinking at this time than his fiction. Rooted in the present and reflecting pressing concerns about the future, they not

only offer insights into Anderson's thinking but also illuminate the fiction that he wrote. As John Bassett argues, in comparing Anderson's nonfiction and fiction of the 1930s, "To be sure, his nonfiction of the period reflects a deeper concern with workers, the alienation at the heart of industrialization and standardization, and the potential of women to redeem America" (111). These are concerns that Anderson grappled with in his earlier works; however, in the 1930s he supplanted the Midwest of the past with the South of the present. As he states in *Puzzled America*, "Although it came some time later, the story of the States of the upper South is also the story of the Middle Western American States" (134-35).

Earlier in the decade, Anderson addressed the pervasiveness of factory work after his travels in Kentucky, Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Florida. At one point late in *Perhaps Women*, he details the complaints of a woman—identified by Kim Townsend to be Anderson's wife Eleanor (258)—that American writers were avoiding the problems brought on by America's overreliance on mechanized factory work. Such writers, as Anderson paraphrases the woman, had "gone the smart way . . . had thrown overboard human life . . . thought it didn't matter" (115). Anderson implies that he himself, in fact, is such a writer: "Time and again I had told the story of the American man crushed and puzzled by the age of the machine. I had told the story until I was tired of telling it. I had retreated from the city to the town, from the town to the farm" (112-13). By this time, Anderson owned a farmhouse and ran two newspapers in Marion, Virginia. As a newspaperman he sometimes adopted a persona, Buck Fever, to report on colorful characters and events in town and immersed himself in local politics. Some of his Buck Fever articles appeared in *Hello Towns!* (1929). But driven by his wife's social activism and his growing awareness of and fascination with industrialization in the South, Anderson confronts head on in *Perhaps Women* the conflict between the modern worker and the machine. In this book he acutely describes some of the reasons why fast-paced factory work was then so prevalent and analyzes the dehumanizing effects of machine work. At the same time, though, he repeatedly acknowledges the wonders and beauty of machines throughout the book.

To Anderson, the nation's wholesale belief that material acquisition represented success explained why mechanized factory work was in such demand. This popular belief had become the status quo until this time in the nation's history—at least until the Depression's

inroads were felt—a belief deemed unchallengeable because, as Anderson suggests, one risked being labeled “un-American” or even a Bolshevik if one challenged it (70). Anderson characterizes this desire for material success as an animal-like greed: “[T]hinking of money and success as a bitch, my fellow Americans . . . [have] got scent of her long since . . . trotting at her heels” (77). Anderson implies that yearning for success is not in itself a problem for Americans, but both greed and the recent yoking of modern technology to it are problems, because, Anderson observes, the country was not prepared for the changes that would come with modern technology. He argues that the people with power did not foresee the rapid changes that machine work would cause: “We had come into a new age in American life, had been swept up into a new age by the machine and the men in power in American life had no program made for the new age” (83-84). This unpreparedness has some serious consequences, Anderson concludes, the most important of which is the utter neglect of the factory workers who have to operate the machines.

For Anderson, greed and the unguided proliferation of machine production emasculate the men who work the machines: “[I]f money and the machine continue to rule men’s lives, then we shall have to surrender maleness” (58). Anderson makes this peculiar observation because he was convinced that machine work all but removes a man’s dignity and pride in his work. As a result, a man’s natural inclination to create things with his hands is suppressed: “The machine has taken from us the work of our hands. Work kept men healthy and strong. It was good to feel things being done by our hands” (41). But he argues that the present dilemma is that “[t]he modern man is drowned in a flood of things he did not make” (42). In Anderson’s mind, this feeling of inadequacy creates a spiritual impotence. He believes it is natural for a man to have hands-on participation in the creation of things; such a participation, he believes, is but a mirror image of God’s own creative powers. Anderson reasons that men were once in tune with this mysterious relationship and that at one time they could believe that “there’s something superhuman at the core of all this” (24). However, with machines now becoming the actual means of production, this relationship is sundered, for now machines perform these godlike acts and become, in effect, gods themselves. While watching the operation of machine work in a South Carolina factory, Anderson himself recognizes the machine’s new power: “It

was a moment of pure machine worship. I was on my knees before the new god, the American god” (125).

This passage illustrates Anderson’s equivocal attitude towards machine work: he avoids becoming nostalgic for a pre-industrial society and actually exonerates the machines themselves from contributing to the problem: “But wait! The factories are themselves all right. The big complicated beautiful machines in the factories are in no way to blame. They are gorgeous things” (44-45). Anderson implies that the problem rests with those who design and build the machines: they implement them too hastily into the workforce and make them too complex and beyond the understanding of most men. “After all, the machine is only a tool, but for the present, at least, it is too big, too efficient for us” (46).

Anderson here echoes similar concerns expressed nearly one hundred years earlier by Henry David Thoreau. In *Walden* (1854), Thoreau also avoids a wholesale condemnation of technological advances—in his day, the railroad and the telegraph—but expresses reservations as to whether such advances accord with humankind’s preparedness for them: “Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end . . . We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate” (95). For Anderson in the 1930s, mechanization of labor emasculates men by sapping them physically, psychologically, and even spiritually. Such emasculation makes men powerless and spiritually exhausted, because, as Anderson argues, “the spirit of the machine doesn’t get tired—it hasn’t any” (46).

In *Perhaps Women* Anderson succeeds in critiquing the conditions and effects of the mechanization of modern life that he finds throughout the South. As in his earlier fiction set in the Midwest, his observations about the present-day South are easily applicable to the entire nation. The book stumbles badly, though, when he attempts to articulate possible solutions to this dilemma: that “perhaps women” can be the force that brings about a change in the system. Rather than drawing his conclusions directly from his experiences in the mill towns, he instead resorts to an objectification of women that he often succumbs to in his writing, going back to his first novel, *Windy McPherson’s Son* (1916)—specifically, that strong women, made so by life’s hardships, are a positive force for men. Like his portrait in

Dark Laughter of African Americans who have no individual identities but are abstracted role models for white men, women, in *Perhaps Women*, are a collective model at the service of men. The change that Anderson believes women can make, after all, would not benefit them anyway, because, he states, they are somehow not spiritually affected by the machines (142).

Anderson's observations in *Perhaps Women* are insightful and often biting. For instance, he argues that rather than pursuing "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Americans have been pursuing "the twin bitches, money and success" (85). Passages like this one permeate the text, illustrating the point that Anderson adopts a more urgent, straightforward style in his 1930s nonfiction. However, his conclusions produce confusion because they are not persuasively drawn from his observations and lack the clarity of his reportage. As spelled out in the book, the conclusions boil down to a request: "I am asking for a statement of the inner strength, of the living potency of the present-day American women, of their hunger, the potentiality of new strength in them, that may save American civilization in the very face of the machine" (97). Though nebulously stated, Anderson's embrace of a clear-cut solution ends up sounding like the embrace of so many truths by the grotesques of his fiction. The untenable solution clashes with the pointed, forceful observations that otherwise pervade the book. Referring to *Perhaps Women*, Anderson would admit a few years later in a letter to Theodore Dreiser that "[i]t fell flat" (340).

Published four years later in the thick of the Depression, *Puzzled America* is a far more successful exposé of the struggles America was facing due to industrialization and the Depression. Anderson's canvas is greater, his descriptions and anecdotes are more detailed, and his conclusions more practical than in *Perhaps Women*. He avoids idealized prescriptions ("perhaps women") and draws potential solutions instead from a diverse cast of individuals he encounters as well as from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal policies. The general nature of his descriptions, as David D. Anderson has identified, is characterized by "faith and humility instead of bluster and pride" (*Sherwood Anderson* 143). Such "bluster and pride," characterized by greed and materialism, clash head on with the harsh realities brought on by the Depression, with the result that American society at this time was seriously threatened with a total collapse of the system.

In his travels through Tennessee, West Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and other parts of the South, Anderson laments how, even in the midst of the Depression, Americans were still fixated on the notion that success was equated solely with material possessions and appearances. He states in the introduction, "It is a bit odd . . . that the American cry, 'Make good! Make good!' that we all heard when we were boys—that I dare say boys are still hearing—that it so often leads to a kind of blindness" (xiii). Later on he is even more explicit about the subject: "This American theory of life . . . that a man must make good at something, justify his existence, make two blades of grass grow where but one grew before—there is a side to me, as to most men, that has always cried out, 'It's nonsense'" (25). Anderson goes on to characterize this theory of making good as a secular creed, adding that Americans have been taught from childhood that it is a "moral obligation . . . to get up in the world" (161). At face value, this belief may be commendable, but he finds that at this stage it has become problematic because the value of "making it" is placed squarely on appearances, not on any inner worth. Consequently, Americans are taught that being poor is disgraceful and that making an ostentatious impression is laudatory: "You had to have money to rise in the world, to be a bigger, showier man than others in order to respect yourself . . . Money was the outward sign of inner merit. Men are still judged that way in America" (162).

Of course, what compounds the problem is that the harsh realities brought on by the Depression have made Americans feel betrayed because all those who answered the call to buy material goods are now broke or in debt (158-59). This phenomenon seems especially dramatic in the South because only recently had it begun a transformation from a predominantly agrarian society to an industrialized economy. Leading up to the Depression, Anderson argues, "a new class [was] coming into power in the agrarian South [who] were hard-headed, money-minded people" (137-38). He further explains:

The Southern story is essentially an agrarian story—a soil story. You are likely to forget that going South now, as many Northerners do go, along the big paved highways through North Carolina, parts of South Carolina, sections of Tennessee, northern Alabama, and Georgia. From Greensboro, North Carolina, to Atlanta, Georgia, along the line of the Southern Railroad, there is one big bright busy industrial town after another. The laborers have been gathered in from the back coun-

try. Southern life is changed tremendously in all this industrialized section. (131)

From his talks with farmers, strikers, coal miners, factory workers, entrepreneurs, and panhandlers, Anderson comes to realize that the country's beliefs about success as well as the relationship between workers, business, and the government require a radical change in the system.

By attacking the traditional "American way," Anderson no doubt felt compelled to explain that he was not out to undermine the country's democratic system or recommend replacing it with a socialist system. Perhaps he has in mind his warning in *Perhaps Women* of wanting to avoid being labeled un-American, because in *Puzzled America* he adamantly stresses that he is not a communist. He states in the introduction, for instance: "What is wrong? Why can't we do it? The capitalists? Is it not true that there will always be strong men? What is the real difference between Stalin of Russia and, let us say, the elder Morgan? If we really got a new set-up here, would not exactly the same sort of men be in power?" (xii). It is true that Anderson did dabble in communism, but he always maintained ambivalent feelings for socialism, as the above passage indicates as does a letter Anderson wrote in 1936: "When I talk to most radicals, I'm strong for capitalism and individualism; but when I talk to most capitalists, I'm hot for the radicals" ("Fuller" 341-42).

In addressing the nation's ills, Anderson in this work is far more pragmatic than in *Perhaps Women*. By 1933, as Walter Rideout has pointed out, Anderson's politics became firmly rooted in Roosevelt's New Deal policies (198). And it is precisely this belief in FDR's leadership that inspires Anderson to urge his fellow Americans towards finding a new belief in their lives. Having admitted that "The South is like all America—a changing thing" (128), Anderson calls for a constructive change—but a turning away from the kind of change that was making the South the growing, industrialized, and mechanized society that the Midwest and elsewhere had become. From his travels across the South, Anderson tells us he hears a cry going up from the American people: "I want belief, some ground to stand on. I do not want government to go on just being a meaningless thing" (xv). This belief harkens back to a pre-industrial age but is now updated by FDR's New Deal. Anderson seems convinced that the state must assert greater control over the conglomerates, mills, fac-

tories, even the land now held by capitalists before such positive changes can take full effect, because with the State in greater control, looking out for the welfare of workers, a belief in fellowship, working for the community rather than for one's self, and pride in hard work as opposed to pride in the material rewards of work may now be possible. This is no idealized proposal like that described in *Perhaps Women*, for Anderson finds such beliefs confirmed in actual people he has met in his travels.

In *Puzzled America* he describes how the efforts of Roosevelt's Tennessee Valley Authority have contributed to Americans feeling alive, "alive in spite of greed, chiseling, desire for fake money, bigness. The . . . desire to some day work for others" (65). This concentration on others rather than self is actualized also in labor meetings, which Anderson depicts using the jargon of religious revivals, calling such meetings a "kind of religion of brotherhood" (153). He reaches this conclusion while describing labor troubles in Elizabethton, Tennessee, a mill town only about five years old, the physical landscape of which is ramshackle, due to shoddy and hasty construction, and yet alive with this new belief, due to the actions of "mill girls" protesting the conditions at a rayon plant. Anderson argues that with a growing faith in themselves and peers and with the help of a benevolent government, people could successfully endure these national crises. What Anderson leaves unsettled in this work is how Americans can continue their lives after the challenges of the Depression.

In *Home Town*, published in 1940 under the auspices of the federal Farm Security Administration, Anderson attempts to answer such a question. David D. Anderson has argued, perhaps too harshly, that this work is "an elegy for a time and place that Anderson knows no longer exists" (*Sherwood Anderson* 155). I would suggest that in *Home Town* Sherwood Anderson does not lament the loss of a way of life—he all but acknowledges as much—but instead argues that there are significant, nontangible elements from that way of life that can endure in a modern urbanized environment. Anderson knows better than to argue for a reversal of industrial and urban progress; rather, he argues simply and plaintively that modern Americans can still adapt these pre-industrial beliefs to the present.

In the book, which is focused primarily on his travels in the South, Anderson fleshes out this belief in the form of a response to an angry letter he had recently received:

I had somewhere said something about the necessity nowadays of staying put. In saying that, I had in mind staying closer home in our *thoughts and feelings*. The big world outside now is so filled with confusion. It seemed to me that our only hope, in the present muddle, was to try *thinking small*. (4; emphasis added)

Articulating conclusions that he drew from his experiences in *Perhaps Women* and *Puzzled America*, Anderson implies that instead of nostalgically recapturing the small-town way of life, one should try to apply small-town values while taking on the larger world, because, as he says, "the world is full now of false bigness . . . ; there's a trickiness in that approach to others—through applause, feeling a false power and importance" (5). David D. Anderson has more recently argued that such values would serve as "the foundation for a new, humanized post-Depression society" (*Home Town* 90). Anderson's advice is for one to be more concerned about one's immediate world than about the world at large. This sentiment allows for both community and communication, both of which, Anderson implies, are essential elements in either a small town or a metropolis. What Anderson is ultimately conceding is that modern Americans will invariably try to take on the world at large. But before they do, he argues, they had better get to know the people and places immediately surrounding them first, because the immediacy of the small town becomes "a test of man's ability to adjust himself. It tells the story of his skill in living with others, his ability to go out to others and to let others be a part of his own life. You have to go on living with your neighbors" (95). The key point here is not to return physically to the town, but to remember that even a city can be regarded as "made up also of an infinite number of small towns" (22), thus allowing for the continuation of a small-town *mindset* in the urbanized, industrialized environment of the future.

As these three works show, Sherwood Anderson's South of the 1930s serves as a microcosm of the country suffering through the Depression and the inroads of industrialization. The Midwest had served a similar function in his earlier works that were set at the turn of the century; but no longer chronicling a bygone period, Anderson confronts present-day challenges in *Perhaps Women*, *Puzzled America*, and *Home Town*. As a reporter and a polemicist more than as a literary artist in these works, he captures the intense anxiety and hardships of people throughout the South and documents the many

ways of how they were enduring the crises. His insights contained in these books provide the backbone for his novels and short stories set in the South; in essence, in understanding his nonfiction from this period one may better appreciate his fiction. Welford Dunaway Taylor and Charles Modlin have argued that Anderson was so astute an observer of the South that many of his Southern works "might qualify for a place in the vast permanent chronicle of the modern South" (x). However, as in his works set in the Midwest, in his nonfiction of the 1930s, the physical locale is of secondary interest to him. As Anderson writes in *Puzzled America*, "What charms you about all of this traveling about America is not the scenery but the people met" (169). From his myriad interactions with people across the South, Anderson in these works provides a revealing and rewarding documentary of Americans enduring hard times and preparing for a future that he himself would not see.

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NOTES

¹Besides brief treatments in biographies or general introductions to Anderson's works, there is a dearth of criticism on any of these works. David D. Anderson writes fondly of *Home Town* in "Sherwood Anderson's Home Town." John Gaterud's dissertation, "The Jigsaw of Sherwood Anderson's *Puzzled America*," provides a comprehensive study of Depression-era America as the backdrop for this book and examines it for its motif of the road. Robert Dunne's "Plainer Speaking: Sherwood Anderson's Non-Fiction and the 'New Age,'" from which this essay is substantially adapted, addresses all three works.

²Anderson's two Southern novels, especially, have garnered critical interest for decades. Regarding *Beyond Desire*, see David Anderson, "Sherwood Anderson's Midwest and the Industrial South in *Beyond Desire*"; David Kramer, "Sherwood Anderson's *Beyond Desire*: Femininity and Masculinity in a Southern Mill Town"; Walter Rideout, "*Beyond Desire* Revisited"; and Keith Carabine, "Sherwood Anderson's Novels: 'An Excessive Waste of Faith.'" Regarding *Kit Brandon*, see Philip Greasley, "Sherwood Anderson's Oral Tradition"; Parks Lanier, "Kit Brandon's Choice"; Karyn Riedell, "Kit Brandon: Androgynous Heroine"; and Cratis Williams, "*Kit Brandon*: A Reappraisal."

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EXPLORING BORDERLANDS: THE "STRANGE GEOGRAPHY" OF SUSAN GLASPELL'S PROVINCETOWN

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A finger of land curving three miles into the Atlantic Ocean, Provincetown has beckoned to pirate and pilgrim, playwright and boatwright, fisherman and farmer for more than three hundred years. Famously visited by the Mayflower in 1620 before the Pilgrims moved on to Plymouth, Provincetown, by the nineteenth century, had become an international port, boasting fifty wharves that serviced whaling vessels as well as a thriving cod and mackerel fishery. After the Civil War, the town became home to one of the largest Portuguese settlements in the United States; during the early twentieth century, Provincetown evolved from seaport to bohemian colony and tourist destination, transformed by an influx of summer visitors, artists, and writers (Egan 35-76).

One of those writers was Susan Glaspell, a native Iowan who arrived in 1912 with her Drake University classmate Lucy (Lulu) Huffaker to rent the cottage of *McClure's* editor Viola Roseboro (Ben-Zvi 117). Already an award-winning short story writer and the author of two novels, *The Glory of the Conquered* (1909) and *The Visioning* (1911), Glaspell would see her creative life change radically during the next several years, as the Provincetown environment, so different from that of her native Midwest, would re-invigorate her thinking and writing.

After marrying fellow Davenport George Cram Cook in 1913, Glaspell soon became committed to his dream of founding a theatre collective in Provincetown that would nurture native playwrights and help to develop an authentic American drama. Together they had

written *Suppressed Desires* (1914), the one-act play that helped launch that theatre collective; together they would write *Tickless Time* (1918), a play in which Cook's homemade sundial, the centerpiece of the couple's Provincetown garden, would evoke cosmological questions that were challenging the thinking of their contemporaries.¹ Until 1922, Glaspell would reside continuously in Provincetown with her husband, writing eleven plays for the Provincetown Players as well as several short stories and another novel, *Fidelity* (1915). After a brief sojourn in Greece, where Cook died in 1924, she would return to Provincetown, publishing a number of short stories, six more novels and two more plays. Except for short residencies in her native Midwest, she would make Provincetown, and later nearby Truro, her home until her death in 1948.

Undoubtedly the Midwest was the strongest regional influence on Glaspell's writing. Almost everything she wrote was set there, in whole or in part; moreover, the Midwest furnished several controlling metaphors for her work: the desolate prairie of *Trifles*, the pollinating cornfield of *Inheritors*, and the powerful Mississippi River of *The Visioning*.² However, Provincetown would prove inspirational as well, providing a locale for three short stories and three plays and furnishing a partial setting for two novels, *Fugitive's Return* (1929) and *Judd Rankin's Daughter* (1945). Tales of shipwrecks and storms, the customs of a different culture, unusual forms of vegetation native to Cape Cod, and the "strange geography" (Egan 90) of Provincetown itself would provide not only new subject matter but new ways of seeing and representing the philosophical questions that she explored in her fiction and drama. Cape Cod, with its uniquely fluid geography of sea, sand, earth and sky, would give Glaspell a potent and versatile language with which to explore new ideas about crossing borders and mingling cultures, convey the emotional states of her characters, and raise questions about the problem of the one and the many, the role of the artist in society, the nature of love, and the meaning of life.

"The Outside" is the Provincetowners' term for the outer shore of Cape Cod that curves into the Atlantic Ocean on its far side bounded by the woods that separate it from Provincetown proper on its near side. In her biography of Cook, *The Road to the Temple*, Glaspell describes this locale as ". . . that line he and I loved where the woods sent out the life that can meet the sand, and the sand in turn

tries to cover the woods—a fighting-line, the front line" (287). The Outside would come to function metaphorically in Glaspell's work, at various times suggesting constant change, bitter isolation, indeterminacy, and a safe haven. Two companion works, a one-act play, *The Outside*, staged by the Provincetown Players in 1917, and "The Rose in the Sand," a short story Glaspell wrote ten years later based on that play, employ this metaphor of a shifting and unstable borderlands where trees and plants continually struggle to survive the ever-threatening sand, and where tensions between polarities—inside/outside, life/death, flowing sea/fixed shore, smothering sand/growing plants—come into conflict.

The isolation of this area doubtless appealed to Eugene O'Neill when he moved into the Peaked Hill Bars lifesaving station there in 1919. Glaspell and her husband were frequent visitors at the station when O'Neill lived there; however, it may have been Maurice Sterne's near-drowning incident there that occurred four years before O'Neill's residence that sparked her imagination, inspiring the play and the short story.³ Both works are set on the Outside in an abandoned life saving station similar to the one in which O'Neill lived. The play that takes its title from its setting opens on the morning after a storm with three lifesavers working on a drowned man; when told that the man is dead, the captain of the lifesavers replies, "Danny Sears was dead when we picked him up. But we brought him back. I'll go on awhile" (*The Outside* 100). Just as the isolated location no doubt suggested to O'Neill a place where he could work on his plays with few interruptions, it also gave Glaspell the perfect objective correlative for the alienation of her main characters, two women—the city dweller, Mrs. Patrick, and Provincetowner Allie Mayo—who have lost their men and want only to isolate themselves from the human community.

"A Rose in the Sand," set in this identical location, makes the same use of the Outside to demonstrate the emotional detachment of the two female characters, the character from the city now called Ellen Paxton. As does the play, the short story employs the setting to stand for the idealistic struggle of those who choose to affirm and fight for life against the forces of annihilation and oblivion:

There was a mile or so of woods, queer dwarf woods of scrub oak and maples, pines which took strange shapes, dictated by the whim

of the sand . . . queer stunted things so valiantly growing between sand and sea ("The Rose in the Sand" 46).

While the setting, the characters, and the movement of the story are derived from *The Outside*, three new elements have been added: a horse, now retired from the life-saving service; a rose that blooms in the sand, and a little orphan girl.⁴ Whereas in *The Outside* the tireless efforts of the lifesavers to revive the drowned man motivate Allie Mayo to fight on the side of life and, subsequently, to persuade Mrs. Patrick to rejoin the land of the living, in "A Rose in the Sand" the miracle of the blooming rose convinces Ellen Paxton to reconnect with the human community and, as suggested by the story's subtitle, "The Salvation of a Lonely Soul," to adopt the orphan girl:

[S]he knelt before the little rose bush with its single flower. It had nothing to do with time. It was the whole of life. The wind brushed her lifted face. Off somewhere a bird was singing. The wind and the birds—*carriers of life, extenders of boundaries* [emphasis ours]. She looked down at her feet; a little patch of sand fertilized by the visits of a horse who had outlived his 'usefulness,' water spilled in drinking; and to a woman too stricken to go to the roses comes this one wild rose, a messenger. There it bloomed in the sand, alone and undismayed, fragile and authoritative. The whole Outside could not daunt it, for back of it was something more powerful than the Outside. Back of it was the will to grow. Back of it was the way of life ("A Rose in the Sand" 51).

Another way in which place stimulated Glaspell's imagination can be seen in the topographical contrast between Cape Cod and her native Iowa, which Glaspell articulated in her final novel, *Judd Rankin's Daughter*:

The Cape was a narrow strip of land out in the sea and she came from land that was wide and deep—deep in its richness and deep deep in the land. This was the outermost land, and was sparse. But out there [in Iowa] growing was taken for granted and here [in Provincetown] was always the wonder that things should be growing at all, and so you loved them for growing. Roses climbed with agility over Provincetown, and this seemed very sturdy and gracious of the roses, blown upon by sea winds, bright color piercing a fog (*Judd Rankin's Daughter* 102).

Elements of dichotomy and of dialectic, present in Glaspell's early novels, become increasingly significant in her later fiction and

drama—ways of conceptualizing suggested by the strong contrast between her birth region and her adopted region. These elements are at work in *The Comic Artist*, a play in which two brothers, Stephen Rolf, a moderately talented portrait artist and Karl Rolf, a brilliant cartoonist, clash over their love for Nina, Karl's wife and Stephen's former mistress. This collaboration with Norman Matson, with whom Glaspell lived for eight years after she returned from Greece, was published the same year as "The Rose in the Sand" and takes place in an old farmhouse near the Outside, but *The Comic Artist* emphasizes the more attractive aspects of the setting.⁵ Stephen and Eleanor Rolf, like Allie Mayo and Ellen Paxton, have chosen to make their home in an isolated area, but unlike the characters in "Rose," the Rolfs are not seeking seclusion because they have become alienated from life through loss and hurt; the Rolfs seek the serenity of Eleanor's ancestral Cape Cod home as an environment where life can be lived, in its closeness to nature, as a harmonious whole that will be conducive to artistic creation. As Stephen says, "We've been so deep in it here—painting, gathering things, making wine, we forget about the post office" (17). Glaspell's stage directions reinforce this concept, indicating that Stephen's studio should be filled with things from the sea: "The prow of an old boat protrudes from right. An anchor leans forgotten in a corner . . . a sea chest under the window serves as a bench" (39). More ironic dichotomies are revealed as the play progresses: Stephen's secluded seaside retreat has failed to inspire him to produce great art, but Karl's busy social life in New York and Paris has not impeded his success. Karl's wife Nina, a beautiful materialistic social climber, doesn't hinder her husband's creativity; Stephen's wife Eleanor, a plain-featured nature-loving homebody, has been an ineffectual muse for her husband, despite her best efforts to nurture his talent.

Glaspell exploits these dichotomies to raise the kind of questions about the relationship between the artist and society and the human being and the larger community that have informed many of her stories, plays, and novels: How much does the artist owe the society in which he/she lives? Is it selfish to withdraw from life to protect and nurture one's artistic gift? How much do we owe our family, our neighbors, our fellow citizens? Is it possible for the artist simultaneously to live in the world and create, or must the artist withdraw from the human community in order to do first-rate work? Where does one draw the line between responsible concern for others and

interference in their lives? The through line of this play calls up these questions as Stephen is lured from seclusion by the seductive Nina, and Eleanor, despite her avowed stance against meddling, attempts to save the two marriages by revealing Stephen and Nina's rekindled romance to Karl— with disastrous results for all of the characters.

The unique topography of Cape Cod also suggests Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of borderlands as "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (3). Anzaldúa's borderlands "are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Preface). Borderlands are in a constant state of transition, the province of the prohibited and the forbidden. The consciousness of the *mestiza*, the people of mixed ethnicities that Anzaldúa writes about in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, is a borderlands consciousness of mixed language, mixed music and mixed food. This straddling of several cultures creates a shock, a cultural collision in the *mestiza* psyche that engenders a capacity to tolerate ambiguity, adopt a pluralistic personality, and engage in divergent thinking. Anzaldúa says that there are certain joys that come with this consciousness: "There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being 'worked' on. I have the sense that certain 'faculties' (not just in me but in every border resident, colored or non-colored) and dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened" (Preface).

In much of her Provincetown fiction, Glaspell employs this notion of borderlands as a place where people of differing ethnicities, classes, and/or genders interact, exchange places, merge, and separate as she writes of native New Englanders and Portuguese newcomers living together and engaging in cultural interchange. Suggestive of this kind of intermingling is Midwesterner Frances Rankin Mitchell's description of Christmas in Provincetown:

Christmas used to be such fun on the Cape . . . So many lovely things she remembered: going to the little church, St. Mary of the Harbor, for midnight service, the tide often participating. Paying visits to Portuguese friends, and there in the best room would be the little altar, images of the Christ-child story, candlelighted. Robustly drinking red wine and eating shrimps with the fishermen. One New Year's Eve she and Marianna drove all through the narrow winding streets of the west

end of town, and Marianna had said, "Is this New England?" Somebody seemed to have been playing pranks with geography and you found yourself in a gay Latin world of music and laughter and dancers from the houses spilling out into the streets (*Judd Rankin's Daughter* 235).

The notion of Provincetown as borderlands illuminates two of Glaspell's stories that are set in that locale, "Government Goat" (1918) and "Agnes of Cape's End" (1915). In "Government Goat," a borderlands sensibility of cultural contestation and contrast is established from the first by the story's setting and the situation of its characters: Joe Doane, descended from a formerly well-to-do ship-owning family in Provincetown, has come down in the world: he no longer has a fishing vessel to take out into the ocean— he is trapped on land, working as a carpenter/handyman in Provincetown. His house is situated between those of two Portuguese families, the Cadaras family, whose father has just been lost at sea after a storm, and the Silva family, whose father has been able to return safely to shore. Underscored by these extremes of condition, the picket fence that separates the Cadaras property from the Doane land exploits the ambiguities inherent in a borderlands area of cultural conflict; the fence functions as a socio-cultural as well as a physical divide that foregrounds the ethnic and class differences between the two families but also demonstrates their underlying similarities as the social hierarchy of Anglo (and patriarchal) dominance and Portuguese (and female) subalternity is reversed when Mr. Cadaras is lost at sea. The loss brings attention, gifts, and status to the Cadaras survivors, and the Doane children are soon peeking through the picket fence to envy the new material blessings showered daily on the Cadaras family: a kiddy car, a baseball suit, a sailboat. The daughter, Agnes Cadaras, is transformed by new mourning garments, her beauty then outshining that of Joe's daughter, Myrtie. Mrs. Cadaras's acquisition of a fireless cooker leaves her with more leisure time than Mrs. Doane enjoys. Finally, the Cadaras family's acquisition of a goat, provided by the government, brings the conflict to a head, for the goat comes to represent for Joe Doane the ignominy that this reversal has brought to him. And, since the reversal has rendered him ineffectual in the eyes of his family, he comes to see himself as the real government goat.

Ironically, Joe Doane recovers his sense of agency, status, and empowerment by rescuing said goat from the high tide after she has

crawled out on the rocks in the breakwater, a borderlands region between the shore and the ocean. Having taken a risk and crossed this boundary, Joe, by virtue of his redemptive act of compassion and humility, becomes a hero in the eyes of his family and neighbors; he is reinserted in his traditional place of respect and the usual social hierarchy of dominant Anglo male and subordinate Portuguese female is reinscribed, putting to right Joe's sense of social equilibrium and status as head of the family and putting Mrs. Cadaras back "in her place." While this final development might suggest, at first glance, the conservatism of the implied author, by reversing the hierarchy in the first place, Glaspell interrogates the ethnic, gender, and social distinctions that govern Provincetown life, suggesting that they are not natural and immutable but socially constructed and subject to change and constructing Provincetown as a place of cultural and social interchange and ambiguity. Moreover, if one reads these reversals and re-inscriptions ironically, the displacement and reinstatement of Joe can be viewed as a deconstruction of traditional social hierarchies.

Glaspell's earliest Provincetown story, "Agnes of Cape's End," is like "Government Goat" in that traditional social and ethnic hierarchies furnish the conflict for the story and then become blurred before they are finally reinscribed. As in "Government Goat," boundaries are crossed when the narrator's beautiful Portuguese neighbor, Agnes Andrado, becomes engaged to naval officer Bartley Weston. Glaspell emphasizes the fluidity of these boundaries in her characterization of Agnes as "veering between tomboyishness and dreaming young womanhood which made her interesting to me through the next few years. But there came a spring when I returned to find that Agnes had left *her border country* behind" (6). [emphasis added]

The narrator's enabling of Agnes and Bartley's relationship seems to be motivated at least in part by voyeurism and curiosity, as well as by a desire to *epater les bourgeois* in effecting a marriage between a working-class Portuguese young woman and a Down Easterner. When she lets Bartley know that Agnes is the daughter of her Portuguese neighbor, the narrator comments, "I'm afraid there was a little malice in the satisfaction I took in looking at this man of the navy and then pointing to the fisherman's cottage next door" (6). However, her desire to break boundaries and mingle cultures as a way of effecting an idealistic vision of life is also a factor: "I loved to think

of the girl whose people had come in fishing boats from the Azores marrying a man who might one day command a battleship of our navy, that mingling of crafts, of peoples, somehow opening my mind to the whole of the romance and variety and adventure of life" (6).

As in "Government Goat," the traditional social hierarchies of ethnicity and class are reinscribed when Agnes falls in love with a fisherman (albeit one of both Portuguese and New England ancestry) and jilts Bartley Weston. In both stories, borders don't stay crossed; cultures don't stay mingled; social hierarchies don't stay subverted, as they do in her late novel, *Judd Rankin's Daughter*. In these stories, though, Provincetown serves as Glaspell's *intermonde*, the "intermundane space where our gazes cross and our perceptions overlap" (Merleau-Ponty), a place of intersubjectivity where a person must come in contact with other bodies in order to create meaning, a space where she could interact with a unique group of people and reflect on her own life to inspire her writing. But Glaspell's Provincetown was not only an *intermonde*—it was a uniquely feminine *intermonde*. As Iris Marion Young argues:

In Merleau-Ponty's account, the body unity of transcending performance creates an immediate link between the body and the outlying space. . . . In feminine existence, however, the projection of an enclosed space severs the continuity between a "here" and a "yonder." In feminine existence there is a *double spatiality*, as the space of the "here" is distinct from the space of the "yonder" and not linked with my own body possibilities, and the enclosed space that is "here," which I inhabit with my bodily possibilities, is an expression of the discontinuity between aim and capacity to realize the aim that I have articulated as the meaning of the tentativeness and uncertainty characterizing the inhibited intentionality of feminine motility. The space of the "yonder" is a space in which feminine existence projects possibilities in the sense of understanding that "someone" could move within it, but not I. Thus the space of the "yonder" exists for feminine existence, but only as that which she is looking into, rather than moving in. (152)

In Glaspell's Provincetown works that evoke the Outside, even the woods that fight for survival against the sand are the "yonder," the places that the women are afraid to venture into, to move within, and must remain as spaces only to be gazed at, "looked into." The women in Glaspell's Provincetown are "kept in their place." If the women cross into the masculine space they are sure to go crazy,

become “loose” women (whores), or, at the end of the work, become re-inscribed in their traditional place in social/ethnic hierarchies. Significantly, in both the play, *The Outside*, and its fictional counterpart, “A Rose in the Sand,” the female protagonist is met with resistance from males when she decides to rent the abandoned life-saving station in the Outside.

Haldrup, explicating Young, emphasizes that a woman historically exists as a body dually lived as subject and object—not only a human subject that is able to gaze, but as an object that is gazed upon and is subjected to another’s desires. Because women experience their bodies simultaneously as subjects and objects, their existence is thus ambiguous and this ambiguity tends to position them in space (Haldrup and others 178). Thus in this *intermonde*, Glaspell demonstrates that Agnes is a woman who is both object and subject, transformed from a Portuguese young woman into a mythical “Lady of the Mist.” Agnes is objectified by the narrator as something lovely to look at, reflecting her desires:

The long jacket of her gray suit was close-fitted, disclosing those long, slow curves of her lovely body. But the arresting thing was the way she moved,—the proud grace of her, the suppleness of her strength,—lithe, buoyant, so light and so firm. What innumerable women in high places would give to move like that! (6)

Later in the story we begin to see a more subjectified Agnes who breaks off an engagement to a New Englander of higher social class to marry for love instead and endures physical and emotional pain and loss to become a strong woman, an “ideal” type. Agnes “has left her border country behind”(6) and has become a woman. The narrator is humbled by Agnes’s giving up of material/class opportunities for true love (the triumph of passionate love) to marry Tony Ventura, a man who is a *mixture* of Portuguese and New Englander. By gazing upon others in the Provincetown community, Glaspell is able to step out of her “place” and transcend her constraints to attempt to work through her own personal issues in her works of fiction—to find an ideal woman, ideal man, an ideal home life, and hold onto the hope that those ideals might actually exist.

The borderlands concept is at work in *Fugitive’s Return*, a novel that employs three settings as it traces the path to psychic wholeness of protagonist Irma Lee Shraeder, who grows up in Iowa, resides on Cape Cod as a young wife and mother, and immigrates to Delphi after

the death of her daughter and the desertion of her husband⁶. In this novel, borderlands function as the source of Irma’s early sense of marginalization and alienation as well as the site of the kind of psychological growth that Anzaldúa describes in her preface as a process of awakening and joyous coming to consciousness.

The daughter of a building contractor who can never turn a profit, Irma lives on the outskirts of a small Iowa city in a cottage with neither bathroom nor furnace, inhabiting a borderlands area between country and city, an anomaly who is comfortable with neither her upper-middle-class town relatives nor her working-class immigrant schoolmates. Living on the border between different social classes, ethnicities and life styles creates an uncomfortable sense of disequilibrium and ambivalence within Irma:

There was always the danger that threatened—that someone who had seen her cool, poised at the party, would see her now eating fried potatoes—Ed gobbling, Mother flushed and not tidy, Father in shirt-sleeves, telling about his day with the laboring men. That sharp difference, so quickly brought about, would have made her absurd (125)

This internal conflict fuels Irma’s rejection of her cousin Janet’s efforts to include her in the town girls’ social circle as well as her repression of physical desire and consequent refusal of farmer Horace Morton’s marriage proposal. But if in Iowa Irma suffers from the disequilibrium that comes with borderlands territory, her move to Cape Cod with her new husband gives her a sense of continuity with her New England ancestors who settled there centuries earlier, enabling her to derive a sense of serenity and purpose from this shared environment:

She read what she could find of old days, reconstructing them in her imagination, pleased with the feeling that this was her background. This strip of land extending itself beyond other land, reaching far out to sea, was something like life itself. Rather lonely, brave, making its own place of safety, surrounded by what was not itself. She loved the way the wind bent the tall beach grass, and when she found bright flowers in gray moss she had a more tender feeling that flowers had given before . . . And her fervor was for making a house—a life—for him, stability to safeguard his restlessness (166)

Although it ends in paralyzing grief, Irma’s sojourn on Cape Cod, the psychic borderlands of her own life between her troubled youth

and her emotional maturation, helps her to purge herself of the conflicts that distressed her growing-up years in Iowa; consequently, she learns to think in a different way about her life. The sense of connection with her forebears that she experiences on Cape Cod prepares her to come to the deeper sense of transcendence that she achieves in Greece as she reflects on her experiences, connects them with those of the ancient people who lived in Delphi centuries ago, accomplishes sexual fulfillment through her relationship with John Knight, and acknowledges the painful feelings she has previously repressed:

[I]t was true her life had not been in vain. To this it had come—for this it had been. The long ordeal of her years—resolved here. The long blind struggle, the baffled seeking—failures, disappointments, humiliation, loss—as offerings—an offering! If there had been less—she would have less to bring. And when she had here—this night, in this vineyard of Delphi, known love, all that had died in shame or grief was resuscitated in beauty. There was not one old moment but was charged with life. Every bird she had ever loved, each flower, each tree, was living fragrant music now. (285)

The concept of borderlands also informs Glaspell's World War II-era novel, *Judd Rankin's Daughter*, which moves back and forth in time and space between the past and the present, between Cape Cod and Iowa and between characters through whom the novel is focalized. All three main characters in the novel—Adah Logan; her cousin, Judd Rankin; and his daughter, Frances Rankin Mitchell—have crossed various kinds of boundaries to inhabit liminal spaces in which genders, cultures, regions, and social classes intermingle. The novel is focalized first through Frances Rankin Mitchell, a native Iowan who has married a man from the East and now lives with her family in Provincetown. At the beginning of the novel, called to the bedside of the dying Adah, she straddles not only a regional divide but a generational divide as well, connecting with both the elderly Adah and Adah's friend, the young soldier Gerald Andrews. A second point-of-view character is Judd Rankin, a native Iowan who has lived in both the city and the country, has combined the careers of farmer and newspaper editor, and leads a lively intellectual life despite the deeply ingrained conservative politics of his neighbors and his own isolationist tendencies. Cousin Adah, the link among the characters, "was the bright smile in the Bible Belt; the gay little tender laugh which somehow extended itself, making lives of farmers seem less drab, and

certainly making captains of industry sit up and glow. She was the Middle West's favorite secret . . . Cousin Adah made the Middle West feel a little wicked and gave it the moral responsibility and vicarious pleasure and guilt of being sophisticated" (7).

Opposites come together throughout this novel in a dialectical movement through which a synthesis is attained that affirms the overall unity of life and the interconnectedness of human lives, despite regional, racial, age, or gender differences. Just as Adah, in her earlier life, was able to introduce successfully the young country bumpkin Judd to city ways and society manners, so, on her last day of life, she is able to bring young Gerald and middle-aged Frances together, effecting a connection between them that endures beyond his death and brings Frances to the conclusion that "I wonder if I didn't have two boys in the service . . . and while I am about it I had better include [neighbor] Joe Jason and make it three . . ." (213); like Arthur Miller's Joe Keller, Frances has come to the realization that they are "all my sons." Judd, through his book *Out Here*, reaches across the generational border and brings his shell-shocked grandson Judson back to his family. Frances, too, effects a reconciliation of opposites when she is able, ultimately, to bridge the cultural, racial and social class gap between her WASP friend Marianna and her Jewish social worker friend Julia, overcoming Marianna's reluctance to sell her house to a Jew. Through their borderlands experiences, all three main characters are able to think and feel in ways that are inclusive, pluralistic, and conducive to resolving conflict.

"The sea has been good to Eugene O'Neill. It was there for his opening," wrote Susan Glaspell of the world premiere of *Bound East for Cardiff* (*The Road to the Temple* 254). The sea was there for Susan Glaspell, too, as well as the sand, the woods, and the sky of Provincetown, for these elements of nature, combined in a way that she had never before experienced, gave her a new lens through which to view the questions and themes that recur in her plays and fiction. Without her Provincetown experience, Glaspell's mature work would not have been as complex and nuanced—qualities derived from a locale where change is constant and boundaries are fluid, where contrasts abound and ambiguities flourish, where more questions are raised than are answers provided.

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NOTES

- ¹ See Marcia Noe and Robert Lloyd Marlowe's "Suppressed Desires and Tickless Time: An Intertextual Critique of Modernity" for a fuller discussion of these plays.
- ² See Marcia Noe's "Region as Metaphor in the Plays of Susan Glaspell."
- ³ A few years earlier, salonista Mabel Dodge had arrived in Provincetown and persuaded Sam Lewisohn to buy the station so that she could renovate it for him as a cure for her depression. Decorating it in white, she then used it as a love nest for her affair with artist Maurice Sterne. On September 6, 1915, Sterne; her son, John Evans; and the set designer for the Provincetown Players, Robert Edmund Jones, set out from the Peaked Hill Bars lifesaving station for a swim in the ocean. When a rope device designed to protect the men from the undertow began to drown Sterne, the Coast Guard was called to rescue him. He was brought to shore unconscious and revived only after twenty minutes of work (Egan 141).
- ⁴ The first seems to have been suggested by the true story of Daisy the life-saving horse, as related below by long-time Provincetown resident Mary Heaton Vorse:
- Daisy wandered at will around the dunes, but when the dinner bell rang she'd come with her tail up in a smother of flying sand. If she got to the door before the men got to table, she got fed. Otherwise she would have to wait till they were through. And wait she would, snuffling and puffing at the window and peering in. She would wander up behind some stranger when a group of visitors were looking at the lifeboats and affectionately nuzzle a shoulder (56).
- Vorse also recalls that roses inexplicably grew in the Outside:
- These roses are Japanese roses, the sort that never grow wild, and yet there is a bank of these flowers growing out near Peaked Hill, in a tangle of bayberry. Cap'n Cook was "cruising around in back" when he "smelled a sweet scent." It was a bank of these roses growing where no rose had ever been seen (Vorse 56-57).
- ⁵ In 1920 the Cooks purchased an old farmhouse on the outside shore of Cape Cod near Truro. In contrast to her earlier emphasis on the de-humanizing isolation of the Outside, Glaspell found the secluded location of their new home to be a "valley of peace" conducive to creativity and harmony in marriage: "It was good to be in his [Cook's] mystic valley, the sea just over the hill, no voice but the birds" (*The Road to the Temple* 292, 297).
- ⁶ See chapters four and five of Martha Carpentier's *The Major Novels of Susan Glaspell* for a psychoanalytical and mythic reading of *Fugitive's Return* that is the most comprehensive discussion of this novel in the corpus of Glaspell scholarship.

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LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY: MARK TWAIN'S ENGLAND

JOHN ROHRKEMPER

By the time Mark Twain first set foot in England in 1872, he was already one of the most widely traveled men of his generation. Having long left his native Midwest, he had traveled up and down the Mississippi as a river boat pilot, had accompanied his politician brother to the rough-and-tumble mining camps of the Nevada Territory, had lived in the western jewel, San Francisco, and from there ventured on to the Hawaiian Islands. He wrote about these experiences in *Life on the Mississippi* and *Roughing It*. He had traveled in the East as well, with extended stops in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. Then, of course, he had made the trip to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land that he chronicled in his first important book, *The Innocents Abroad*. After marrying, he settled in Buffalo, later moved to Hartford, and often spent summers in his wife's hometown of Elmira, New York. In all these travels and the additional ones he had made as a touring lecturer, Twain's wanderlust had taken him well beyond the horizons of his native Midwest and assured that when he set foot in England he was anything but a provincial bumpkin.

But England was different from all these places for Twain. England was a special case. Not only did he establish lifelong friendships there, he also came to inhabit England as a place of the imagination. He became interested particularly in the historical England. In fact, the subtitle of my essay might better be "Mark Twain's *Tudor* England," for it focuses not just on Twain's exposure to a new culture of place, but also of time. If, as this special issue of the *Miscellany* implicitly argues, there is a value in looking at how writers—in this case specifically Midwestern writers—look at the world

beyond the place in which they were born and came of age, then there also is a value in looking at how writers deal with eras other than their own. And it was the historical England that was to excite Twain's imagination throughout his career, shaping his reading and also his writing, especially in two of his novels, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and his earlier, Tudor novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*. This article will focus on this first English historical novel.

Twain completed the manuscript of *The Prince and the Pauper* on February 1, 1881, and it was published in the United States, Canada, and England in December. Interestingly, as something more than mere publishing trivia, it appears almost exactly midway between Twain's two most famous and influential books about boys, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which appeared in Canada and England at the end of 1884 and America at the beginning of 1885. Twain was not alone in his interest in writing books about boys and boyhood. In fact, the subgenre of boys' books was very much the vogue among American readers in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Twain, however, soon found that exploring the lives of adolescents was more than merely nostalgia; increasingly he saw these boys as specimens in the laboratory of society in an age that grappled so earnestly with the big questions about the relationship of the individual to society, with questions of personal freedom and human volition. Later in this essay, I will discuss ways that Twain's work on his Tudor novel reflected these concerns and helped to shape some of the conspicuous differences in tone, characterization, and theme that differentiate *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. But first, more about the novel itself.

The Prince and the Pauper, the historical novel, was almost neither historical nor a novel. Twain originally conceived of *Prince* with a Victorian setting, with Albert Edward, heir to the throne, exchanging places with a poor Londoner (Emerson 107). He also, at one point, thought it would be a play. In his notebook of July 1877, Twain resolves to "Write Prince and Pauper in 4 acts and eight changes" (Emerson 107). Like so many great novelists of his generation—Howells and James come immediately to mind—he was taken with the stage and hoped to write successfully for it. But, like the others, his genius lay elsewhere and we'd have to wait until just a little after Twain's death in 1910 for a distinguished and distinctively American drama to emerge in the work of Eugene O'Neill and his contempo-

raries.¹At any rate, Twain quickly changed course and resolved to write a historical novel of Tudor England.

The idea for the novel began to form in the mid-seventies, as he wrote *Tom Sawyer*. As Everett Emerson notes, "*The Prince and the Pauper* had its origin in Samuel Clemens's reading, not his experience" (106). In 1874, he read William E. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869). Lecky aroused Twain's interest in early European history, but Twain was especially taken with Lecky's evolutionary argument that ethical progress drove history. During the summer of 1876 he compiled in his notebooks samples of typical phrases of the Middle Ages with the idea of writing a historical study, and he also wrote "1601," a story that Leslie Fiedler called "a hard-core pornographic skit" (1) and Everett Emerson called "much the work of a naughty boy playing hooky" (92). Perhaps there is some truth in both assessments, but the work was important for Twain as an exploration of the language and mores of the age he would examine more deeply in *The Prince and the Pauper*. Written in Elizabethan dialect, "1601" gathers Queen Elizabeth, Francis Bacon, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and others in pleasant conversation that quickly turns to graphic discussion of flatulence, masturbation, and intercourse. Twain's research had led him to conclude that the pre-Puritan, pre-Victorian Elizabethans enjoyed a great frankness about bodily processes and this seemed both to intrigue and disconcert him. And this illustrates, I think, a theme in Twain's historical research into Tudor England. He essentially was an Anglophile, but through his research he increasingly became aware of a darker side of that culture. In "1601" Twain begins to reveal a conflicted tension between admiration and contempt for many aspects of the English past.

During the summer of 1877, with *Tom Sawyer* behind him, he continued his research, reading books on sixteenth-century England, including James Anthony Froude's *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (twelve volumes, 1865-1870); David Hume's writing on Henry VII and VIII from his *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Abdication of James the Second* (six volumes, 1854); Raphael Holinshead's *Chronicles of England, Ireland and Scotland* (six volumes, 1807-1808); and Leigh Hunt's *The Town: Its Memorable Characters and Events* (1859).

Twain was encouraged in his writing of the novel by his family, his wife Olivia, and his daughters, especially his eldest, Susy, who wanted a book for children that would be edifying, presumably as *Tom Sawyer* was not. This information is significant because, by the late 1870s, Twain had left behind his rough and tumble youth—except as he visited it in his imagination. He was now ensconced in a mansion in the leafy enclave of Nook Farm in the genteel city of Hartford—a family man, married into a family of higher social standing than *his* family had ever expected to attain. Many critics have noted that this was a book not only for his family but for a whole class of gentle readers—in Hartford and elsewhere. It was the kind of book a learned Victorian gentleman might write, complete with scholarly footnotes. Upon completing the novel, Twain said he liked it better than *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* because "a body always enjoys himself attempting something out of his line" (Emerson 108). Twain was proud of his new novel, sending copies to over seventy people, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Emerson 109). (Emerson and Longfellow were both dead within three months, though presumably not for having read or not having read *The Prince and the Pauper*.)

The Prince and the Pauper is the story of two boys who are remarkably alike physically. But, despite their virtually identical appearance, the lives of the two boys are dramatically different. One is Prince Edward, heir to the throne of Henry VIII in the very last days of the king's life; the other is Tom Canty who lives in a "foul little pocket [of London] called Offal Court" that is "packed full of wretchedly poor families" (3). Tom's drunken and violent father and grandmother—both reminiscent of the Pap Finn Twain would create just a few years later—are physically and emotionally violent and continually abuse the sensitive young boy. But one day, by accident, Tom finds himself in the royal palace in the presence of the prince, who notices their similarities and suggests as a lark that they exchange clothes. This exchange leads to Edward, taken to be a pauper, being driven from the castle while everyone assumes that Tom is the heir to the throne. The rest of the novel chronicles the naïve Tom's attempt to navigate the requisites of a crown prince but focuses even more on the fate of Edward, cast adrift in the lower depths of his own kingdom, experiencing, as Twain suggests royalty rarely can, the brutal unfairness of his realm. Twain's idea, he claimed, was to portray the "exceeding severity of the laws of that day by afflicting

some of their penalties upon the king himself & allowing him to see the rest of them applied to others" (*Prince* xvi).

Twain had begun his novel with the deepest respect and admiration for all things English. On his triumphal tour of England in 1872, Twain had been feted as an important man of letters at a time when his reputation in his home country was mainly as a "phunny phellow." He had hobnobbed with the most eminent Victorians and formed a warm if sentimental view of the English aristocracy. And Twain was never entirely to lose his admiration for things English. Late in life, he valued no honor greater than receiving an honorary degree from Oxford University in 1907. Twain was feted by King Edward VII, and, though his fellow honorees at the Oxford commencement included Rudyard Kipling, Auguste Rodin, the editor Whitelaw Reed, and the founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth, Twain was clearly the day's great lion—and how he was lionized! He was so proud of his red Oxford gown and tasseled cap that he wore them at the wedding of his daughter Clara two years later. But as often happens with Twain—and many other writers as well—he wrote himself into another point of view in composing this novel. As one scholar has put it, in *The Prince and the Pauper*, "the romantic's fascination with knights and castles is counterbalanced by the iconoclast's itch to shatter that world of sham and injustice, where crown and miter lorded it over the commons" (Spiller, et. al. 934). As best we can tell, Twain began the project in "romantic fascination," and developed the "itch to shatter" as he became more immersed in the culture of Tudor England.

A few years later, Twain was to attack fiercely the sham hypocrisy of politics and religion and the tyranny of social class in his own culture. Henry's England was a harsh and unfair place, but if Lecky's theory that ethical progress drives history was true, how was one to explain the similar abuses of humane values in antebellum America as portrayed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? It's possible that *Huckleberry Finn* owes much to the direction in which Twain's mind had begun to move as he wrote his Tudor novel. Andrew Hoffman has argued:

The Prince and the Pauper reflected his vision of justice more explicitly than any of the earlier books As Mark Twain portrays it, Tom Canty's experience at first appears to be mere misfortune—until we see the wider frame of existence, the political structure that deter-

mined the apportionment of fortune in his society. Then it becomes clear that Tom's unhappy life results from a Dickensianly abusive social system. In Mark Twain's view . . . systematic misfortune is injustice. (291)

The more he researched fifteenth-century England, the more furious he became with its draconian laws and rigid class system—and possibly also with the most draconian laws America had ever enacted—those laws governing slavery.

But if Twain attacked unjust law in both of these novels of the 1880s, he also was interested in even bigger and more controversial issues, for *The Prince and the Pauper* centrally focuses on issues of identity and, particularly, what we today call the debate about nature vs. nurture: the extent to which we are the products of our biological inheritance and the extent to which we are the products of our environment. Twain clearly assumes the greater importance of the latter and calls into question the assumption of the "inherent greatness" of certain classes of peoples. Twain implies this when he later describes the two central characters of the novel as "the prince of Wales & a pauper boy of the same age and countenance (& half as much learning & more genius and imagination)" (*Prince* xv). Despite his high regard for the many members of the English aristocracy that he proudly counted as friends, Twain believed he was asserting an American view of human value exemplified by the Jefferson/Jackson democratic tradition. In this view, identity and personal value are more a result of experience and achievement than one's bloodline. And this view, of course, countered English notions of class.² Edward, the future king, is certainly of a noble nature, but so is his other, Tom Canty. The principal difference between them is the difference of opportunity afforded by their radically different circumstances

But, if one's environment was more formative than one's heredity, and if that assumption was to be central to the American democratic genius, it was also a problem to be surmounted. Twain became centrally preoccupied with this dilemma in his great novel of the eighties, indeed, the great novel of his career, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, for in that novel, Twain posed the question of the extent to which the individual, powerfully shaped by environment, could liberate himself from that environment's least palatable ideas and ideology. This is Huck's challenge in his journey down the river

with Jim. Twain resisted the claims of social class in *The Prince and the Pauper*, but that novel nevertheless is too glib in its suggestion that the force of one's circumstances could be overcome with some ease—that a prince could survive as a pauper; that a pauper could understand and undertake the role of a prince as if it were as easy as donning the ermine. But of course *The Prince and the Pauper* was a children's story, possibly one that became more serious than Twain intended or his polite society could quite understand. Yet, when all was said and done, Twain seemed to downplay the novel's social criticism when he added the subtitle—*A Tale for Young People of All Ages*—and dedicated the book to “those good-natured and agreeable children, Susie³ and Clara Clemens.”

Still, Twain clearly learned a great deal in the writing of the novel and clarified his thinking on issues that were to be of paramount importance in subsequent work, including *Huckleberry Finn*. In fact, he had taken up the manuscript of that novel, which he had laid aside for three years, during the last weeks of composition of *The Prince and the Pauper*. Ron Powers has suggested that *The Prince and the Pauper* marked the first direct articulation of “his central and infinitely suggestive cluster of literary obsessions: identities switched and mistaken, twins and twinning, stolen birthrights, imposters, pretenders, false claimants” (438). And Leland Krauth implies that the novel rehearses a central theme of Huck Finn's life. Krauth discusses *The Prince and the Pauper* as melodrama, remarkably faithful to the genre except in one way:

John Canty [Tom's father], in most ways the arch emblem of evil, is simply “never heard of again.” Like Pap in *Tom Sawyer*, he is not dead or imprisoned, but absent. Twain's imagination, even in its most secure moral fantasy, remains haunted by the evil father still at large in the world . . . Only the release of this dark figure departs from the conventions of his melodramatic form.” (165)

Krauth further makes explicit his understanding of the connections among the three boys' novels of the seventies and eighties: “Both boy adventures [*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Prince and the Pauper*] affirm the heart as the source of morality, a vision common to nineteenth-century sentimentalists. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain would plumb that conception, complicating and problematizing it” (165). But in many ways he had already come to problematize it in *The Prince and the Pauper*, for the novel asks us to at

least consider that the stoutest and purest heart might not always surmount the often crushing force of a stratified and oppressive social structure. This is the reality against which both Jim and Huck—but particularly Huck because of his supposed freedom—must continually struggle.

Many—probably most—critics have relegated *The Prince and the Pauper* to second-tier status among Twain's works and I won't disagree with that. Twain was always best working from personal experience—as was his most successful character, Huck—rather than from books, in the manner of Tom Sawyer. But Twain learned from those books. An omnivorous reader, Twain knew how to use what he got from his reading. And, as Andrew Hoffman has observed, Twain “steeped himself in history books much the way a man in prison studies his cell, to look for an escape from it” (Hoffman 255). From his readings of English history, he was to escape into *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and that extraordinary American journey. Written in the years between his two most famous novels, Twain, in *The Prince and the Pauper*, adopted Tom Sawyer's methodology—bookishness—to work toward the place where he could imagine Huckleberry Finn, the ultimate democratic noble savage, a vision of boyhood based in an inherent nobility, a boy forced to grapple with the issues Twain had explored in more tentative ways a few years earlier in his Tudor novel. The principal difference between Tom Canty and Huckleberry Finn is that Tom, though uncorrupted by his palace experience, enjoyed putting on the purple, wearing the ermine. He is in this way a sentimental hero. Huck, to the contrary, resists civilization's lure, resists every opportunity to capitulate to a system that we know is inherently corrupt. Huck is an altogether different kind of hero because he understands in his bones that to be free, he must stay outside the culture that could give him substantial rewards at merely the cost of his soul.

Twain's actual and imaginative journeys to England had done for him what travel often does for intelligent travelers: they showed him a world different from but not entirely unlike his homeland. In looking across the ocean—and across a sea of time—he found what mattered most to him as a writer and a man. He found America—or at least a fresh perception of it that he would embody in Huck Finn—as he confronted an England long ago and far away.

NOTES

- ¹ Twain, whose plays had mixed success in his lifetime, would have been delighted at the success of David Ives's adaptation of his previously unproduced play, *Is He Dead?*, which opened to favorable reviews and appreciative audiences in December, 2007.
- ² Judith Martin, (Miss Manners) in a thoughtful introduction to the Oxford Mark Twain edition of the novel, sees it imbued with the values of Victorian etiquette guides that are premised on the idea that manners—behavior—matters more than social class in determining a person's worth.
- ³ The Clemens' oldest daughter was named Olivia Susan after her mother. The family always called her by the diminutive of her middle name. She herself spelled it "Susy," though Twain often spelled it "Susie," as in his dedication.

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