

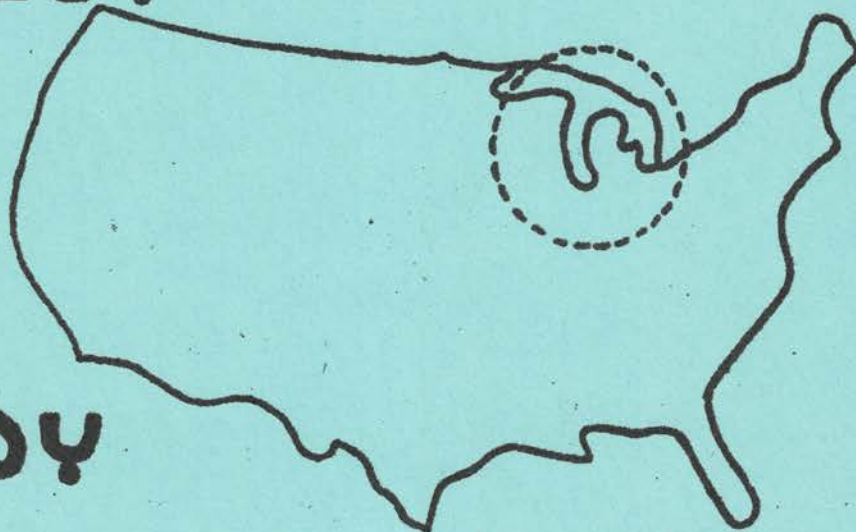
SOCIETY

FOR

THE

STUDY

OF



MIDWESTERN

LITERATURE

Newsletter
Volume Five
Number One
Spring, 1975

**Society for the Study
of Midwestern Literature**

Volume V, No. 1

Newsletter

Spring, 1975

Election of Officers

The mail ballots for the Society's officers for 1975 have been tabulated, with the following results:

Eric Rabkin
Michigan

President: Bernard Engel
Michigan State

Continuing members are (expiring 1977):

Gerald Nemanic
Northeastern Illinois

Vice

President: Linda Wagner
Michigan State

Elizabeth Steel
Toledo

Three-year terms on the Executive Council
(expiring 1978):

Alma Payne
Bowling Green

Paul Ferlazzo
Michigan State

Non-elective officers are:

Executive Secretary
and Secretary:

David D. Anderson
Michigan State

Secretary:

Paul Ferlazzo
Michigan State

Continuing members are (expiring 1976):

Linda Wagner
Michigan State

William Miller
Ball State

Bibliographer:

Don Pady
Iowa State

Indexer:

Susanna Harmon
Jacksonville, Fla.

MIDAMERICA II

MidAmerica II will be available in April. Contents include the following:

The Uncritical Critics:

The American Realists and the Lincoln Myth

David D. Anderson

The Return of St. Louis' Prodigal Daughter:

Kate Chopin After Seventy Years

Joyce Ruddel Ladenson

Ross Lockridge, Raintree County, and the
Epic of Irony

Gerald C. Nemanic

Knights in Disguise: Lindsay and Maiakovski
as Poets of the People

Marc Chénétier

Floyd Dell: Freedom or Marriage

Gerald L. Marriner

The First Nick Romano: The Origin of
Knock on Any Door

Robert E. Fleming

Community and Self in the Midwest Town:
Floyd Dell's Moon-Calf

Park Dixon Goist

Lizzie Dahlberg and Eula Varner:

Two Modern Perspectives on the Earth Mother

Robert L. Kindrick

Compulsive and Monumental: a review essay

Thomas J. Schlereth

The Annual Bibliography of Studies in
Midwestern Literature for 1973

Donald S. Pady, editor

Regular price is \$5.00; members' price is \$3.50, and a special dues-paying rate of \$5.00 for membership and MidAmerica II is available. MidAmerica I is in limited supply at the same rates. Both plus dues are available at \$8.00.

We are now soliciting contributions for MidAmerica III. Articles that deal with broad problems of definition and that attempt significant syntheses will be especially welcome.

Announcements

Future Programs

The Society has four programs scheduled for the remainder of calendar 1975; the Fifth Annual Conference, to be held at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, on October 4, 1975; a seminar at MLA in San Francisco in December; a special program at MMLA in Chicago in November, and a special program at MLA in San Francisco. Members are invited to participate.

The Fifth Annual Conference will focus upon literary innovations which have come out of the Midwest or have been developed by Midwestern writers and have become part of the mainstream of American writing. Approximately ten places are available on two panels. If you are interested in participating, please write Dave Anderson by June 1.

The Seminar at MLA will focus upon "The Great Gatsby at Fifty: A Midwestern Novel as National Masterpiece." About four places are available. If interested, please write Blair Whitney.

The special program at MLA will be the first of a two-part sequence: "Two Hundred Years of Midwestern Literature." It will focus upon the years 1776-1876. Four places are available; if interested, write Dave Anderson. Part II, 1876-1976, will be given in New York in 1976.

The special program at MMLA will focus upon "Chicago in Fiction." Four places are available. Again, if interested, write Dave Anderson.

The Willard Motley Papers

Before his death in 1965, Chicago author Willard Motley left parts of his large accumulation of literary papers to two libraries. In the late 1940's Motley responded to a request by Carl Van Vechten and donated a typescript of his best-selling novel Knock on Any Door (1947) to the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of the Yale University Library. According to Peter Dzwonkoski, Assistant to the Curator, the typescript consists of 1078 pages, many of them revised in pencil.

Motley donated a second large collection of letters, notes, clippings, and some manuscripts to the University of Wisconsin Memorial Library. This collection has been thoroughly catalogued by Jerome Klinkowitz, James Giles, and John T. O'Brien. See "The Willard Motley Papers at the University of Wisconsin," Resources for American Literary Study, 2 (1972), 218-273.

A third collection, still owned by the Estate of Willard Motley, is on loan to the Parson Library, Northern Illinois University. This collection, by far the most interesting of the three, has been briefly described by James Giles and Jerome Klinkowitz in "The Emergence of Willard Motley in Black American Literature," Negro American Literature Forum, 6 (1972), 31-34. Like the Wisconsin collection these papers consist of letters, notes, and clippings, but also contain early manuscripts of Knock on Any Door, We Fished All Night (1951), and Let Noon Be Fair (1966), and a number of unpublished manuscripts.

The most noteworthy items among the unpublished writings are a book-length non-fiction manuscript called "My House Is Your House," dealing with Motley's experiences in Mexico, and a number of short stories with a Chicago setting, most written before Motley published Knock on Any Door.

Robert Fleming

According to a note among Motley's papers, "The Beer Drinkers," an early story, was to have been published in the May 1957 issue of Dude, the men's magazine. No copy is extant in any of the three collections described above. If anyone in the Society has a copy, or if anyone can even confirm its publication, please write:

Robert E. Fleming
Dept. of English
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, N. M. 87131

EDGAR LEE MASTERS: The Spoon River Poet and his Critics by John T. Flanagan, Metuchen, N. J. (Scarecrow Press, Inc.) 1974, 183 pp., \$6.00.

When Edgar Lee Masters published the book version of the Spoon River Anthology and for some years thereafter, he was the most widely discussed poet writing in the United States. The phenomenon of Spoon River Anthology created a literary storm without precedent in American culture. Despite the fact that Masters followed up his first success with many other volumes of verse, along with fiction, biography and history, his reputation gradually declined. Nevertheless he produced substantial books in his narrative poem Domesday Book, his life of Vachel Lindsay and his autobiography Across Spoon River.

This study is the first book-length analysis of Masters and the first extensive review of the criticism which his numerous volumes elicited. Masters never enjoyed a wholly flattering press, but even those critics who objected to his style or to his drabness and redundancy acknowledged the importance and originality of what he was trying to do.

Spoon River Anthology of course produced the lion's share of comment about Masters. But many of his other books also enjoyed the limelight, if more briefly. Most readers in the second half of the twentieth century will not remember that Masters was a narrative poet, a novelist and a biographer, nor that his lives of Lincoln, Whitman, Twain and Vachel Lindsay kept his name in the forefront of literary controversy for many years. This study records in some detail the critical response to the books which poured forth from Edgar Lee Master's versatile and tireless pen for almost half a century. The reviews tell us a good deal not only about Masters himself but also about the literary climate of our country during the years preceding World War II.

The book is not a biography of Masters, although some of the material evaluated is of special utility for a potential biographer. It is instead a presentation of Master's work through the eyes of reviewers who variously branded him as a satirist, an ironist, a philosopher interested in science,

a descriptive poet, and a naturalist. Few critics in the second half of the twentieth century look with conspicuous favor on Masters, but even today the impact of Spoon River Anthology has not been forgotten.

A graduate of the University of Minnesota, Dr. Flanagan has been professor of English (American literature) at the University of Illinois since 1949. He has many publications to his credit. One of the first members of the Society, his interest in Midwestern writing has been lifelong.

As editor of The Mississippi Valley Review, I am proud to announce that with the Fall-Winter 1975-76 issue, MVR enters its fifth year of publication. MVR is located at Western Illinois University. MVR appears twice a year. Subscription cost will be \$2.50 per year; \$1.50 per single copy.

Single copies of the Spring, 1975 issue cost only \$1.00. MVR won a 1974 Illinois Arts Council award in fiction for publishing "Goatfate," a story by Murray Moulding, Professor of English at Monmouth (Ill.) College.

Forrest Robinson
Department of English
Western Illinois Univ.
Macomb, Ill. 61455

A New Course in Midwestern Literature

A pioneering course in Midwestern American literature is being offered during the spring quarter at Ball State. In this evening graduate course, "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country: A Seminar in Midwestern Literature," students will study such novels as Lewis' Main Street, Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, Eggleston's The Hoosier Schoolmaster, Wright's A Native Son, Dreiser's Sister Carrie, Farrell's Studs Lonigan, Cather's My Antonia, and poetry by Sandburg, Masters, Lindsay, and Brooks.

A main thrust in this seminar will be to discover whether there are subjects, problems and literary approaches which are

peculiar to literature which has its origin in the Midwest--a region bounded by Michigan and Ohio in the east and the prairie as it cuts through Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas in the west. As the works noted above suggest, the small town, the city, and the frontier are three areas which will be given special attention.

This course in Midwestern literature should prove useful to teachers of literature in these states, to students of Midwestern history and culture and to others who are simply interested in what it means to be a Midwesterner. The Hoosier Schoolmaster is remarkable, for example, both for its reflection of quaint folk customs and southern Indiana dialect and for the way Eggleston uses literary conventions in creating the story. Although each is a "realist," Sandburg, Brooks, Dreiser, Wright, and Farrell present sharply contrasting images of Chicago, the quintessential Midwestern city. The students will be asked to consider which author gives the most accurate view of city life, which of the works is the most artistically successful.

An important "myth" in American culture has been that of the frontier yeoman whose freedom and closeness to the earth created in him moral superiority and the joy of his heroic empire-building. But what has been the cost of the empire? Per Hansa who tames a section in the Eastern Dakotas in Giants in the Earth was a giant, but his lovely wife suffers mental traumas which leave permanent scars. The industrial revolution helped create not only modern urban living but also small town life styles dramatized in Main Street and Winesburg, Ohio. The imaginative writer in his "controlled objectification of human emotion and will for contemplation and appreciation" offers a valuable though not definitive expression of those life styles. Sometimes--when the objectification captures our imaginations and transcends time and place--the imaginative writer offers much more. The course will be taught by Dr. William V. Miller.

The Wisconsin-Northern Illinois American Studies Association is beginning publication of a newsletter. Aims are fourfold:

1. to promote a sense of group identity and solidarity by providing an organizational voice;
2. to promulgate information about events and publications of interest to the membership;
3. to provide space for letters, queries, responses, for information about new and existing American Studies courses and programs;
4. to permit, when space permits, the publication of notes of general and specialized interest to the membership.

Policies, Organization, and Format: Each issue will include four regular departments--"Commentary," "Forthcoming," "Letters, Queries, Responses," and "American Culture Courses."

"Commentary" will provide a forum for an individual commentary on the role of American Studies courses and programs, on methodology, on contemporary issues of concern to the membership.

"Forthcoming" will announce conventions, meetings, events of interest to the regional membership.

"Letters, Queries, Responses" will be a forum for responses to previous "Commentary" columns, to earlier letters, and an avenue of inquiry.

"American Culture Courses" will print materials--course descriptions, abstracts, even appropriate syllabi being used in high school and college classrooms--of interest to students and teachers in American culture classes.

Materials for the three issues for 1975-76 should be submitted no later than September 1, January 15, and April 15 to:

Elmer R. Pry
Department of English
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Reflections on Regionalism and the Midwest or Why Are We Here and Where Are We Going?

Someday, it is hoped, someone will bring it all together.

All of us believe, I am sure, that there exists a unity behind apparent diversity, a single set of philosophical assumptions and attitudes, a vision of life, death, and heaven which is at the core of the Midwestern literary imagination and defines, delimits, and describes writing as uniquely Midwest American. Our discussions at meetings and seminars, and our writing in this Newsletter and other publications of the Society indicate this is true. But the exact names and natures of those values that are at the heart of the Heartland, I'm afraid, we have taken somewhat for granted.

What are they? Perhaps we have assumed that we all understand instinctively what they are and so have never felt the need to precisely and clearly verbalize them. Perhaps we have thought that they are so self-evident that it would be simple-minded to go around talking about them. Or, perhaps, and this is what I most suspect, we ourselves are unsure, confused, and stand in awe of our subject.

Understanding a writer in relation to the values of his nation is somewhat different from understanding him in relation to the values of his region. In the former the goal is to see a part (the writer) in terms of the given whole (his civilization).

National classifications are broad, generalized, and not usually debated. Of course, there are a few exceptions, but most would be content to accept that if the writer was born, raised and educated for a while at least in a single country, practically speaking one can identify him and his values with that country--no matter how far away he may have roamed.

But when we decide to classify a writer by a region, I think we are asking for a special understanding of this writer. We are asking that the writer be seen as a part of another part, the writer in terms of a selected set

of values which are not attributed to the nation at large, unless they are understood first as originating in the region. Not only is this writer American, but he is also uniquely Midwestern. Until we are able to do this, it seems presumptuous to call any writer Midwestern.

Difficulties arise, for instance, in trying to determine regional boundaries. Unlike national boundaries they are easily blurred and debated. Also, they may change. Shifts in population, politics, economics, quality of life, and now even landscape, can alter a region significantly so as to make it unrecognizable and its status questionable.

Further difficulties arise in the face of mass communications, the electronic media, and vast transportation systems. Their tendencies are to decentralize and universalize all information and experience, blending differences into a homogenized whole. Unique regional characteristics can be made to look like oddities and signs of backwardness.

It is difficult to depend upon cities as focal points for regional culture since often they appear to have more in common with other cities at the opposite end of the world than they have with their immediate environments. In fact, in a few instances, it has become possible to speak of cities themselves as separate regions of value, attitude, and culture. The New York Poets, for instance, have almost nothing in common with any persons or poets living in Albany.

What I think I'm getting at with all of this is that we must begin now, and probably never cease, defining, evaluating, and cherishing our writers, at least in part, with reference to what makes us want to call them Midwestern. If we don't or can't do this, I'm afraid, we have no right to claim a special classification for otherwise American writers. We must frequently ask ourselves how this writer reflects, augments, perhaps negates, whatever it was this region gave him or failed to give him. In this way, I believe, we will begin to understand how the Midwest is a force and a focus in American literature.

Prairie State Blues: Comic Strips & Graphic Tales. Chicago Review Press, Chicago, Ill. 64 pages, \$2.95.

Take Carl Sandburg's celebration of Mid-Western banality, the bleak moodiness of the Wisconsin Death Trip, the savage and somber-hued landscape of a Goya print, and the caustic use of funny animals to display human behavior at its grossest as in Robert Crumb's greatest cartoons--mix them together and you have the work of Bill Bergeron, a poet with a drawing pen and producer of the most sophisticated, personally lyrical, and mordantly ironic comic art to emerge from the underground.

Bill Bergeron was born in 1938 and raised in Illinois, where he worked as a railroad fireman for five years, an experience on which his art obviously draws. For the past ten years he has lived in Southern California, and his drawings have appeared in Chicago Review and Creem.

While Bergeron's words--sometimes poetry, sometimes prose, and sometimes quotations from newspapers and reports of disasters and brutality--go in one direction, the seemingly unrelated and strangely framed drawings go in another; yet they all add up to a moving visual and emotional experience, comparable to watching Jack Ruby shoot down Lee Harvey Oswald on nationwide television.

Bergeron's view of human nature is bitter, yet he delineates it with loving care. Vance Bourjaily, novelist and Director of the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop, has said, "Give a poet a pen and I guess Bergeron is what happens. Some of the stuff is genuinely haunting." He has also been called "the Melville of the comic strip."

While most readers won't know what to make of Prairie State Blues, the book represents a new breakthrough in combining the written word with the visual image to portray a deeply personal but unmistakably American view of the nature of existence.

M. Thomas Inge
Virginia Commonwealth Univ.

The Great Lakes Review reviewed

Scholars in areas as broad as cosmology and as specialized as linguistics have had to accept the working principle that one can talk about their matter without knowing its origins. Perhaps the same realization must come to those interested in the Midwest. We all know it exists (try telling a New Yorker or a Californian that it doesn't!), but none of us can define it or describe it adequately, so we move on to other business.

More widespread and apparently more solidly based than the many previous--almost, the continuous--efforts to study the region, the current movement to establish Midwestern studies in colleges and universities has produced courses, conferences, books and articles, and a number of journals, all the weaponry with which the academy assaults (and sometimes overwhelms) its objectives. A more than merely good example of the new publications is the first issue of The Great Lakes Review, subtitled A Journal of Midwest Culture.

The culture focused upon is primarily literary. Of the seven contributors, four are professors from English or English-related departments. But literary emphasis also pervades black studies, women's studies, and American studies, perhaps because literature is the most general of our current academic disciplines, perhaps only because program inaugurators have commonly been English professors. One may hope that the journal will draw contributions from anthropologists, economists, sociologists, and others whose expertise should be consistent with the "studies" approach.

The issue opens with two excellent general essays. David Anderson gives a quick but tantalizing review of shifts in literary understanding of Chicago, the Midwest's capital city, from the late 19th century to the 1950s, a period that, he says, began with the dashing of hopes as a succession of young men dreaming of material conquests, which they assumed would bring happiness, found in the city only poverty and defeat.

Maturing, the once young men found that the city becomes a value in itself productive of other values. Anderson touches upon work by Sherwood Anderson, Floyd Dell, Dreiser, Richard Wright, and others as he summarizes experiences of rural newcomers, immigrants, and blacks, nearly all of whom found not fulfillment but destruction in the city.

But newer generations, including Farrell, Algren, and Bellow, explore the city as "environmental phenomenon in terms of the lives it has shaped.....and in terms of the values, the forces, and the institutions of which the city is made." Bellow in particular presents in Augie March a man who has learned to live with the city, to avoid its destructions because he has learned "to be cool.....to recognize the ironic reality that lay beyond both the promise and the reality". Augie, Anderson says, could laugh because "he could refuse the disappointments that destroy." In the work of Bellow and other later writers, Chicago becomes a metaphor "not only of modern civilization but of all human culture, not only of modern human life but all human life. Anderson here is moving "Midwest lit" away from the provincialism that dogs regional studies. He must be encouraged to develop his insights into a full length presentation.

A similar universality informs the optimistic but commonsensical essay in which Martin E. Marty, after reviewing both the cynic's and the innocent's views of the city, asserts that, since the city is here to stay, we must develop readiness to deal with complexity. "It is not the plunder," said Marianne Moore (in her poem "New York") but the "accessibility to experience" that makes life in the city replenishing. Marty would approve. We must, he says, see with Pascal both the beast and the human in our cities and learn to moderate the one, to inspire and develop the other.

We must, Marty says, see that the city is built brick by brick: "The buildings are built one at a time, street by street. Government has to be reformed person by person, ward by ward." We must work with patience upon the immediate, avoiding the

grandiose schemes of ideologues, both those whose vision of the city is exhausted by the picture of its beastliness, and those who are idealistic or innocent in their concept of its future. "We have to deal with polarities, tension, disorder, messiness, have to compromise or form coalitions to please interests." There will be, meanwhile, no total solutions: clues are available, at best. Marty therefore rejects what he sees as the melancholy which in the 1970s has replaced the anxiety that characterized the 1960s. We must work with politics, voluntary associations, the arts and sciences, and, in his view, religion: in all this effort, we must remain alert to liberating possibility.

Anderson provides a story of growth in one important form of contemplation and understanding. Marty inspires to hard work in hope of eventual achievement of a better life. A third major contribution to the issue is Clarence Andrews' 31-page bibliography. Though headed "The Literature of the Middle West," this is much more than a belletristic venture, finding room for The Frontier in American History, the WPA Guide to Indiana, and other works important to understanding our culture as that may be broadly conceived. Andrews is amassing material for a history of Midwestern literature: he appeals for information on library and museum resources and other literary materials. His bibliography is intended only as a beginning. (He alludes to Gerald Nemanic's projected Bibliographical Guide to Midwestern Literature, a much needed resource).

No bibliography could be complete. Andrews covers ten general and regional topics, representative books about Chicago, prominent books about the 12 states that he thinks belong in the region, and works related to the dime-novel and folklore. This is a heterogeneous, subjective compilation. But what else could it be? The problem of defining the region may be avoided by the essayist who focuses on a limited topic, but it perplexes the bibliographer. Andrews includes, for example, the Lomaxes' American Ballads and Folk Songs, and Sandburg's The American Songbag--collections which include material from the Midwest though they are not limited to it. Should a Midwestern

bibliography include everything about Hemingway? What about T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Richard Eberhart, and other natives who left the region? Andrews is aware of such problems, occasionally remarks on a work's relevance (re Paul Engle's Midland: "Not all of these stories.....are from the middle west or its writers....."), and sensibly limits his listing to works that either focus on the Midwest or include substantial sections from or about its writers and characteristics.

A fourth interesting contribution is intended to carry out an aim stated in the editors' preface--providing exposure for a writer who is obviously talented and yet has not been given.....the breadth of readership he deserves. The editors do not necessarily mean work by a newcomer, for given exposure in this issue is a selection of nine poems by Gary Gildner, who has published two books of poems and has a third about to appear. In an autobiographical note, Gildner says that he wants to write poems that proceed by "picking up things along the way, that are loose, rambling, mainly happy. These descriptions apply. The poem "Edward," for example, shows something of Gildner's grandfather, muses on details that recall the rather boisterous, certainly beloved man, but drifts off into a portentous ending. The same fault mars "Nails." In "Around the Kitchen Table" the inspiration is more Norman Rockwell than Robert Lowell, though when Gildner gets control of his well observed domestic circumstances he may, indeed, be much more Lowell than Rockwell. In "Prayer for My Father," Gildner shows that he can use homely detail to hold off threatening sentimentality, achieving that rarity, a good poem about a funeral. Best of these nine is "Picnic," in which both the recently observed and the long remembered combine with warmth of feeling to give a sense of joy in existence. Even "Picnic" is not entirely in control of its material--the dialogue, for instance, swaggers--but it shows Gildner capable of becoming an accomplished poet who can affirm without needing to defend this currently unfashionable mode by resort to irony. The editors are to be congratulated, both on their choice of Gildner, and on their decision to give a sufficient selection of one writer's work to enable a reader to achieve some brief familiarity.

The issue concludes with several reviews and a short bibliography of new publications concerning Midwestern architecture, folklore, literary studies, and other cultural topics. Two excellent essays, a useful bibliographical venture, an interesting young poet: a good first issue for anyone's journal, better than most, and, it appears, capable of becoming a leader in the Midwestern studies that it represents.

Bernard F. Engel

Conversations With Frederick Manfred,
moderated by John R. Milton, with a foreword by Wallace Stegner (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1974), 170 pp. \$5.00.

One of America's most ambitious and prolific novelists in the years since publication of The Golden Bowl in 1944, Frederick Manfred is also unfortunately one of our least known. Part of the reason for this is simple confusion, often by people who should know better: from 1944 through the Giant in 1951 he wrote under the name Feike Feikema, his "real" name, of Frisian origin, and his decision to change to Frederick Manfred, which first appeared on Lord Crizzly in 1954, was, as he has often commented, with some irony, to avoid confusion.

However, confusing or not, under the two names Manfred is one of the few American writers who has created a world of his own--Siouxland--, peopled it, and given it both history and myth. He is truly a regionalist, defining most clearly and completely that part of the American midland where Midwest and West become one. He knows his country and his people, and none has written about either with more certainty or precision. Manfred is a big man, six feet nine inches tall, and his work, like his country is proportioned to him.

Conversations With Frederick Manfred is vintage Manfred in two ways: it is Manfred of ten years ago speaking, and is Manfred at his wide-ranging best. The conversations, with John R. Milton, then chairman of the Department of English at the University of South Dakota, were video taped as the first

of a series of conversations with Western American novelists and made available for educational television. For this volume Manfred has edited the conversations from the typescript transcribed from the tapes. The wide-ranging spontaneity of the original has remained untouched.

Here is Manfred on his work, on his country, on his background, on the nature of fiction--any fiction and his own--, on his "Buckskin Man Tales," on the future of America and American letters:

.....well, we still haven't developed the language and the technique.....
We are just beginning our great civilization here. We are just starting
.....Our Shakespeares are still ahead
.....

This note not only runs through Manfred's conversations in 1964, but it runs through his work before and since. More than anything else it makes evident the sense of life and the dimensions of the land and people to which he has devoted his work and his life.

David D. Anderson

From a Midwest Notebook: Otterbein Church

Half a mile south of our house was the cemetery, and across the road from it the United Brethren church named for Philip William Otterbein. My mother and I commonly went there to Sunday school, though I had to be persuaded, often cajoled, into it, for to me it was dull, and the attitude of Sunday-school teachers unduly patronizing. My teacher was Mrs. Redd, whose white hair and finely wrinkled face made her seem always a very old woman. Within my pre-adolescent years she could not have been more than fifty-five or -six, but to me any age beyond thirty was prodigious, so far was it from my own. On a Sunday she usually dressed in a high lace collar with stays, the sort my mother frequently wore also; my first supposition was that they pinned these neckpieces to their necks. It was an entirely plausible belief, as I knew they had pierced their earlobes for earrings.

The Otterbein congregation was small and relatively stable, but now and then newcomers were admitted and old members left, and when the preacher talked about transferring membership by letter I first thought a person brought or took some letter of the alphabet with him. Because, like many adults, I wished to conceal my ignorance, and didn't ask what was meant, I held a long while to this misconception.

The preachers were broken-down war-horses of the gospel or young men in their novitiate, ascetic-looking and with moral earnestness shining out of their eyes. It was not yet the time when a young minister must be offensively virile and stand in robust proof that he-manhood is congruous with other qualities of a servant of God; but they always had this look of dedication. They came from divinity school or another pastorate, to stay two or three years, and move on to greater or lesser glories--according to whether they were novices climbing up or veterans backing down the ladder of success. A veteran named Siddall was followed by a young man whose name was Biddle; it was irreverently said that what we needed next was a Fiddle. This feeble jest was repeated, with variations: Riddle, Middle, Piddle. A young woman newly married said, in company all female but me: "No, a Diddle." I didn't see why the change to still another initial consonant should make it so much funnier.

I may have thought myself well let-off, for I was seldom made to stay through the sermon. But the preacher was often at our house for Sunday dinner, always of fried chicken, hot biscuits, and apple pie. I learned early that certain ritual was observed for the preacher and nobody else; my father diffidently asked Siddall or Biddle or Riddle to "return thanks", and as we bowed our heads he launched into a prayer that, whether I had been obliged to stay for church or not, I always thought too long. After dinner a certain stiffness of manner constrained both host and guest till my mother had finished with the dishes and joined us in the parlor; then we all knelt on the floor beside our chairs while the minister prayed once more. It seemed a superfluity of prayer to me, who took the view that if you thanked God for blessings and requested his favors, that was enough,

and to go on wheedling him might have the opposite effect, as it often had on my mother when I teased her for something she didn't want to permit. But I knelt as the others did, for I knew I must; if my father, for whom this procedure seemed so out of character, was obliged to do so, there was no escape for me. When the rite was finished, it was as if all felt that enough devotion had been expressed for the day, and relaxed into fellowship, my father sometimes with a cigar. None of these preachers smoked--they found it Christian duty to abstain--and I thought my father a bold fellow smoking in the ministerial presence.

Sometimes the preacher stayed overnight, or even several days. But the regular pastor would have to return not later than Monday morning to the gainful occupation that supplemented his hortatory labors. He who stayed several days was a different kind of preacher, not meek, mild, or soft-spoken but on the hell-fire order, an evangelist. Once a year "revival" services or "protracted meetings" were conducted by earnest successors to St. John. The favorite season was late October or early November. Every night for a week or more the evangelist eloquently implored sinful souls to receive Christ's mercy; it took most of a week for him to convince his auditors of their utter depravity and sinfulness. Then, on the sixth or seventh evening, when he could reach in five minutes that height of eloquence that at first had taken an hour to attain, he proceeded to harvest the crop of souls ripe for salvation.

It was a battle between his powers of persuasion and the recalcitrance of souls steeped in sin; and he was, at least in part, always a victor. On that night when he suddenly put off his grandiloquence and plainly asked those of his listeners who felt Jesus in their hearts to rise from their seats and walk down the aisle and kneel in front of the altar--someone would rise, albeit slowly and abashed, and, with carefully timed encouragement from the exhorter, walk. Others followed, and in no time at all he had them coming faster than he could lave them in the blood of the Lamb. The next couple of nights were similar; but on the third one afterward the harvest was thinner, and after that it began to look as

if Satan might not be absolutely defeated. Some people, with souls blackened from many years of sinning, held off till the very last night; a few, utterly adamant, might refuse altogether. If they refused--it had been known to happen--to come forward even when called by name, no more was to be said. Before all the repentant ones they were marked as being inescapably in the Devil's clutch or too vain to realize the punishment that would be theirs when God imperturbably threw them into the fiery pit. Afterward those who backslid quickly and others whose conversion did not take strongly might secretly admire them.

In my eleventh year I was touched by the Holy Spirit and impelled to renounce my evil life. My converter was a huge man with a black beard and a bass voice. His name was Zuspan, and I thought and spoke of him privately as "Mister Dustpan." None of his audience could remain wholly immune to the cumulative effect of his oratory. I held out till the third or fourth night after the first call. Like some others, I had not been aware (he pointed out) of the extreme wickedness of my life. I had not realized what heinous sin it was to take the name of the Lord in vain and to write on the walls of privies and board fences with chalk or soft limestone words whose meaning had to do with excretory or other bodily functions. But after a fiery session a girl from my Sunday-school class who had been converted approached me and urged me to come forward the following night. I promised I would, although not because of her urging; she was several years my senior and I disliked her; I promised because I knew I was weakening and eventually must succumb. I am not sure why I didn't simply stay away from meetings after I found myself in danger of salvation; I was not compelled to go, though each evening my mother, preparing to start, tacitly assumed I would; perhaps I thought it unsportsmanlike to go so far and then shirk coming to grips with the Lord. So, without having said anything about it to my parents, the following night, when Mr. Zuspan lifted both his hands heavenward and uttered his exhortation and Edith looked at me expectantly, I rose and walked down the aisle. Directed by Mr. Zuspan's great flailing arms, I knelt, and Christ, through his legate, gave me mercy; my

renunciation was pointed to as a wondrous demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power and all who remained unsaved were besought to follow my example.

I didn't go to any meetings after that. Though I told my mother, somewhat disconcerted by my action, that I meant thenceforth to "live right", I could find within myself no revulsion from Evil and was soon ashamed of my weakness. Herself of the Faithful, she had no need for conversion. But she was never much of a Calvinist and doubtless found it hard to believe her ten-year-old son carried a great burden of Original Sin. My father, who sensibly stayed away from revival meetings after they began to get hot, had nothing to say about my being converted beyond a few mutterings of displeasure, but I know he felt I had been imposed on.

One spring there was a baptism in the river, which the church was only a short distance away from, the length of the cemetery. It was early May, and the water was still pretty cold, and the event was without the fervor that has been ascribed to its counterparts in fiction. Before, the Otterbein congregation had been content with "sprinkling", but a new minister convinced them of the greater efficacy of total immersion. There was some dissension over it, and this preacher lasted only that year; no one tried to learn from a source nearer the fountainhead what he ought to believe about baptismal methods.

It was a sunny day but chilly, and the faces of the men and women who clustered on the river bank in new overalls and gingham dresses got for the occasion showed no enthusiasm for the sacrament. One by one they waded to where the minister stood waist-deep, allowed themselves to recline in his arms, and endured their ducking. Then up and out they came, sputtering and blinking, to the doubtful protection of overcoats held by relatives to remain shivering, and watch the ordeal of the others. I was not one of them. I had already been "sprinkled", and took the chance that the milder rite was sufficiently to God's satisfaction.

My religious experience all came within a few years, for as I grew older I backslid more rapidly and further. It got harder and harder for my mother to compel me to attend Sunday school, and my father, no hypocrite, declined to aid her. I hated the annual "Children's Day" exercises, for I refused to think of myself as a child, and loathed being addressed or referred to as "Master", the title by which we boys on giving our recitations were introduced. Church socials were no attraction; somebody was always patronizing me (I didn't know that word but resented the act), and I preferred to eat my ice cream and cake at home. At the age of eleven I was elected Secretary, but it didn't work. I ceased going to Sunday school entirely, returned to my old vices and acquired new ones, and shortly was steeped in the iniquities of swearing and playing marbles for keeps.

William Thomas

A Long, Clear View of Papa Hemingway
Ernest Hemingway: Five Decades of Criticism,
edited by the Society's Linda Wagner (Michigan
State University Press, 1974, \$10.00) is a
rarity among collections of academic and
critical writing; it is first-rate in every way.
Part of the value of the collection is inherent
in the stature of its subject matter: the many
dimensions of one who, in spite of his many
imperfections, has done more than any other
writer to reshape and re-direct American prose
fiction in our time.

Nevertheless there are a good many collections
around that testify to the ease with which an
editor can botch the job through insensitivity,
imbalance, or simple wordiness, and this col-
lection makes evident just the opposite: the
role of editorial sensitivity, careful selection,
and editorial commentary and apparatus that
are worthy of the stature of the subject matter.

Particularly evident is the editorial skill
inherent in writing an introduction that is
eloquently and intelligently restrained in
making clear the focus of the volume, the
state of Hemingway criticism at the moment,
and the dimensions of the task ahead of us, all
without infringing upon the essays themselves

or imposing an unwarranted or unwanted editorial judgement upon the reader. The purpose, for example, is clear but unpretentious: "If it is possible for a collection of essays to have a focus, this one aims toward presenting Hemingway as writer, as craftsman, seeking to shape his statement of beliefs about life with all the love and finesse of any gifted artisan."

Even more significant is a statement that, one may hope, Professor Wagner will develop in a great deal more detail in a future critical study. She writes, "Emphasis upon craft, of course, need not undercut the thematic relevance of Hemingway's writing.... his work shows him, in his probing self-consciousness, to be one of the most American of authors." Perhaps here is foreshadowing of the study of Hemingway as Midwesterner, as an innocent abroad, that must, sooner or later, be written, and no one is more capable of writing it than Professor Wagner.

Particularly useful in the collection is Professor Wagner's organization: Hemingway's development, studies of his work as a whole, studies of method and language, and studies of individual works. Included are twenty-two essays, intelligently grouped, and with virtually no repetition of essays reprinted elsewhere.

One might quarrel here or there with an essay included or omitted, but that would be no more than carping. This collection is useful, stimulating, and intelligent.

David D. Anderson

Willa Cather's Second Century

After a period of several years, during which she received more serious critical attention than in most of her active literary career, the observance of "The Art of Willa Cather: An International Seminar" and the publication of The Art of Willa Cather, edited by Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner, and Willa Cather: A Pictorial Memoir, with photos by Lucia Woods and others and text by Bernice Slote, Willa Cather's first hundred years has come to an end.

This remarkable sequence of events is not only an appropriate tribute to a writer who, Maxwell Geismar said in 1947, possessed "one of the most complex, difficult and contradictory minds in our letters," but it is a tribute, too, to the diligence and dedication of Professor Bernice Slote and others who made it a reality. An able writer, unfortunately too frequently neglected in her own time has, for the first time, been placed in clear literary and historical perspective, and virtually the entire range of her works--novels, short stories, essays, and letters--as well as thorough biographical studies have been made available for scholars of the future.

The focus of the discussion at the seminar--at least that published in The Art of Willa Cather--is to a great extent the attempt not only to assess what Miss Cather accomplished in her work, but also to point out the direction that critical assessment must take in the future in what will hopefully be her second century. In its search for the clarification of her art and a direction for critical thinking of the future it appears to me that the participants have, unfortunately and, I am sure, unconsciously, made Miss Cather something that she was not, perhaps both more and less than she was in insisting that, in John J. Murphy's unfortunate phrase, she was "more than a regionalist."

Much of the thrust of the conference seems to have been the attempt to make Miss Cather an internationalist, and not only is much made of her French experience and use of French subject matter and influences, certainly more than is warranted, but almost as much is made of the fact that the conference attracted participants from seven countries. We are treated to Japanese, French, Italian, and a wealth of Eastern and Southern perspectives from people as capable as Michel Gervaud, Hiroko Sato, Aldo Celli, Leon Edel, and Eudora Welty, but, unfortunately, the effect is not only to mislead the unwary or the embryo scholar but also to obscure Miss Cather's solid accomplishments. Miss Cather was, at her best, a regionalist: her explorations of the richness and diversity of human life on the prairies are her most durable work; and here, rather than in critical assessments from foreign (in the figurative sense, for I include much of the United States) perspectives is certainly to do her critical reputation, indeed her critical survival, no favor.

Criticism of Miss Cather's work during the next century, a century during which I am confident she will be read, must begin (and perhaps largely remain) in the years and works of solid accomplishment marked by O Pioneers!, The Song of the Lark, and My Antonia as well as the earlier perceptive prairie short stories. To recognize this fact is not to degrade or demean--not only is regionalism no disgrace, but perhaps, as Emerson eloquently proclaimed and Faulkner gave eloquent proof, "The local is the only universal" --but to recognize the essence of a unique literary insight. Perhaps to do so, one must look long and thoughtfully at the remarkable photographs of "The Midlands," the most significant section of "Willa Cather's America" in the pictorial memoir, and to find a point of departure for Willa Cather's second century that is rooted in the reality of the Nebraska soil from which her best work and most perceptive insights have sprung. Willa Cather, like her creation, Neighbor Rosicky, had "a special gift for loving people" of her adopted Nebraska; at the same time she "could see the complete arch of the sky," and these unique qualities must not be lost in an attempt to magnify what is ephemeral or unimportant.

David D. Anderson

Society Sponsors Panel at Pop Culture Convention

The society recently sponsored the "Midwestern Literature and Popular Culture" section of the Popular Culture Association Convention in St. Louis, March 19-22. Four society members read papers.

In "Midwestern Literature and Film," Professor Jennifer Banks analyzed film adaptations of novels such as Elmer Gantry, Studs Lonigan and Native Son, all of which include complex and often unresolved variations upon the theme of environmental determinism. The films were discovered to be of "an essentially different order of things from the literary originals." Professor Banks outlined in some detail how the films were "subject to the movie industry's concepts of a popular taste which requires affirmative resolutions."

Dr. Eugene Huddleston's "Odd McIntyre's Country Town Angle" reviewed the career of columnist Oscar Odd McIntyre whose formula was to "write from the country town angle of a city's glamour." Thus, although, as Huddleston observed, McIntyre might write about London or Paris, "he was always at pains to preserve images of himself consistent with Midwestern rural and small town folkways." His obsession was with simplicity, honesty, and naturalness.

Huddleston placed McIntyre alongside a number of other writers and humorists of his time and within a broad populist tradition. McIntyre was described as an "arcadian humorist," whose work provides interesting and amusing reading but probably does not offer serious solutions for major issues in contemporary times.

Children's literature is a significant measure of popular values since it reflects the ideals Americans wish to instill in their young. In "Abraham Lincoln in Children's Books" Patricia A. Anderson found that Lincoln continues to appear as a symbol of a belief in education and in honesty. She noted that Lincoln's physical appearance in children's literature was at once that of a mythical folk hero and that of a figure who "democracy ultimately demands must look like any other man." Ms. Anderson is associated with the Lansing, Michigan Public Schools.

Minnesota is not a mountainous state, and "Minnesota's Seven-Storied Mountaineer" was not the usual mountain climber. Professor Dave Anderson's paper about Ignatius Donnelly pictured him as a "political champion of the underdog, lawyer, poet, and rational interpretator of mysteries of the grave, "a special Alpine artist, who "stormed the forbidden fastnesses of rhetoric and ideology."

"The mountains that Donnelly sought to ascend," according to Anderson, "were those that perhaps can never be conquered completely: those of one's time and his nature, of prejudice and human freedom, of exploitation and justice."

Although Anderson concluded that Donnelly's "place among those who sought to magnify

man's humanity is small.....it is secure in
the history of his time and his nation."

Professor Douglas Noverr of Michigan State
University was Chairman of the "Midwestern
Literature and Popular Culture" panel.

Nancy Pogel

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