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In Honor of
Donald A. Daiker

PREFACE

On May 17, 2018, members of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its forty-eighth annual meeting. At the awards luncheon on May 18, Donald A. Daiker was named the 2018 winner of the MidAmerica Award for distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern literature, and Tim O'Brien won the Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature. John Beall was the winner of the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize for "November 22, 1963: *The Dallas Morning News*," Michele R. Willman won the David Diamond Student Writing Prize for "Drowning," and Guy Szuberla won the David D. Anderson Midwest Heritage Prize for his essay, "George Ade and Essanay Films: Cruel or Unusual Comedy?" Conference highlights included panels on the work of Tim O'Brien, Ernest Hemingway, and John Herrmann.

SSML is currently operating at a loss due to increased expenses in publishing its journals and convening its annual symposium. Major gifts from the late Jane S. Bakerman, David Diamond, and David D. Anderson have enabled us to continue our work while we seek to establish a more stable financial footing for the work ahead. SSML is also grateful to the following members and friends who have made contributions in addition to their dues. As more such contributions are received, and earlier ones are discovered in searching the archives, we will add more names to this Honor Roll: Walter Adams, Robert Beasecker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ray B. Browne, Mary Ellen Caldwell, Louis J. Cantoni, G.B. Crump, Bernard F. Engel, Kenneth B. Grant, Philip. A. Greasley, Theodore Haddin, Donald Hassler, Janet Ruth Heller, Ted Kennedy, Jean Laming, Barbara Lindquist, Larry Lockridge, Loren Logsdon, Bud Narveson, Marcia Noe, Mary Obuchowski, Tom Page, E. Elizabeth Raymond, Herbert K. Russell, James Seaton, Guy Szuberla, Doug Wixson, Melody Zajdel, and the family and friends of Paul Somers.

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IMAGINING LIFE AS A GRAFFITI ARTIST

MARY CATHERINE HARPER

for Steve Smith, potter, generous Midwestern artist

"Art is not a crime"
he tells us gesticulating.

"Art is not a crime"
his words reverberating through
the drab lecture hall.

"Art is not a crime"
this spray painted on a streetside wall
in Jerusalem
he tells us as he spreads his arms
wide in passion.

I am reminded of
the flash of police lights trapped
in the mirror of still-wet paint,
you and I running
beneath the overpass
into the thick woods to hide
from God getting out of his patrol car.

I can't remember what
we were trying to say
to the rest of the world.

I can only hope that
it mattered more than the mere
rebellious "I"
only hope it had matter enough
to justify daring each other to

the wrong side
of the rules we had memorized
in Catechism.

Only hope that the slick of paint
got us arrested for believing
in something about art
something weighty about the world.

Defiance College

VANISHING POINT

JANE HOLWERDA

Throughout the afternoon, mourners swooped in with sad eyes and platitudes, then stood in small silent groupings, crowding the small spaces of Jen's house on the edge of town.

Jen sequestered herself near the bookcase, opposite the front door, nodding at those who looked her way and at the few who approached to express sorrow for her loss. Some were curious about what had happened at the church earlier. Jen shrugged, just a little, to convey her sense that she shouldn't have to explain that she had been a little out of it.

She had been a little out of it, at the church, because she had been staring at the oval stained glass window high on the wall backing the altar, placed at just the height to beam upon congregants' midmorning sunlight in fractals of color the forms of human figures: one holding a book and sitting at the feet of a man, another behind him, standing near a table. Jen had been staring at this stained glass window, called to consider herself as she did whenever she stood in this church. When a guy, the guy everyone was now so curious about, so unexpectedly stood up, and, raising a gleaming bugle to his lips, filled the church with melancholy, the pure tones soaring, the last few notes resounding, Jen had turned to watch Martin's flag-draped casket carried through the nave and out the narthex.

For those who asked about the bugler, now, in her living room, Jen pointed to where Martin's high school art teacher, a wispy woman in gauzy attire, stood next to the bugler, a hearty, bald fellow in a reddish beard and a green cardigan. They stood, gazing upon one of Martin's largest oils. It took up most of the north wall where Jen had hung it several years ago. She had hung it there to show her support for Martin and his artistic efforts.

The canvas was a confusing morass of orbs foregrounded on dollops of orange and red. Atop the dark centers of the orbs, Martin had glued small bits of broken glass so that the orbs glittered, reflecting

light. The painting reminded Jen of gaping eyes, wide with astonishment or fear. He had referred to it as his self-portrait. After she had hung it where it dominated the room, Martin seemed indifferent to it, and now Jen wished she had thought to take it down. She didn't recognize Martin or anything human in it.

In preparing for today, she had set out photos in small frames. These represented the Martin she saw in her head when she thought of him: a clean-cut and grinning graduate waving his bright blue honors scarf, a gap-toothed child squeezing a stuffed giraffe, a bashful teen in a tux next to a girl in a one-shouldered gown, a sunburned stoic in combat fatigues squinting against a desert sun. He had been so eager to serve his country. Jen noticed that the few mourners who picked up the photos quickly set them back down again. She understood. She, herself, his own mother, couldn't quite connect the photos of the sweet child and swaggering youth to the shaggy-headed, stoop-shouldered man so recently buried in a gray fleece hoodie and baggy sweat-pants.

That man had spent his days dozing on the bench in Cottonwood Park or trawling alleys, pulling a child's wobbling, rusted red wagon filled with rotting produce, crumbled newspapers, bits of shattered glass and broken furniture, rusted bicycle parts and wasted tires. That man rifled such treasures from dumpsters. That man, her son Martin (she'd had to remind herself), had retreated when she had stepped in for a hug, had tensed when she had reached out to smooth his hair. That Martin had raised an arm across his face or turned aside at the idea of a photo. She had no photos of that Martin. Jen released the fists her hands had formed and smoothed the fabric of her pantsuit along her hips.

Across the room, the art teacher and the bugler gestured toward Martin's painting, their hands busily inscribing textures in the space in front of it, as if, in mimicking the motions of Martin's brushwork, they could more readily understand its affects. Jen thought she should offer Martin's self-portrait to the art teacher. The woman was obviously interested in it. And she had been so kind to Martin when he had been invalided out of military service. Most everyone else had simply looked away, said nothing, not even to Jen, his own mother.

Like a boy in a bubble, he had been among them, she thought, but not of them. None of them had been able to touch him. Across the room, the art teacher and the bugler remained, intent on Martin's self-portrait. Yes, Jen decided, were the north wall blank, emptied of

Martin's self-portrait, she would be better able to withstand it. And if she couldn't, then she would find another to display on that vast north wall. Martin must have left hundreds of paintings behind. In his room alone, earlier in the week, Jen had found dozens.

She had been asked to provide burial clothing. She had been advised the best choices were some of the deceased's favorite articles of clothing. At the time she'd been so advised, Jen had felt strongly that Martin should wear something to his grave other than the horrible gray sweats he had worn everywhere for the past few years. This clothing that he would wear in his grave he would wear for eternity. Jen wasn't sure she believed that. She wasn't sure she was thinking clearly. But to choose what Martin would wear became a mission that had led her to his room, a no-man's-land she'd not visited since his deployment. She stood on the threshold as the door swung open into Martin's room, a room he'd occupied all his life, a room that, to Jen, thinking about it on this day of Martin's funeral, seemed well-staged, as if for a museum exhibit. The bed was made, its corners square, its surface taut, a field blanket folded at its foot. Organized on shelves along one wall were jars of brushes, vials of paint, a few books and plastic containers of glass shards and handheld tools. Against the remaining walls were what she supposed were painted canvases, some stacked, others leaning, yet more contained in stacks of rough-hewn crates Martin must have fashioned from legs and slats of cast-off chairs he'd salvaged through the years.

Through the bare window, natural light shone on the center of the room, where, upon an easel, a blank canvas rested, waiting for Martin's return. The room was inviolable. She had stepped back as if from a velvet rope preventing her entrance. She closed the door, found a clean pair of Martin's sweats in a laundry basket, then dropped them off at Brown's Mortuary for Martin's burial. The Browns had not seemed surprised.

And now, as the afternoon turned to early evening, the mourners departed, like Martin, Jen assumed, never to return. She hadn't expected so many, many she hadn't recognized, many, clearly by their stylish black garb, not from Bitumen Falls. Her neighbors, widows like herself, had brought salads and cookies and made pitchers of sweet tea and platters of sandwiches. As Jen would do, had done, in fact, many times, for them, these good women tidied up the house, gathering glasses and coffee cups, scraping plates and tying up trash bags they carried to the curb. The women loaded the dishwasher,

wiped the counters, straightened seat cushions, hugged Jen and patted her shoulders, told her to call, anytime, then, having restored order and established calm, left for their own lonely homes and evening rituals.

Jen stood on the porch, waving good-bye, until she felt it polite to return inside and dim the lights.

Where, after a time of sitting alone and in near darkness, she felt dislocated, somehow, untethered, even as she sank into the softness of the sofa, and, cushioned there, found herself listening to silence, or a domesticated version of it, a descant rising just above the rumbling of the dishwasher completing its cycle and the bass-toned thrumming of the furnace. She imagined she might hear the thumping of her own heart, should she try hard enough. How long since she had sat in such utter quiet, she wondered.

She considered a photo on the side table. The moment it captured was from several decades past. Yet she didn't need light to see it. She remembered the way Martin's eyebrows cocked, a grin caught just as it had begun to spread across his face; he was at his desk, a pen in hand, notepaper and books strewn everywhere. Scrawny little redheaded Charlie was perched atop a corner of the desk. They had been terrible debaters, short on facts and long on bullshit. That had been their coach's assessment of their abilities. But they'd had such fun, Jen remembered; either boy could talk your ears off, but together, what rivers of words had swirled around them.

And where was Charlie now, she wondered. Had his parents died, or had they moved away? She would have called Charlie, certainly, had she known how to. Had he served, also? She wasn't sure of that either. Whereever he was, in whatever distant place, she hoped it had all turned out well for him. Jen brushed her thumb across the glass surface of the framed photo and discovered, tucked in at the edge of the metal frame what proved to be a business card of Charles Johnson, representing D9 Gallery. She wasn't familiar with the name, didn't recall anyone by that name. She had no idea what a D9 Gallery was, and, she finally admitted to herself, she was too done in at this point to care. The phone number suggested a location out of state, though it was difficult to judge these days, with cell phones and such.

She returned the photo to its spot on the side table. She tucked the card into the frame of the photo. She had read once, once having been an avid reader of books, especially books on codependency, PTSD, and trauma-recovery, that a person's self-concept can become static,

and that person, much like a spider suspended in amber, is unaware of the passing of time. When such a person looks in the mirror, she doesn't see her grayed hair, browned age spots, the turkey wattle neck. She sees herself as in her early forties. She reacts to life events as she always has, immune to gains in wisdom.

For what that was worth, she mused, thirty years ago, when Martin first came home, jittery and restless, he spent most nights roaming the dark streets of Bitumen Falls on foot or pedaling some Frankenstein contraption he'd fashioned from cast-off bicycles. Those first years, she hadn't slept much either for worrying about him as he wandered in the dark. Later, once he'd started painting, his restlessness wasn't remedied but contained to his bedroom, at the back of the house. If he wasn't clomping in his heavy boots from one side of the room to the other, he was whistling—short blasts of one or two sharp notes, or grunting, or emitting staccato bursts of laughter, or sobbing, a sound that made Jen weep. If he hadn't yelled at her, demanding she respect his privacy, never enter his room, she would have gone to him. She would have listened, had he been willing to talk. She would have held him, had he allowed it, holding off the monsters as she had used to, rocking and crooning, until he closed his eyes and slept.

Instead, he had painted. Night after night, for decades. Martin had painted the way some drink gin, or rack up charges on the Home Shopping Network, that is, in a continuous exchange of one emptied bottle for a full one, one opened box of merchandise for an unopened one, a painted canvas for an unpainted one. She had asked questions, which Martin hadn't seemed to mind, but as she asked for brighter colors, realistic details, and, once, for a cheerful spring still life, Martin quit showing her his canvasses; instead, he set them, fronts facing the walls, first, of the hallway, then of the guestroom. As he stashed his work in the shower of the guest bath, Jen complained. Shortly after, all those canvasses were gone, having disappeared like political dissidents, their disappearance making empty the spaces where turmoil had fomented.

On the sofa, in the dark quiet of her living room, grieving her son, Jen wondered about those paintings. What had Martin done with them? The dozens she'd found in his bedroom weren't enough to account for the decades he'd spent painting, and they seemed very different from her recollections of his earlier work, just not in ways she could articulate. They weren't in the house. She knew that, hav-

ing peeked onto the attic crawlspace and surveyed the basement, the only two spaces in the house she rarely checked on. It was a shame, Jen concluded, but he must have dumped them, must have asked someone to help him dump them in the country landfill. She imagined them, now, all these years, their frames warped and bent from weather and weight, the canvasses torn, mouldering under the waste and garbage of the people of Bitumen Falls. Would the canvasses ever decompose, she wondered, dissolving into the ground? What had she missed, not having seen them?

Having no answers, Jen burrowed into the sofa, clasping her arms around her knees. She fell into sleep, and sleeping, dreamt.

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Sitting in the first pew, she is, in this sudden dream life, only a few feet from the sanctuary. She rarely sits so close. But today she is here for answers. Getting closer can't hurt her chances. Her gaze is directed to a stained glass window set in the wall above the altar. Depicted in the stained glass is a woman who sits at the feet of a man with flowing blond tresses clad in a long white robe; in the background, a second woman hovers near a banquet table, laden with produce, flowers and bread. The second woman wears a scowl.

"Have I chosen the better part?" Jen calls out.

"The better part will not be taken from you," replies a deep resonant voice.

Jen swivels, looks over her shoulder and around the empty nave of the church. She registers some surprise at her fluidity of movement, accustomed as she is in her waking life to her stiff joints and muscles. To her left, she is, again, surprised to see a casket, draped in an American flag. To the voice, a voice she assumes, seeing no one, is discarnate, she calls out again: "Have I chosen the better part?"

"Who knows? Did you give it your best shot?" A man, straining the seams of his shiny white bell-bottomed pantsuit, has appeared at her side. "But you've certainly chosen the best seat in the house!" This fat Elvis of a man shifts his weight and thrusts his left hip. Jen smiles. Jen loves Elvis, even this end-life version of Elvis. In a grand sweep of his arm, he brings a wireless mic to his lips. He leans forward and he chants:
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"Rock the Casbah. Rock the Casbah. By the order of the prophet. We ban that boogie sound. Rock the Casbah. Rock the Casbah. Degenerate the faithful with that craaaazy Casbah sound. Rock. The Casbah."

The Fat Elvis wraps up his performance in the manner of a sidewinder pitch, his arm rotating wildly. The mic flies from his hand, spinning and flipping end over end and on its upward arc shape-shifts into a bugle and then in its downward arc becomes a trumpet, becomes a myriad of trumpets, pressed against the holy mouths of red-bearded seraphim. *Da da-da duh*, sounds their fanfare, a beautiful ravaging sound that explodes the stained glass of the oval window, and fragments of stained glass that had depicted two women and a Messiah scatter.

From the frame in the wall over the altar, thick broken pieces of the woman scowling for her duties at the banquet table, of the hand extended as if in blessing of the blond guy, of the bowed head of the second woman—shower the nave. With the improbabilities of a dream, unquantifiable shimmering shards of glass, a surging tide of brokenness ripping and swelling and seething at her feet, rise turbulently to her knees, to her waist, and then wash her, in all her heaviness, from the pew. Sodden and adrift, flotsam on waves of broken glass, she floats amidst so much impossibility and loss. The clink and clatter of the shifting shards lull Jen almost to rest when the voice of a boy calling for his mother rouses her.

"Mom!" Jen stands. "Mom! Up here!" She walks toward the altar. She tilts her head back the better to see the stained glass of the oval window set in the wall over the altar. The multicolored glass depicts an unkempt man, dressed in gray sweats, arms outstretched, ascending through a negative space of purple and indigo glass. On the ground, far below his feet, crumbled combat fatigues, a stuffed giraffe, and a paintbrush are piled.

Jen stretches out her arms. She sees herself in this moment of this dream, translucent and radiant. "My son," she whispers. "My son."

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In real time, at home at the edge of town, Jen, burrowed deeply into the soft depths of her sofa, turned and stretched, claiming more
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space. She sighed, her exhalation plummeting her into a deep therapeutic sleep, very much like the sleep of the dead.

You may think she'll never awaken, but, in truth, she already has.

Dodge City Community College

LOOKING BACK: THE ORPHIC QUEST OF THE NARRATOR IN TIM O'BRIEN'S *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED*

LUCIE JAMMES

In the Greek myth, Orpheus is an unparalleled lyre player, son of the muse Calliope and husband of the dryad Eurydice. One day, after being bitten by a snake, his wife dies and goes to Hell. Orpheus manages to seduce the keepers of the kingdom of Hell thanks to his skills as a musician, a remarkable prowess which decides Hades and Persephone to grant him the opportunity to bring his wife back to Earth, as long as he absolutely keeps from looking at her until they reach the kingdom of the living. However, right before they reach daylight, Orpheus cannot resist the temptation to look back and loses Eurydice again. French critic Maurice Blanchot analyzes the creative process of every form of art as an echo of Orpheus's descent towards Hell:

> When Orpheus comes looking for Eurydice, art becomes the power which forces the night open. The night of death, because of art's power, welcomes Orpheus; it becomes a welcoming intimacy, an agreement . . . However, it is towards Eurydice that Orpheus goes: in his eyes, Eurydice becomes the extreme that art can reach; it is, hidden under a pseudonym and a veil, the most obscure point towards which art, desire, death and the night seem to lead. She becomes the moment when the essence of night becomes *the other night*.[1] (Blanchot 225)

According to Blanchot's analysis of the myth, art in general, much like Orpheus's singing, is a means to explore the unknown. Art is what "opens the night," which means that it is what allows the poet to visit the realm of death, understand death and even reverse its effects—since art can metaphorically restore what has been lost, bring back the past and even resurrect the dead by retrospectively capturing the essence of their existence. However, this voyage

through Hell, towards the "profoundly obscure" (Blanchot 226), towards the extreme point embodied by Eurydice hidden under a veil, is a journey towards the heart of an unfathomable enigma. It becomes a major transgression: no mortal is allowed to unveil the mystery of death without dying first, no one can reach the *core of the night* and then choose to leave afterwards. Thus, when Orpheus looks back towards the most obscure point of the mystery, he desires to pierce the mystery of death, to know its nature more than he desires to save Eurydice: "That is what he came to find in Hell. All the glory of his work, all the power of his art and the desire to live a happy life under the beautiful clarity of the day are sacrificed for this only purpose: to look into the night and see what it hides, see the other night" (Blanchot 227).

The poet is therefore unable to accomplish his work because it ceases to be the purpose of his journey to Hell as soon as he looks backwards. For a brief moment, bringing Eurydice back to life becomes less important than seeing the ultimate truth of death in her, seeing what *she* saw. Orpheus's task, which he cannot complete because he looked back, is akin to the work of the writer. Much like the poet in the myth, the writer explores death thanks to his art; he searches his memory in order to find what was lost and what belongs to a past reality in the same way that Orpheus descends towards Hell to find Eurydice.

However, unlike Orpheus's task, the work of the writer is possible because looking back does not lead him to discover the ultimate truth of death. It rather exposes death *as a riddle*, as a mystery that shall never be solved. Orpheus's glance at Eurydice reveals to him the nature of death, but most importantly, it immediately triggers the failure of his task and Orpheus loses Eurydice again. On the contrary, the writer can only contemplate death indirectly, not from within the event like the ultimate witnesses—those who experience death and will never be able to testify—but rather from a fundamentally exterior viewpoint: that of the ones who survived. The writer's glance backwards allows him to make an infinitely renewable analysis of death and its significance as an event seen from the outside; however, this analysis cannot disclose what death is for those who experience it.

This secret, which shall remain untold and unknown, embodies the writer's failure, but also the driving force of his art: the writer is thus both as a failing Orpheus—because his glance backwards can-

not reveal to him the profound nature of the ultimate mystery—as well as a triumphant Orpheus, because his retelling of the past through his art allows him to bring back the dead in the reality of his stories. Consequently, the work of the writer becomes possible and is not threatened to be dissolved by this transgressive glance, because if death is indeed present within his work, it manifests itself shrouded in its mystery, visible *as a secret* at the heart of the text.

In Tim O'Brien's short story collection, *The Things They Carried*, the narrator presents the act of telling a story as the means to restoring the past and bringing the dead back to life within the reality of the text. Meticulous analyses of his memories combined with the practice of storytelling allow the narrator to look back upon the disappearance of his friends in order to get as close as possible to the unfathomable truth of death. Recurrent descriptions of dying characters get increasingly exhaustive and circumstantiated, as if the mysterious nature of death was encoded in the details of the landscape and in the specificities of its occurring. I endeavor to analyze how O'Brien's narrator appears as a reverse figure of Orfeo, inasmuch as he manages to bring his long-lost friends back to life through writing, but fails to see and understand the ultimate enigma of death when looking back upon its various instances. In the first part of this essay, I shall analyze the recurrent moment of Curt Lemon's death and explain why its multiple recountings put forward the failure of the narrator's endeavor to crack the secret of death. During the second part, I shall demonstrate that in Tim O'Brien's collection, the only possible epiphany regarding death takes the form of an anti-revelation, which fails to transcend the unbearable reality of war. Finally, I will argue that in spite of his lack of understanding of death and his inability to see through its mystery, Tim O'Brien's narrator still manages to overcome death by rendering it powerless through the act of writing and bringing back the dead in his stories—thus completing the task that Orpheus never could.

LIFTING THE VEIL: AN IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

In several metafictional passages, the narrator comments on the bewildering death of his friend Curt Lemon, always looking back to his passing away as if searching for a solution or an explanation as to what *really happened*. These regressive movements of the narration towards Curt's death get more and more detailed and precise,

descriptions of the crucial moment proliferate—yet they always fail to open the door leading to "the other night": we cannot witness what Curt witnessed when he died, nor can the narrator. Notwithstanding, Curt Lemon's death cyclically comes back in the stories, as if a repeated and in-depth autopsy of the moment (through a complete analysis of its physical and aesthetic modalities) could take the narrator closer to the nature of death. Curt's death is first mentioned briefly in a quick overview of the event: "I sit at this typewriter and stare through my words and watch . . . Curt Lemon hanging in pieces from a tree" (*TTC* 31). The idea of looking back is already present through the use of the verbs "stare" and "watch" which creates a relationship between the narrator and the past event that he observes. The expression "stare through my words" puts writing at the center of this relationship of visibility between the narrator and the past and defines art as the interface through which the descent towards "the centre of the night in the night" (Blanchot 227), represented by Curt Lemon's death, will be possible.

A few lines below, the second mention of Lemon's death is more descriptive and narrates the event by putting an emphasis on certain aesthetic features such as light and shadows: "Curt Lemon steps from the shade into bright sunlight, his face brown and shining, and then he soars into a tree" (*TTC* 31). The final result, "he soars into a tree," is preceded by a mysterious sequence of events that, far from being an explanation for how and why the body of the young soldier found itself hanging from a tree, makes the transition between life and death totally and utterly incomprehensible, beyond understanding. The reason for Lemon's death does not appear in that description, which puts forward an unsettling series of events in which the cause and effect relationship is not clarified. The description is only an aesthetic one; indeed, it considers the surface of events without revealing their logical mechanisms. By separating the physical phenomena from their origin, the text already brings forth the impossibility of making sense of death by looking at it. Seeing is no longer enough; it does not offer any knowledge but only astonishment when facing an event whose nature cannot be understood based only on its aesthetic manifestations.

The third description of Lemon's death incorporates elements from the second one—light is presented again as a central feature, as well as the elevating movement which follows the explosion of the soldier's body:

> There was a noise, I suppose, which must've been the detonator, so I glanced behind me and watched Lemon step from the shade into bright sunlight. His face was suddenly brown and shining. A handsome kid, really. Sharp gray eyes, lean and narrow-waisted, and when he died it was almost beautiful, the way the sunlight came around him and lifted him up and sucked him high into a tree full of moss and vines and white blossoms. (*TTC* 67)

Several aesthetic details are added to this version of the event, including indications about the physical aspect of Lemon or even the leaves in the tree. These details underline the beauty of the scene, half-spoken by the narrator ("it was almost beautiful"); however, they do not bring forward any explanation for Lemon's death. In fact, the more the narrator tries to elucidate the unfathomable, the more the mystery becomes inaccessible. He keeps searching his memory of the scene to recover all its details and aesthetic characteristics as if they were the key to the mystery, a sort of code to be deciphered in order to access this "profoundly obscure point" of death, but for all its circumstantial specifics, the scene fails to disclose the nature of death. The beginning of the passage mentions an undefined noise which may have come from a detonator and could explain the explosion of the soldier's body; however, this hypothesis is immediately modulated by the narrative voice: "I suppose."

The narrator assumes that a detonator was the cause of the noise, since the reality of the explosion of Lemon's body necessarily calls for a starting point from which death logically ensues, but he does not actually remember it. He assumes a rational explanation that his senses could not provide, which underlines even more his inability to make sense of death through a cognitive endeavor. On the contrary, the syntax leads us to believe that the noise from the detonator did not cause the death of the soldier, but rather that it was light that killed him after surrounding him and lifting him up from the ground and into the tree. Rational explanations and subjective perceptions oppose each other in this passage, and, as a consequence, the unravelling of the mystery of Lemon's death does not reach a satisfying result.

The fourth passage where Lemon's death is mentioned is very brief and factual, void of any attempt to describe, replacing the description with a simple series of events: "On the third day, Curt Lemon stepped on a booby-trapped 105 round. He was playing catch with Rat Kiley, laughing, and then he was dead" (*TTC* 74). The first

sentence finally explains how Lemon died: he stepped on a mine. However, the second sentence immediately cancels this explanation in order to come back to an unsettling series of events as seen from the narrator's point of view. Once again, the scene that was described no longer makes any sense from a logical standpoint, and the moment when Lemon goes from life to death is part of an ellipsis: Curt is laughing and playing with his friend, and, without any transition, he is dead. He does not *die,* because the action of dying is not mentioned. It is the actual fact of "being dead" which immediately follows the laughing and playing. The moment when everything changes remains unobservable but appears as a blank in the narration, present in its absence, thanks to the elements that surround and circumscribe it: a living body playing and laughing on the one hand, and an already dead body on the other.

The fifth passage is made up of a whole paragraph and uses all the elements from the first four passages in order to incorporate them in a more comprehensive description. The passage begins a few seconds before Lemon's death and the narrator's gaze is mentioned from the first sentence onwards. The narrator relates every movement that will lead to Curt's death, but this time, it is the moments that follow the explosion of Lemon's body that are emphasized: "In the mountains that day, I watched Lemon turn sideways. He laughed and said something to Rat Kiley. Then he took a peculiar half step, moving from shade into bright sunlight, and the booby-trapped 105 round blew him into a tree. The parts were just hanging there, so Dave Jensen and I were ordered to shinny up and peel him off. I remember the white bone of an arm. I remember pieces of skin and something wet and yellow that must've been the intestines" (*TTC* 79).

The description insists on the remains of Lemon's body, which exist only in a fragmented state and whose internal elements, now exposed, are part of a list: "white bone of an arm," "pieces of skin," "something wet and yellow that must've been the intestines." The meticulous exploration of *the surface of the scene* (through the enumeration of details from the landscape, the light, and Lemon's movements before the explosion) could not lead us to witness the truth of death. In the same way, the meticulous inspection of Lemon's corpse, what was *under the surface*, also fails. The narrator's gaze enters the body but does not find an answer to the mystery. He only finds another opaque surface, impossible to decipher, a surface which does not disclose any knowledge. The body is now inside out, its intimacy

brought to light, but it does not reveal anything substantial: the truth of the *"other night"* lies somewhere else.

In the last passage about Lemon's death, the narrator confesses his failure and his inability to see, through his writing, the last thing that the young soldier saw: the ultimate sight, leading to the revelation of a "final truth" that will remain unknown:

> Twenty years later, I can still see the sunlight on Lemon's face. I can see him turning, looking back at Rat Kiley, then he laughed and took that curious half step from shade into sunlight, his face suddenly brown and shining, and when his foot touched down, in that instant, he must've thought it was the sunlight that was killing him. It was not the sunlight. It was a rigged 105 round. But if I could ever get the story right, how the sun seemed to gather around him and pick him up and lift him high into a tree, if I could somehow re-create the fatal whiteness of that light, the quick glare, the obvious cause and effect, then you would believe the last thing Curt Lemon believed, which for him must've been the final truth. (*TTC* 80)

Once again, the narrator presents the strange choreography preceding the explosion he witnessed, retracing Lemon's steps, his movements, and the light on the soldier's face. The narration echoes the expressions which were already present in the previous passages: "from shade into sunlight," "curious half-step," "his face suddenly brown and shining," "It was a rigged 105 round." These repetitions are barely modulated through the use of an adverb or an adjective and invariably repeat the same key words, thus pointing to a circular pattern within the narration: the narrator, unable to reach the desired point in his story, goes over the same series of events in more or less detailed accounts, but always reaches the same narrative dead end. The work becomes an infinite loop and cannot reach and transmit what really matters, that is to say the "final truth" which Lemon witnessed. The narrator, in this last passage, admits his failure to narrate exactly what happened from Lemon's perspective: "he must've thought it was the sunlight killing him." This assumption about what Lemon believed is completed by several expressions in the conditional mode: "If I could ever get the story right," "if I could somehow re-create . . . then you would believe the last thing Lemon believed." However, in spite of the suppositions, the narrator's gaze cannot replace that of the ultimate witness. The paragraph therefore ends on a statement about the limits of writing: if art and imagination

can admittedly reconstitute Lemon's body and observe its last instants over and over again, it can never really lead us to a full understanding of the event of Lemon's death—which we can only witness as outsiders.

"DEATH SUCKS": REVERSE EPIPHANIES

Furthermore, the only revelation regarding death in *The Things They Carried* constitutes rather an anti-revelation, an obvious and underwhelming truth. In the last pages of the book, the narrator explains that Mitchell Sanders and himself have just spent three hours gathering corpses to put them in a truck—he also states that this was their worst day in the war. At some point during their gruesome task, Sanders seems to realize a superior truth unattainable so far, which he shares with the narrator:

> At one point Mitchell Sanders looked at me and said, "Hey, man, I just realized something."
>
> "What?"
>
> He wiped his eyes and spoke very quietly, as if awed by his own wisdom.
>
> "Death sucks," he said. (*TTC* 230)

The lines preceding the "revelation" put forward a rhetoric of suspense: Sanders mysteriously announces that he understood something, and the terms "quietly," "awed," and "wisdom" point to a form of reverence on Sanders's part as he faces the immensity of what was revealed to him. Finally, the brief mention of his discovery ("Death sucks") necessarily does not live up to the expectations of a transcendental revelation and transforms the climax of the discovery into an ordinary cliché of war. Despite their unbearable proximity with cadavers with visible mutilations, raw flesh, foul smells and noises, their worst day at war does not teach the two soldiers anything about death in general. It teaches them only how intolerable it is to handle the material consequences of war as a survivor.

Although the writer repeatedly fails to tell the ultimate truth of death, the book still testifies, paradoxically, about the mystery of death and the idea that it is impossible to unravel this mystery through

the power of art. Indeed, through the confession of his many failures to reach the heart of the enigma, the narrator testifies to his inability to testify. He put forwards, at the centre of the text, the unattainable void created by someone's death, when words become ineffective and scarce. Therefore, Death does not reveal itself directly, as it did to Orpheus when he looked back at Eurydice. It is rather revealed indirectly, being "dissimulated in the work" (Blanchot 226). Death seen from an indirect angle thus appears in the text without showing itself completely. Despite his failure to see and tell its essential truth, the narrator still manages to tell the only truth accessible to the survivors: there is nothing to learn about death; it is only possible to testify to its impenetrability. In his essay on testimony, which he based on the translation of a Holocaust poem by Paul Celan (*Aschenglorie* or *Glory of Ashes*), Jacques Derrida explains that the poem testifies to a secret, a dissimulation within itself, but that it can never reveal what the ultimate witness has seen:

> [The line] is the poem, poetics and the poetics of the poem—which dissimulates itself by exhibiting its dissimulation *as such*. But it is this "as such" which turns out to be doomed to the "perhaps." Probable and improbable (possible but removed from proof), this "as such" takes place as poem, as this poem, in it, and *there* one cannot reply in its place, *there* where it is silent, *there* it keeps its secret, while telling us that there is a secret, revealing the secret it is keeping as a secret; not revealing it, while it continues to bear witness that one cannot bear witness for the witness, who ultimately remains alone and without witness.[2] (Derrida 205)

Celan's poem follows a poetic paradigm which is centered on a dissimulation exhibited as such, and Tim O'Brien's treatment of death in *The Things They Carried* follows the same structural principle. Coming back to the moment someone died through writing allows the narrator to point out the central void of the event—without revealing its essence, yet making its power palpable, its signifying force beyond meaning. The constant repetition of the moment of death sheds a light on an operation of dissimulation at the heart of the text and presents itself as a mask of what it cannot reveal:it is of this essential solitude of the witness that I would like to speak. It is not a solitude just like any solitude—nor a secret just like any secret. It is solitude and secrecy themselves. They speak. [The poem] speaks to the other by keeping quiet, by keeping something quiet from him. In

keeping quiet, in keeping silence, it is still addressing itself. This internal limit to any witness is also what the poem says. It bears witness to it even in saying "no one bears witness to the witness." Revealing its mask as a mask, but without showing itself, without presenting itself, perhaps presenting its non-presentation as such, representing it, it thus speaks about witnessing in general, but first of all about the poem that it is, about itself in its singularity, and about the witnessing to which any poem bears witness. (Derrida 206)

According to Derrida, if the notion of the unspeakable cripples any given testimony, there will rise another—paradoxical—way to bear witness: if one cannot testify, one can at least testify to his impossibility to testify, by making a conscious dissimulation manifest itself as such in the testimony. Following the same example, Lemon's death in *The Things They Carried* is the moment when words find themselves unable to render the ungraspable reality of death, as the narrator openly admits. The unspeakable thus becomes a structural principle of the narration, whose circular pattern is put into motion by the fundamental silence at its core, which condemns the narrative endeavor to fail while at the same time giving it a reason to exist in the first place. It is through his repeated ellipses and omissions that the narrator bears witness to what no one can bear witness except him: the impossible task to understand fully and tell about Lemon's death, whose essential truth does not stop where words start to fail, but extends beyond the testimony, in silence.

RESURRECTING THE DEAD: ORPHEUS'S TRIUMPH

As we have seen so far, the writer's movement backwards and the power of investigation of his writing are bound to encounter certain limits inherent in the very notion of testimony. Through several attempts to see further than the narrator's gaze is able to, Tim O'Brien's collection shows that bearing witness to death is an impracticable endeavor that only opens the testimony to its own helplessness. However, if the narrator's orphic curiosity is not fulfilled by his many glances backwards towards the disappearance of his loved ones, he still triumphs over death—in a certain way. Indeed, in the last story of the collection, entitled "The Lives of the Dead," the narrator introduces himself as an Orpheus whose work has not been sacrificed to the unravelling of an absolute mystery and could, thanks to the power of narration, resurrect the dead: "But this too is true: sto-

ries can save us. I'm forty-three years old, and a writer now, and even still, right here, I keep dreaming Linda alive. And Ted Lavender, too, and Kiowa, and Curt Lemon, and a slim young man I killed, and an old man sprawled beside a pigpen, and several others whose bodies I once lifted and dumped into a truck. They're all dead. But in a story, which is a kind of dreaming, the dead sometimes smile and sit up and return to the world" (*TTC* 213).

Thanks to the writing process, which he compares to dreaming, the narrator is akin to an Orpheus who does not have to lose Eurydice twice. He looks backwards in vain, for his quest in the night of the past does not reveal anything to him about the nature of death, but he does not fail completely. Thanks to his art, he succeeds in bringing back what was lost and gone, making it eternal in the reality of the diegesis: "And as a writer now, I want to save Linda's life. Not her body—her life . . . But in a story I can steal her soul. I can revive, at least briefly, that which is absolute and unchanging. In a story, miracles can happen" (*TTC* 224). The end of the collection presents death as a phenomenon which one can annihilate thanks to the writing process. The traces of physical decrepitude—such as little Linda's scars and bruises, which plague her appearance—are erased from the text when she comes back among the living in the narrator's imagination:

> I remember closing my eyes and whispering her name, almost begging, trying to make her come back. "Linda," I said, "please." And then I concentrated. I willed her alive. It was a dream, I suppose, or a daydream, but I made it happen. I saw her coming down the middle of Main Street, all alone. It was nearly dark and the street was deserted, no cars or people, and Linda wore a pink dress and shiny black shoes. I remember sitting down on the curb to watch. All her hair had grown back. The scars and stitches were gone. In the dream, if that's what it was, she was playing a game of some sort, laughing and running up the empty street, kicking a big aluminum water bucket. (*TTC* 225)

The event of death, in this passage, is down to the literal enactment of the metaphorical expression "to kick the bucket." It is no longer what transforms the bodies into corpses, a terrifying phenomenon beyond understanding, but only an insignificant action, a child's game. Robbed of its signifying power, death becomes harmless; it paradoxically does not have the power to kill anymore. It becomes

something other than death: a trivial event within life, which it cannot interrupt or threaten. Besides, every element in the description of the young girl who was brought back to life thanks to the narration is used to deny the event which caused her to depart. Far from being a dying child, she is running and laughing, her hair has grown back, all traces of disease and suffering have disappeared from the surface of her body, whose new life is celebrated by the presence of light and color ("pink dress," "shiny black shoes"). The event of death is abolished through writing, rendered inconsequential and transformed into a game. This scene of an imagined resurrection symbolically stands for life freeing itself from the limitations of death thanks to artistic creation, and it is also the moment when little Tim understands the healing power of fiction. It is that same technique of remembrance coupled with imagination that he claims to use to resurrect the dead (as well as himself or rather the child he was) at the very end of the collection:

> And yet right here, in the spell of memory and imagination, I can still see her as if through ice, as if I'm gazing into some other world, a place where there are no brain tumors and no funeral homes, where there are no bodies at all. I can see Kiowa, too, and Ted Lavender and Curt Lemon, and sometimes I can even see Timmy skating with Linda under the yellow floodlights. I'm young and happy. I'll never die. I'm skimming across the surface of my own history, moving fast, riding the melt beneath the blades, doing loops and spins, and when I take a high leap into the dark and come down thirty years later, I realize it is as Tim trying to save Timmy's life with a story. (*TTC* 233)

Here, again, death is rejected from the text and denied by the narrator, who claims that his young self will live endlessly ("I'm young and happy. I'll never die"). The present tense used here makes this statement sound like a universal truth, an eternally valid affirmation. Again, the event of death is but an ellipsis: "a place where there are no brain tumors, no funeral homes, where there are no bodies at all." The expression "there are no," instead of "there aren't any," is mentioned twice and puts forward the paradoxical presence of an absence in the text, that of all physical manifestations of dying. Death therefore no longer has any place in the narrative and disappears. There is only life left, followed without transition by the afterlife, that is to say resurrection through fiction. The last sentence of the collection

metaphorically sums up the orphic endeavour of the narrator, who introduces himself as an ice skater able to go back and forth on the surface of his own life story while creating it at the same time, engraving it on the ice. The "loops and spins" of the skates are metaphors of the writing process and artistic creation in general, which allow the narrator to grasp the essence of things as they were before in order to "save" them by writing them down forever. Finally, the figure of the narrator is doubled when the collection ends, revealing that he is both Orpheus and Eurydice: "when I take a high leap into the dark and come down thirty years later, I realize it is as Tim trying to save Timmy's life with a story." Writing therefore appears as a means to save himself from an irreversible disappearance. Writing traces the way back home after exile and allows him to come back to himself despite the alienation of the war.

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NOTES

[1]My translation. Emphasis in original.

[2]All Derrida quotations were taken from Rachel Bowlby's translation. Emphasis in original.

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WORKS OF LOVE: SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S INFLUENCE ON WRIGHT MORRIS

RODNEY P. RICE

The influence of Sherwood Anderson on the world of American letters is an established fact. In addition to William Faulkner, who declared Anderson to be the "father of my generation of American writers," F. Scott Fitzgerald called him a "wonder," Hemingway admired him, and Sinclair Lewis wrote favorably of *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Poor White* (Burbank 141-42). However, most investigations of Anderson's fiction have focused on his influence in areas east of the Mississippi. To date, his impact on writers of the Great Plains has been overlooked, even though Wright Morris, one of the most prominent unheralded fictional voices of that region, dedicated *The Works of Love* to the memory of Sherwood Anderson and in 1965 wrote an introduction to the University of Chicago reprint edition of *Windy McPherson's Son*. Morris never caught on with readers, nor did he attain the range of influence Anderson acquired, even though Morris published over thirty novels, collections of short stories, critical essays, memoirs, and photo texts; won two National Book Awards; and received critical praise from writers and critics ranging from John Updike and Saul Bellow to Wayne Booth and Leslie Fiedler.[1] Eventually posterity may catch up with Morris, but that seems unlikely; Morris's books have never had broad audience appeal and many are out of print. Yet despite being a literary oddity and the paradoxical figure of the so-called "unrecognized, recognized writer" (Blumenthal), Morris is still relevant, and, like Anderson, much of his artistry treats simple, ordinary people with sympathy, understanding, and love.

Although the scope of this essay will not allow a full exploration of Anderson's influence on Morris's craft, it will trace connections from Anderson works such as *Winesburg Ohio, Windy McPherson's Son,* and *Poor White* to *The Works of Love*, a pivotal novel in Morris's

artistic development. In this book Morris adapts the notion of the grotesque to his own writerly purposes in order to reflect the people and places of his Nebraska childhood and reexamine themes and ideas similar to those previously explored by Anderson. To do so, Morris uses main character Will Jennings Brady, a man who shares much in common with Hugh McVey and Sam McPherson and who also embarks on a quest for connection with others that leads him from his rural Midwestern roots to the bustling streets of urban Chicago. However, Morris's path begins in the dry, empty spaces of post-frontier Nebraska rather than the older, more populated Midwest environs found in Anderson's stories and novels. As a result, Morris creates an artistic vision that is uniquely his own, one that bears the spare, unadorned imprint of an object made on the plains.

Just as *Winesburg, Ohio* proved to be the most well-known expression of Anderson's experience in the Midwest, so, too, is *The Works of Love* at the heart of Morris's rendering of his own upbringing on the Great Plains. Similar to the way *Winesburg* functioned for Anderson, *The Works of Love* was critical in Morris's development as a writer and has been viewed as a touchstone for key ideas, themes, and techniques found throughout the Morris canon. For example, in one of the most insightful early readings of Morris's writings, Wayne Booth argues that *The Works of Love* explores the human desire for transcendence from time-bound, everyday reality into a timeless, more perfect world. According to Booth, Morris's characters try to escape the mundane present through acts of heroism, imagination, or love (395). Echoing Booth's thesis, David Madden suggests that the key themes articulated in *The Works of Love* include failure to achieve or enact real or ideal forms of love as well as the blighting effects of the pursuit of the American dream of success (65). Critic G.B. Crump also sees the desire for transcendence as a crucial element. For Crump, however, the troubles associated with the themes in the novel stem from the inability of the characters to balance their open, romantic expectations with the closed, fixed boundaries of reality (64). In a more recent study, Roy Bird analyzes how Morris uses formalist techniques to make commonplace events and people seem uncommon (11). Finally, Joseph Wydeven's *Wright Morris Revisited* concludes that the narrative method of the novel proceeds without transitions via anecdotes, vignettes, and epiphanies in order to emphasize the ambiguous nature of Brady's story (86).

Collectively, what these varied studies reveal is a writer who is often in accord with many of the themes and ideas Anderson rendered before him. Morris biographer Jackson Benson observes, for instance, that the artistic treatment of the frustrations associated with the inability to express thought, feeling, and love were as familiar to Morris as they were to Anderson (110).[2] Morris had read *Winesburg* before he wrote *The Works of Love* and there is a good possibility he may have taken some cues from *Windy McPherson's Son* or *Poor White* in developing his themes, characters, and plot sequence. Nevertheless, readers should not assume that the correlation between Anderson and Morris is always direct or "consciously" patterned after books such as *The Triumph of the Egg,* as one early reviewer from *Time* asserted ("That Lonesome Road" 112). For instance, the lonely father figure portrayed in "The Egg" was not the alleged inspiration for the inept poultry man Will Brady becomes at one stage of his life in *The Works of Love*. In an interview with Wayne Booth, Morris explained that he had not read that story until after *The Works of Love* was published (*Conversations* 78).[3] In truth, much of *The Works of Love* is autobiographical in nature, and Morris's stated intention was not to imitate Anderson, but to "superimpose the life of Will Brady" onto "the pattern of Morris's father's drift eastward" (*Conversations* 76). That so-called drift swept Morris and his father—also named Will—on a wayward migration from Morris's birthplace in Central City, Nebraska to Omaha, Los Angeles, and finally Chicago (*Will's Boy*).

In terms of technique, there are marked differences as well. Although both Anderson and Morris were capable of superb craftsmanship, Morris was much more attuned to cultivating a form of austere, revelatory prose more closely aligned with the Hemingway model than the forms of stylistic expression typically found in most of Anderson's work. In his introduction to *Windy McPherson's Son,* for example, Morris expresses his admiration for Anderson's poetic intuition, but laments the fact that even though Anderson helped pave the way for writers like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, he seemed to have learned little from either in terms of his own fictional practice. At one point, he also comments that Anderson too often exhibits a quality of lyrical vagueness and intrusive commentary that "undermines the fiction" (xvi).[4] Ever a devotee to the hard, clean edge in his own writing, Morris labored longer on the manuscript of *The Works of Love* than any of the nineteen novels he wrote. Unlike

Anderson, who apparently wrote "Hands" and many of the other *Winesburg* stories in single sittings (Townsend 109), Morris spent five years creating *The Works of Love*, honing it from a manuscript of some 300,000 words to approximately 80,000 (Madden 64). Like Anderson, Morris sought what was new and original, yet Morris targeted nostalgia and cliché with more deliberate intensity. In *The Territory Ahead*, a collection of critical essays he published in 1957, Morris argues that nostalgia has had a crippling effect on American writers because it constricts the imagination and leads to what he refers to as an artistic "limbo land, leading nowhere, where the artist can graze like a horse put out to pasture, feeding on such clover of the past as whets the appetite" (159). To avoid this phenomenon, Morris aligned himself with T.S. Eliot's notion of the poet as a catalyst; that is, one who consciously transforms the raw elements of past and present experience into refined and timeless imaginative forms (217-31).[5]

For both Anderson and Morris, a crucial element of the past that informs all their fiction is the Midwestern experiences of their childhood. Just as Ohio is stamped indelibly throughout Anderson's works, so is Nebraska etched clearly into the fabric of Morris's fiction. Both writers evoke imaginative landscapes suspended between two worlds. For Anderson, one world is that of the agrarian, pre-industrialized Ohio of his youth, while the other is the transformed world produced by the relentless advance of heavy industry, mass production, and progress (Rideout xvii). In describing this transformation, Anderson's rendering of the Ohio landscape is impressionistic rather than documentary. Like Morris, he shuns the accumulation of factual detail found in various forms of journalistic writing and uses setting as a vehicle to mirror the innermost struggles, thoughts, and feelings of his characters. However, Anderson's descriptions of place are often more concrete than those found in Morris's work. Winesburg may be something of a little town that time forgot, but in the opening pages readers are given a point of reference replete with a fictional map of the city streets, shops, and landmarks, many of which correspond to the actual Clyde, Ohio, of his youth (Hurd 163-81).

Morris provides no such Nebraska coordinates for fictional places like Indian Bow, Bruno, or Murdock, perhaps because open spaces such as the Great Plains are sparsely populated, contain few landmarks, and little variation. In such places, the grain elevator is one of the few things that punctuate the immense sky and infinite

horizon. As a result, finding perspective in terms of time and place can be difficult because spatial boundaries tend to blur. Nebraska is quite different from Ohio in terms of geography, and the transient railroad towns perched amid the arid and empty landscapes of Morris's fiction stand in stark contrast to the lush greenery, forested hills, and verdant fields that surround older, more established Midwestern communities such as Winesburg or Bidwell.

The opening passage of "Hands," for instance, renders an unforgettable image of one such small-town Ohio landscape:

> Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. (27)

By contrast, in the opening pages of *The Works of Love* the agricultural fields and laughing berry pickers are missing, and places like Indian Bow are stranded, like abandoned arks, beneath a sweeping horizon in a sea of grass. What remains is something more disorienting, remote, and ominous, figured in passages such as the following:

> In the dry places, men begin to dream. Where the rivers run sand, there is something in man that begins to flow. West of the 98th Meridian—where it sometimes rains, and it sometimes doesn't—towns, like weeds spring up when it rains, dry up when it stops. The stranger might find, as if preserved in amber, something of the green life that was once lived there, and the ghosts of men who have gone on to a better place. The withered towns are empty, but not uninhabited. Faces sometimes peer out from the broken windows, or whisper from the sagging balconies, as if this place—now that it is dead—had come to life. As if empty it is forever occupied. One of these towns, so the story would have it, was Indian Bow. (3)

Morris's semi-arid Nebraska is an existential landscape—depopulated, nearly treeless, and without water. Unlike Anderson, the ten-

sion that drives his fiction does not arise primarily from the portrayal of small, decaying agricultural towns in transition to population growth and industrialization. Instead, Morris is concerned with the transformation of the Great Plains from the romanticized dream of endless progress promised during the frontier expansion period to the deadly nightmare posed by the disturbing realities of the modern world.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Morris sees, as had Anderson before him, that for most the future path to freedom, progress, and self-fulfillment points not to the forlorn agricultural communities of Ohio, nor to the deserted landscapes of western Nebraska, but instead to the sprawling environs of the American city. For Anderson and Morris, the city that best embodies that vision is Chicago, where their fictive roads often lead. At various points in their lives, both had lived there: Morris as a boy and Anderson as an adult. But even though Anderson and Morris were quite familiar with the Windy City and its surroundings, from a fictional standpoint they approach it from somewhat different perspectives. According to Irving Howe, many of Anderson's tales are fables of "American estrangement" whose theme is the loss of love (*Sherwood Anderson* 101). Or, as Charles Child Walcutt suggests, Anderson's characters frequently discover that "what appears on the surface . . . is not the true inward reality," and that "what is true remains a mystery" (443). And as Rex Burbank points out, Anderson's protagonists are frequently buffeted by natural, social, and psychological elements that force them to make choices between discord and harmony, and isolation and "sympathetic communion with others" (50).

Thus, characters such *Winesburg, Ohio*'s George Willard, *Windy McPherson's Son*'s Sam McPherson, and *Poor White*'s Hugh McVey follow a psychological and moral progression that starts with youth spent in a small town, followed by an escape to the city (usually Chicago), and, for McPherson and McVey at least, the ultimate abandonment of the conventional success ethic (Burbank 48). Both McVey and McPherson at first embrace conventional notions of the "man of achievement," and are seduced by economic power and the lure of city lights, only to discover in the end that buried within, "there is another personality, a quite different being altogether . . . who had never really breathed or lived or walked before men" (*Windy McPherson's Son* 327-28). McPherson's and McVey's ultimate realization is that money has a hollow ring, and true fulfillment requires

love, commitment to others, and the wholehearted embrace of the human community.

In *The Works of Love*, the trajectory of the heroic journey is also a moral and psychological one that follows the same three stages. However, for Morris the choice is less between embracing selfish material gratification or establishing selfless communion with others than between enduring crippling isolation or finding imaginative ways to overcome it. For Will Brady, the path also leads to Chicago, but he comes there from the West, not the East, and, after being exposed to the corruptions of the big city, instead of returning to the comforts of family and home, he ends his life just as he had begun it, more or less alone.

Although Brady's taciturn, inexpressive, and passive nature bears some resemblance to grotesque Winesburg characters such as Wing Biddlebaum or Enoch Robinson, he is clearly a child of the frontier, not the settled Midwest. He has no traceable lineage, and his father, aptly named Adam, is a transient figure, while the mother who bore him is a mail order bride. Like Hugh McVey, he comes from nowhere, but instead of being sired "in a little hole of a town stuck on a mud bank on the western shore of the Mississippi River" (*Poor White* 3), he is born in Indian Bow, near the Platte River, west of the Missouri. Unlike the legendary heroes of the trans-Mississippi West or Anderson's material men of action, Brady is a passive, confused, and helpless man engaged on a lonely quest that leads away from a Western frontier that is already gone, where the sagebrush and buffalo grass are no longer the stage upon which men of value enact their manhood. A man who neither smokes, drinks, nor fights in any wars, Brady has no unique heroic status, possesses no special skills, wins no lady fair, nor advances any cause.

With Anderson, who saw a divided America that contains crippled souls desperately grasping to express love, thought, and feeling (David Anderson 41), Morris shares the idea that history is a progression of stages, and that those stages are not always fixed and linear. Often, as *Windy McPherson's Son, Poor White, Winesburg, Ohio*, and *The Works of Love* make clear, the trajectory of human progress inverts its axis and turns upon itself.[6] For Anderson, the flow of life sometimes returns to a form of simplified existence and communal fellowship. But the world Will Brady inherits is one in which the flow of life turns increasingly toward alienation, a phenomenon that ushers in a new set of challenges and questions that are

equally as complex as any confronted by George Willard, Hugh McVey, or Sam McPherson.

The primary challenge that Brady has to master is one that Morris calls the "great problem" in life: namely, "how to pass the time" (*Works* 200-01). Unlike McVey and McPherson, whose lives are spent largely in the tenacious pursuit of distinct materialistic goals, Brady's time is filled by long, lonely periods during which almost nothing happens. Isolated, abandoned, and unsure of himself, Brady instinctively longs for connection with something meaningful that will bring him into more direct contact with the world around him. As he moves ever eastward, he falls under the seductive siren song of material success like McPherson and McVey. Brady finds his mentor in T.P. Luckett, a fat, shameless promoter of small business. Under Luckett's influence, Brady thinks he has found a calling in the egg trade, which Luckett claims only needs a few up-and-coming men to get the enterprise off the ground. But foolishly, Brady borrows a substantial sum of money from Luckett and starts his egg business, a decision that initiates a succession of blunders that culminate in Brady's financial ruin.

Unable to master the challenges of the business world, Brady tries another option, the pursuit of love, which beckons him—beyond a brief interlude in Los Angeles—from rural Nebraska towns to the cityscapes of Omaha and eventually the heart of metropolitan Chicago. But unskilled in the art of romance and possessing little command of artful expression, Brady fails to win over the women in his life. In fact, he only succeeds in attracting a group of social misfits, including whores, frigid widows, cigar counter girls, and pubescent Lolita figures who sell him kisses in the park. Like so many of Anderson's grotesques, he is unable to will acts of love. And among the many failed attempts in Brady's relentless quest for love, perhaps the most telling occurs during the honeymoon he takes shortly after marrying the widowed Ethel Basset. Trying to enact his own version of western romance, Brady spirits his bride to a three-week stay in a hotel in Colorado Springs, where he makes the following unsettling discovery when he tries to consummate the union:

> The woman beside him, his wife, was rolled up in a sheet . . . . She seemed to be wrapped from head to foot, as mummies are wrapped. It occurred to him that something like that takes a good deal of practice, just as it took practice to lie, wrapped up like a mummy, all

> night. It took practice and it also took something else. It took fear. This woman he had married was scared to death. (*Works* 52-53)

The thought of sex confuses Brady because he has never been married nor has he had sex with a married woman. But for Ethel, the thought paralyzes her. When Brady enters, her eyes are "wide and blank" and "she did not smile, nor make any sign that she recognized him" (*Works* 52).

Brady's clumsy campaign against isolation eventually engulfs him in a figurative vapor or poison that "made people yellow in color, gave them flabby bodies, and made their minds inert" (*Works* 136). Although this vapor is difficult to define, in this novel it is symbolic of the toxic, nameless fear that plagues post-frontier America, the alienating evil that haunts those who live in isolation, that causes women to roll themselves up in sheets and makes men afraid to truly express themselves in any place other than the dark of night. The novel contains an epigraph by D.H. Lawrence that reads, "We cannot bear connection. That is our malady," a clear allusion to this disaffecting paralysis. Caught between the godforsaken and empty corner of his dead past and an urban wasteland outlined by false visions of heroism, material success, and love, Brady shrinks to a mere shadow of a man. In an elevated room overlooking the sprawling Chicago freight yards, Brady works alone at night, gazing silently at the bridges spanning the inland waterways that lead into Lake Michigan. At such times, he feels as if he were "the last man in the world" (*Works* 239).

Eventually, Brady meets his end, not among friends and family like Hugh McVey or Sam McPherson, but all alone in the gray waters of a Chicago sewage canal, where he stumbles after being blinded by the toxic glow of a cheap "NU-VITA" sun lamp he purchased to improve his skin color. Morris describes Brady's fall using phrasing as finely etched as any found in American literature:

> He leaned there on the railing, his eyes closed, but on his face the look of a man of vision—a holy man . . . . But when the lantern dropped down . . . he did a strange thing. He went down the turning stairs toward the water, toward the great stench as if he would grasp it, make it his own, before it could blow away from him. Or as if he heard above the sound of the traffic, the trains in the yard, and the din of the city, the tune of that Piper—the same old Pied Piper—over the canal. The same one that had drawn him, time and again, into

> the streets. So he went on down, groping a little, as he had no proper eyes for seeing, or for knowing that there was no landing over the canal. A rope swung there, the knotted end sweeping the water, heavy with ice. (*Works* 268-69)

But even though Brady is unable to lift his life beyond crippling loneliness and does not reclaim love and understanding like Hugh McVey or Sam McPherson, clearly he is every bit as much a grotesque figure as any character found in the works of Anderson. The Pied Piper allusion is emblematic of the fleeting truth Will seeks, the one that ultimately becomes false and leads him to his death.

Overall, while it is true that Morris owes a tremendous debt to the example of Sherwood Anderson, it is also true that he is able to transcend the vision Anderson provided by transforming it into something that is distinctively new. What Malcolm Cowley said in his 1960 introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio* literally applies here: "[i]t is a work of love, an attempt to break down the walls that divide one person from another, and also, in its own fashion, a celebration of small-town life in the lost days of good will and innocence" (58). But for the sensitive reader, Morris's novel is much more than just a clever reworking of the way in which Anderson handles setting, plot, theme, and character. In *The Works of Love*, as in so many of his other novels and stories, Morris successfully overcomes the anxiety of influence by producing a durable image of a world that is fading fast but not entirely gone from view. For this reason, he should be recognized for what he really is: a gifted craftsman and an American writer fully conscious of his literary heritage, yet able thoughtfully to harness past and present traditions to the limitless imaginative possibilities of his individual talent.

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NOTES

[1]Morris was awarded National Book Awards for *The Field of Vision* (1957) and *Plains Song* (1981). In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Fiedler asserts that in his novels through *The Field of Vision*, Morris "has been trying to convince his readers that Nebraska is the absurd hell we all inhabit" (494). Elsewhere, John Updike praised Morris in *Hugging the Shore* and *Due Considerations*, two of Updike's volumes of essays and criticism. The former singles out Morris's *About Fiction* as a record of his "bracingly virile" capabilities as a reader and responder to fiction (777). In the latter, Updike notes Morris's "unmatched particularity and itemizing patience" in rendering the "professional tics and private cogitations of small-town men" in his novels and photo texts (107). Updike claimed he and Morris's literary paths crossed only three times (*Due Considerations* 105); however, Morris knew Saul

Bellow quite well. They first met in a New York bookstore and later became friends. In *A Cloak of Light*, Morris remarked that "the binding mucilage in our friendship was that the same things struck us as funny. Once started, we found it hard to stop laughing. Not merely amusing, but matchlessly zany" (162).

[2]In addition to Morris, Benson wrote biographies of John Steinbeck, Wallace Stegner, and Walter Van Tilburg Clark. Benson argues that *The Works of Love* is Morris's "most impressive novel, even more impressive than those novels that have won praise and awards, such as *The Field of Vision*" (*Haunted* 111).

[3]Morris attributes the egg man coincidence to unconscious plagiarism, something he believes happens often in American writing. He also says that it was a good thing he had not read *The Triumph of the Egg*, for had he done so, he might have been "self-conscious about making Brady a butter-and-egg man" and that he would have rejected the idea (*Conversations* 78).

[4]Morris claims that Sam McPherson is Anderson's first grotesque, but as a "truth-seeker, he is not convincing," and as a character, McPherson is closer to Horatio Alger than someone such as Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming. According to Morris, "Anderson's focus is soft in precisely those areas the writers he influenced would be hard: romantic bohemians of the sort of John Telfer, and romantic dreamers such as Sam McPherson. In Hemingway's 'book' they were both obsolete clichés" (x).

[5]Morris explains this imaginative transformation thusly: "Life, raw life, the kind we lead every day, whether it leads us to the past or the future, has the curious property of not seeming real *enough*. We have a need, however illusive, for a life more real than life. It lies in the imagination. Fiction would seem to be the way it is processed into reality. If this were not so, we would have little excuse for art. Life, raw life, would be more than satisfactory in itself. But it seems to be the nature of man to transform—himself, if possible, then the world around him—and the technique of this transformation is what we call art" (*The Territory Ahead* 228-29).

[6]In a discussion about writing *The Works of Love*, Morris told Wayne Booth that as he superimposed the life of Will Brady upon that of his father, he began to realize that in the modern era, "the flow of plains life had turned eastward, a reverse of the frontier experience" (*Conversations* 76).

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PRESLEY'S INDUSTRIALIZED POETICS: THE MONOPOLIZATION AND MECHANIZATION OF AMERICAN AESTHETICS IN FRANK NORRIS'S *THE OCTOPUS*

AARON BABCOCK

Frank Norris's 1901 novel *The Octopus* opens with the poet Presley bicycling through the ranches of the San Joaquin Valley of California. He is seeking inspiration for, as he terms it, "a subject, something magnificent . . . some vast, tremendous theme" to turn into the definitive "poem of the West" (*The Octopus* 9). Norris's poet envisions a text that will not only encapsulate the American experience, but also define its borders by means of a singular aesthetic vision. Presley imagines the unwritten poem as a comprehensive lyric:

> [A]ll people should be included—they and their legends, their folklore, their fighting, their loves and their lusts, their blunt, grim humor, their stoicism under stress, their adventures, their treasures found in a day and gambled in a night, their direct, crude speech, their generosity and cruelty, their heroism and bestiality, their religion and profanity, their self-sacrifice and obscenity . . . each group in its proper environment . . . all the traits and types of every community from the Dakotas to the Mexicos . . . gathered together, swept together, welded and riven together in one single, mighty song, the Song of the West. (9-10)

The shift in language in this passage is significant for the way in which it initiates the often uneasy relationship between American art and American industry in the novel. Presley's artistic dream first takes shape in communal, human, and even quasi-religious terms before becoming a mechanized process in which the polyglot American landscape is refashioned and consolidated into an aesthetic product. The creation of his song is, at root, an act of destruction; he seeks to tear apart the diverse components of the United States and

reforge them. His poem is a violently imposed harmony, a welding together of the population his poetic vision has first riven into discrete units.

The West's communities, with their own traditions, fictions and legends, are seen by Presley as raw resources for his epic, which is a static and, ultimately, synthetic creation. Instead of exhibiting the "sincerity of . . . love for his scenes and characters . . . [and a] tender care for truth" that Hamlin Garland argues is essential to the creation of a genuine portrait of American lives and scenes, Presley seeks to impose his mastery upon the West in order to universalize it in accordance with his poetic vision (*Crumbling Idols* 62). The richness of local myths and populations, as suggested by the first portion of Presley's artistic dream, gives way to a monopolized, homogenized West in which the populations and stories become "component parts" reduced to "signs and symbols" for the poet's work (*The Octopus* 47). The chaotically diverse West becomes the product of an industrial artistic re-rendering, a purely manufactured commodity that in its apparent harmony misrepresents its subject matter.

Thus, a central tension within the novel is voiced within the opening pages of *The Octopus*—one that has occupied the attention of critical scholarship for decades: the relationship between art and capitalism. Don Graham, in *The Fiction of Frank Norris*, observes that the overwhelming presence of art throughout the novel indicates that "[o]ne of Norris's purposes . . . is to examine the role and function of an artist in a society impelled by economic energies" (89). Subsequent scholarly criticism has tended to expand this observation through examinations of the meeting between Presley and the railroad boss Shelgrim. Clare Virginia Eby draws upon this meeting to complicate astutely Graham's observation, writing that not only does Norris's work address a growing affinity between business and aesthetics, but also "redefine[s] the role of the modern American author facing capitalism" (33-34). The close bonds that Eby concludes the novel establishes between art and industry via the Presley-Shelgrim encounter is further explained by Daniel Mrozowski, who writes persuasively that "art and finance . . . share a common imaginative language and an expansive sympathy" in *The Octopus* (178).

Yet for all the depth this longstanding critical focus on the meeting of Presley and Shelgrim brings to discussions of the novel's ruminations on art and aesthetics in a capitalist age, it pushes to the background the intriguing possibilities raised by the language Presley

uses to define his own artistic project and by the presence of Vanamee in the text. In a period of rapid technological and industrial advancement, older forms of poetics are pushed to the margins and left—like Vanamee who wanders on the fringes of society—to languish on the edges of American culture. The newer forms, however, fail to capture the richness of their subjects. The poet of the mechanized age hammers and flattens his or her materials into inorganic, manufactured shapes. Presley's Song of the West marks the arrival of an unanticipated apotheosis of Walt Whitman's *literatus* four decades after the publication of *Democratic Vistas* in 1871. By 1901 the poet's power to draw upon what Whitman refers to as America's "exhaustless mines of the richest ore of epic, lyric, tale, tune, [and] picture" in order to cultivate the buried literary masterpieces awaiting realization is conceptualized not as an imaginative flowering from the nation's soil, but as the extraction and brute shaping of raw material (981). The poet in 1901 does not cultivate the "native, imaginative Soul" of the country, but instead processes it by breaking down its component parts and melting them together into a composite shape (981). While Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* looks toward a future flowering of varied literary productions inspired by the nation's movement westward and an "all-accepting fusion," Norris's novel suggests that the poet of the industrial age, prompted by mass production and uniformity, produces only flattened, homogenized works that exclude or smelt down what he or she cannot fuse (952). Such domineering poetics only stifle the "Soul" of the West and of the nation.

The Octopus's pair of poets embody two different poetic aesthetics, neither of which is sufficient on its own. Vanamee, the mystical, ascetic shepherd first described to the reader as "a poet by instinct" who has a preternatural ability to perceive and experience the external, natural world and the inner, emotional world to a degree that is almost too acute, exists on the edges of the community in the San Joaquin Valley mooning over his lost love and dispensing literary advice to Presley that the young poet is too afraid to follow (*The Octopus* 36). In the course of his discussions with Vanamee in the first chapter of the novel, Presley is aware of the radical difference posed by the former's connection to the community. He reflects that it "stand[s] for a different order of things," one in which the artist is not a distant surveyor of his work, but instead is one intimately connected to his materials and to the spiritual rather than material world

(20). Indeed, Vanamee's only points of contact with the social and economic fabric of life in the San Joaquin Valley are through long-standing, pre-industrial institutions (the Catholic mission) and pre-industrial labor (as the shepherd for a flock of sheep). Suggestively placed as a gentle guide in the natural world and a cultivator of the soul in the spiritual world, Vanamee's poetics is tied to a geographic space that is represented as not merely temporally indeterminate, but as outside of the arc of history itself; he resides on the borderland of an industrial present, yet also maintains a rooted connection to a pre-industrial past.

This position is a fragile one. Vanamee's entire way of life, in addition to his aesthetic outlook, is an anachronism that is being violently pushed aside by the arrival of the railroad. Vanamee's continued existence is marked as tenuous in the narrative by his close proximity to the dwindling spiritual authority behind Spanish colonialism and his physical resemblance to "an Indian," a population driven to near extinction (43). Like the tolling of the Spanish Mission's bell—that "note of the Old World," Vanamee's entire outlook sounds "unfamiliar and strange at this end-of-the-century time" to Presley (48). Though Presley genuinely respects Vanamee's perspective, his view is that it is ultimately implausible as a model. Vanamee's spiritualism belongs to an admirable but unrecoverable past identified with "the padres, planting the first wheat and oil and wine to produce the elements of the Sacrament," rather than with the modern industrialist whose sweep and scope has dwarfed such communal industries (48). Vanamee's insistence on a spiritual experience of the world echoes portions of Norris's own remarks in "Novelists of the Future," also published in 1901, in which he writes that the novelist "must learn to sit very quiet, and be very watchful" in order to "achiev[e] less of an aggressive faculty of research, than of an attitude of mind—a receptivity, an acute sensitiveness" (1154).

Donald Pizer summarizes the outlook articulated above as deceptively simple: Norris believes "that first-hand experience ('life') is better than second-hand experience ('literature')"; but Pizer expands this definition to explain that "life" in Norris's framework is "primitive," devoid of ornamentation or artifice, whereas "literature" stands in for "imitative and affective art, written entirely for money or for the approval of a cult" (113). While Vanamee's decree that Presley should live, rather than write, his epic is in keeping with Norris's portrait of the Novelist of the Future, Vanamee's fixation upon his dead

lover Angéle that prompts him to haunt the grounds of the largely abandoned mission leaves him trapped within a flood of romanticized memories of his past.

Though neither artist is able to accurately perceive and portray his subject, Presley's failure is caused by an intellectual and ego-driven emotional distance from his subjects rather than an inability to exert sufficient control over his empathetic feeling. Presley's detachment marks him as possessing "limitations of perception and sympathy" necessary for poetic creation (Frye 216). Explicitly rejecting Vanamee's advice by telling the shepherd that "'I could not lose myself like that in your desert'" and afraid to live within "'its vastness,'" Presley resists yielding any degree of perceptive control over the raw literary materials of the West (*The Octopus* 41). Where Vanamee, and to a degree Whitman, perceive spiritual and artistic flowering from communing with the West's land and populations in a requisite "experience of humanity," Presley sees an expansive chaos that threatens to overwhelm his artistic vision (Whitman 972). In relentless pursuit of harmony but lacking genuine feeling for the components he ruthlessly views as his to smelt down, Presley sets out to craft an epic free from any "medium of personality or temperament" (*The Octopus* 12). Thus, while disingenuously denying his own authorial temperament and his sense of total artistic ownership, he expresses his determination to erase the complexities of his subject; the artist's raw material may not exhibit any form of personality disruptive to the epic. Driven by sanitized notions of "the West" as a canvas, a vista of landscapes and populations awaiting harmonious organization under the gaze of a poet-engineer, Presley's epic is doomed to failure.

The irony of *The Octopus*, however, is that Presley spends much of the novel professing to abhor the grasping greed and seemingly omnipresent power of Shelgrim's railroad while failing to recognize that he operates as an artist in much the same way Shelgrim does as an industrialist. Both share the "commanding genius" that the poet condemns in Shelgrim, whose "colossal intellect operat[es] the entire width of a continent" (104). Yet Presley desires a similar scope of intellectual control over his epic. Both men strive to bind the continent together—the former through art, the latter through commerce—and their visions offer up a strange conflation of aesthetics and industry (after all, Shelgrim is revealed as an amateur art critic). Just as Shelgrim views the valley's farmers as ratepayers to be

exploited for the railroad's profits, Presley sees the populace as merely another source of raw material for his own epic poem. Tellingly, he conceives of the "Spanish-Mexicans" of the valley as a "decayed, picturesque . . . and romantic" group—a trope rather than a community (20). In order to achieve their respective visions of the West, Presley and Shelgrim must first dispossess its occupants of their claim to the land and to their own autonomous community. Poet and industrialist alike set out to erase the present inhabitants of the valley—the latter for commercial profit and the former for artistic liberty.

While Whitman framed his *literatus* as a surveyor of sorts, a cataloguer of the many components of the American West, Presley, who writes in an age of industrial monopolies, is the *literatus*-as-prospector. Rather than seeking to fuse the whole landscape, Presley seeks only to fuse those parts of it deemed valuable or usable for the production of his epic. For him the San Joaquin Valley contains a vein of poetic materials awaiting extraction; its land and its people are remarkable only insofar as they form the basis for his imagined West. Viewing the valley from a high ridge, he proclaims that "'the poem is here; my West is here'" (40). Similar to Howard McLane in Hamlin Garland's "Up the Coolly," who views the Midwest plains as "his West," (*Main-Travelled Roads* 45) but who finds himself continually struggling to reconcile the "sordidness, dullness, trivialities, and . . . endless drudgeries" of Midwestern farm life with his romanticized notions of that life, Presley's sense of ownership is derived from his desire to shape the space around him to match his grandiose fantasy of the West (*Main-Travelled Roads* 52). Presley is not interested in fusing the disparities of the American West together into an epic; instead, he attempts to translate his sense of ownership over the region into a portrait of "primeval, epic life" extracted out of an imaginatively flattened and sterilized landscape bounded by the artist's controlling vision (41).

Shelgrim's railroad physically accomplishes what Presley hopes to do aesthetically. The reach of the railroad and the rails themselves "crush . . . out the human atom standing in its way" and physically bind the nation together (*The Octopus* 577). The price for the violent erasure of disharmonious "atoms" however is, according to Shelgrim, a loss of control; the machine has a will and life of its own. Upon his arrival into Vanamee's great desert, Presley has an encounter that suggests he is aware of this possibility occurring in his

own epic. Dreaming of his poem, Presley is interrupted by the locomotive, whose "disturbing shriek," Leo Marx writes, "arouses a sense of dislocation, conflict, and anxiety" wherever it appears in American literature (16). Rather than allow this intrusion to disrupt his vision, Presley co-opts it for himself. The locomotive merges with his imagined poem, as viewing the train he declares:

> [T]here it was, his epic, his inspiration, his West, his thundering progression of hexameters . . . As from a point high above the world, he seemed to dominate a universe, a whole order of things . . . [he was] drunk with the intoxication of mere immensity. Stupendous ideas . . . drove headlong through his brain. Terrible, formless shapes, vague figures, gigantic, monstrous, distorted, whirled at a gallop through his imagination. (*The Octopus* 47)

Presley's imagined poem is characterized as similar in movement, scope, and effect as the railroad the artist professes to abhor. Inspiring terror and desire in the poet as it breaks upon the calm of the valley, the locomotive is Presley's imagined epic materialized: his imaginative grasping of the land is embodied by the sprawling railroad's "tentacles of steel clutching into the soil" (51). The poet's domineering eye is mirrored in the locomotive's "enormous . . . cyclopean" lantern "throwing a glare far" out across the West; and the booming cadence of the poet's imagined hexameters becomes reality in the train's "sudden crash of confused thunder; filling the night with the terrific clamour of its iron heels" (49). Locomotive and poetic epic are, in this moment, one in the same. Each reshapes and binds the landscape through a myopic vision and a dominant presence.

Presley's oft-critically disputed encounter with Shelgrim is important, then, not merely for the novel's social commentary, but also for the way it reveals his inability to see how his art, like the railroad he detests, is "the nucleus of the web in which so many lives, so many fortunes, so many destinies had been enmeshed" (569). Though Granville Hicks views Presley's response to their meeting as a retreat from reality that "is ridiculous, and [which] destroys the emotional effect of the book," when one considers the role of mechanization in Presley's artistic outlook, his meeting with Shelgrim and sudden change of attitude make considerable sense (173).[1] Indeed, although he fails to see himself in a similar role as that of the railroad, Presley nevertheless realizes that he cannot compete with its physical and mechanical binding of the continent through welded

rails. Furthermore, even if he could, the resulting epic would be beyond his control. When Shelgrim asserts that the railroad is unresponsive to his wishes, Presley admits that his statement "rang with the clear reverberation of truth" (*The Octopus* 576). The poet's acknowledgement of his inability to create an artistic product and to control his intellectual product once it becomes a cultural artifact exposes his harmonious song for what it has always been: an expression of "Colossal indifference," a striving for an aesthetic monopoly on par with the industrial monopoly of the railroad (557).

This, too, is where Presley most disastrously departs from Whitman's characterization of a fraternal literature of the future. Uninterested in the "uncouth brutes . . . farmhands and petty ranchers, grimed with the soil they worked upon" who are "odious to him beyond words" in "the monotonous round of their sordid existence," Presley instead desires to erase them (5). Driven by a view of art as "a thing exclusive, to be guarded from contact with the vulgar, humdrum, bread-and-butter business of life, to be kept unspotted from the world" fundamentally places Presley in a position in which the creation of a true epic is an impossibility ("Novelists" 1155). He lacks any degree of interest in the realities of lived experience in the American West, viewing its inhabitants not, as Whitman does, as sources of literary enrichment, but instead as impediments to his grandiose project. Whereas Vanamee's excessive sympathy problematically lodges him in an ossified, medieval past, Presley's modern impulse to harmonize the West's rougher, less pleasing edges makes him akin to that "soulless Force, the iron-hearted Power," the railroad that binds through the exertion of raw power (*The Octopus* 51). Even so, the ostensibly villainous railway boss Shelgrim manages to express a degree of human sympathy when upping an alcoholic employee's pay rather than firing him in an effort to reform the man's behavior. The modern poetic vision Presley espouses, in its desire to cleanse such figures from its portrait of the West, is more devoid of human sympathy than the worldview of the supposedly arch-capitalist railroad boss.

Consequently, Presley, as the modern American poet in *The Octopus*, does not merely "face" capitalism. He is inextricably bound up within its own particular set of aesthetics and values. The artist and the industrialist possess shared ways of seeing and interpreting the world, its landscapes, and its populations. Presley's artistic eye mirrors the "single eye" of the railroad, "cyclopean . . . shooting from

horizon to horizon" and subjecting the landscape of the West to its sweeping domination and ownership (*The Octopus* 51). The natural beauty of the San Joaquin Valley is "his West . . . unrolling . . . before the eye of his mind," bearing the material from which he will hammer his poem (40). The similarities of vision in these two passages position the poet of the modern age as a machinist, whose gaze is as sweeping as that of the railroad and whose art form (built with an industrial precision and power) acts as a binding agent for the nation's fantasized frontiers and identity. His vision possesses, alters, and seeks to "improve" the landscape in accordance with his fantasy.

Enacting what Annette Kolodny argues is a culturally persistent set of "chosen visual images" that frame the frontier of the continental United States as gendered and exploitable, inviting "a bold exercise of masculine power over the feminine," Presley's imaginative acts are ideologically in sympathy with the rhetoric undergirding frontier expansion, the spread of the railroad, and the near extinction of the conditions in which Vanamee's communal spiritualism thrives (22). Control, for Presley, is the ultimate achievement of the poet; he believes only highly organized art produces a "true" portrait of the West and its people, one that is bound together, unified, and tamed by the artist's monopoly of his or her subject matter. Believing himself to be the lyric poet who will re-forge a chaotic, kaleidoscopic landscape "into [a] great scheme of harmony," a "picture" wholly of his own creation in which not "one note of harsh color" mars the "huge romantic West that he saw in his imagination," Presley's poetic eye proceeds across the landscape of the West with an atomizing gaze (*The Octopus* 12). The West is subdued, tamed; its raw components are either used to meet the purposes of the modern artist who shapes them into a self-contained product or discarded and relegated to cultural and historical invisibility.

In his efforts to render the West shrouded in "a rose-coloured mist . . . that dull[s] all harsh outlines, all crude and violent colors," Presley fails; his epic remains unfinished and unsung by the novel's end, the outline of the work lost to him amid a cynicism redirected from industry to art, and he belatedly realizes that his desire to subject the West inflexibly to harmonization is to blame (12). Seeking uniformity, the young poet fails imaginatively in a manner that is not only very American, but is also in its frustrated groping for—and subsequent pragmatic rejection of—an elevation of the West out of the mundane, the sordid, and the disappointing, profoundly Midwestern.

Caught between the seemingly irreconcilable desires for the realization of "the Midwestern garden" and the homogeneity made possible by material and technological advancement, Presley's conclusion that there are positive and negative repercussions of the inevitabilities of the arc of history is more than a humbling recognition of the loss of control. It is an acknowledgement that his artistry, even at its most possessive, "lack[s] . . . the intellectual or emotional means . . . for dealing with the murky or simply more complex aspects of human experience" in a changing United States (Weber 20). Faced with larger forces such as the railroad and commercialization, Presley is unable to realize that which "haunt[s]" him: "the dream of writing an epic of the West" (Cooper 28). As Ronald Weber notes in his masterful study of Midwestern literature, "The South lost a war, the Midwest a dream" (18). This, too, is Presley's failing in California—a rural, agricultural California poised in 1901 to experience that which has already transformed the Midwest and finalized its loss of what was always a myth: the region as a tranquil, orderly, and implicitly homogenous space. The "yoke of iron" that Presley perceives as victorious at the end of the novel and which has "stamp[ed] out the spark ordained by God to burn throughout eternity" is a comment on the end of a Midwestern, not a Western, dream of the Mid-American garden (*The Octopus* 651).

Undone by a "merciless, inexorable iron monster," the dream and the dreamer are left to drift unable—and in method unwilling—to realize Whitman's directive to the *literatus* to cohere America's rich variability into an appropriately heterogeneous literary expression (50). Though Presley contents himself at the novel's end by taking the larger view, *The Octopus* overall suggests that genuine artistry and poetry are in a process of being plowed under by the advancement of technology, industry, and capitalism. Like the wandering tramp in *My Ántonia*, who, carrying only scraps of food "'a penknife . . . and some poetry'" throws himself "'headfirst . . . into the threshing machine'" out of apparent despair at the state of things in a rapidly-changing "'Americy,'" (Cather 114-15) Norris's epic novel implies that it is not only "the individual who suffers" so that "the race goes on," but a genuinely American artistry, too (*The Octopus* 652).

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NOTE

[1]Hicks's view of this moment as a formal failure of the text is echoed in numerous other critical works. For examples, see Paul H. Bixler, "Frank Norris' Literary Reputation," *American Literature* 6.2 (1934):109-121; W.F. Taylor, *A History of American Letters* (NY: American Book Company, 1936): 314; Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*. ([1942] Garden City: Doubleday, 1956): 77; and Van Wyck Brooks, *The Confident Years: 1885-1915* (NY: Dutton, 1952): 226.

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MIDWESTERN AMBIVALENCE AND LOYALTY IN TWO STORIES BY SUSAN GLASPELL

RASHA GAZZAZ

In a letter to one of her publishers, Susan Glaspell wrote, "Although my home has for some years been in the East, almost everything I write has its roots in the Midwest; I suppose because my own are there" ("Here is the piece . . . ."). And in a letter to her friend Edmund Wilson, Glaspell also wrote, "The Middle West must have taken strong hold of me in my early years for I've never ceased trying to figure out why it is as it is" (Letter to Edmund Wilson). Glaspell's family had roots in the Midwest because they were among the first settlers to arrive in Davenport, Iowa, in 1839, a time when the city was a flourishing town near the Mississippi River.[1] Glaspell was fond of her pioneering ancestry and had great love for the rural region, two reasons that inspired her to write stories about her hometown, blending the realities of the region with the hope of preserving its customs and depicting its richness. However, it is no surprise that in her newspaper and magazine articles, stories and plays, Glaspell attacked some of her birthplace's conventions, for she lived her life experiencing ongoing inner conflict with the strictures of her Midwestern community.[2] She was agonized by the rigidity of a society where people were confined to stringent social and cultural rules and subjected to harshly biased views. Glaspell was one of the fortunate individuals who, through perseverance and self-reliance, fought her way to a certain level of autonomy, thus escaping the narrow life expected for her in Davenport.

Throughout her career, Glaspell wrote mainly about the Iowa community. According to Marcia Noe in Susan Glaspell's *Analysis of the Midwestern Character*, Glaspell "used Iowa characters and settings in many of the 14 plays, 9 novels and over 50 short stories, essays, and articles that she wrote" (4). Noe discusses specific plays and longer narrative works such as *Inheritors, Chains of Dew,*

Fidelity and *Judd Rankin's Daughter* in which Glaspell, an insider who is empathetic to the region and its inhabitants, digs deeply into the Midwestern landscape to create stories that capture the experiences and influences of the region on its residents. This essay, however, focuses on two shorter narratives, "Poor Ed" and "Pollen" in which Glaspell voices her opinion through her characters on the difference between ambivalence toward and loyalty to the Midwest. She portrays conventional people of Midwestern origins, some of whom enjoy the Midwest and adhere to and accept that society's rules and regulations and others, unorthodox persons, who struggle to escape the pressures of their communities. Glaspell, absorbed in delineating tension, shows how individuals are torn between remaining loyal to their place of origin and trying to find better lives elsewhere, a tension which is *not* uncommon in Midwestern societies. My essay also sheds light on Glaspell's development as a writer. Her presentation of escape from and loyalty to the region is more complex in "Pollen" than in "Poor Ed"; in the former story, Glaspell experiments with conveying theme by locating the oppositions in one character, focusing on an internal tension, rather than showing a conflict between two people as she does in "Poor Ed." This development in narrative technique establishes "Pollen" as a subtler and more intricate story, illustrating Glaspell's maturation as a short story writer.

"Poor Ed" enacts the conflict between identifying with the Midwest and wanting to escape it. Glaspell represents ambivalence by presenting the region and its effect on individuals. She places her two main characters, Edward (Ed) and Henry Shackleton, in magnetic opposition to reveal how the Midwest affects her protagonists contrarily, Ed signifying escape from the Midwest and Henry symbolizing loyalty to it. Believing that education is an important asset to bettering himself and his life, Ed leaves his hometown where opportunities are limited and determinedly finds success as an "eminent critic" in Chicago, while Henry stays in Freeport (a fictional Davenport) leading a simpler life as a farmer ("Poor Ed" 121). Glaspell borrows noticeable features of her life and parallels her experience of leaving Davenport for a better future with Ed's pursuit of a more desirable professional opportunity. Her dream of becoming a writer matches that of her protagonist and, like Glaspell, Ed exemplifies the individual who has left his Midwestern hometown because he is convinced that the East has more to offer. A simple life in an agrarian setting is not enough; it is not proof of success. Like

Glaspell, Ed is shaped by the Midwest because it is his place of origin and, like the author, Ed is driven away from it to the civilized East due to its limitations.

By moving to Chicago, Ed becomes more of an Easterner: "[i]t was fifteen years since he had been back to the old place. He would not have been here now if the telegram about Henry's death had not reached him in Chicago" (124). He adopts the East's sophisticated lifestyle, outlooks, and intellectual orientation. He is proud to be "one of the forces molding public opinion" and boasts that his written works are "a real contribution to English Literature" (121). Ed can be regarded as a city dweller. In *The American Midwest: An Interpretative Encyclopedia*, city dwellers are described as individuals who "perceive their small-town counterparts as a source of humiliation and embarrassment" and this description accurately applies to Ed (88). Upon his return to Freeport for Henry's funeral, Ed is reminded of his upbringing through the Midwestern landscape and, interestingly, from his thoughts about the scenery; we sense that his newly adopted critical spirit voices Glaspell's presentation of the contrast between the liberal East (Ed himself) and the conservative Midwest (Henry). Ed, espousing an eastern perspective, is pretentious and biased in his opinion of his late brother, for to him, Henry "had remained an obscure farmer, living and dying in the house where he was born" and is an embodiment of failure and pitifulness for not having achieved much in life (121). Due to his opinions, though Ed does not attack the Midwest, he regards its people (including his brother), as "the country louts who hung around the village store" who "are not articulate," as uncultured and merely farmers (126; 122).

J. Ellen Gainor in *Susan Glaspell in Context* states that "Glaspell frequently critiques the Midwest and its narrow social codes in her novels, plays, and stories by juxtaposing characters with unacceptable, provincial views to those figures superior to their neighbors' limited perspectives" (70). Her statement clearly describes Ed's conceited personality because he is fixated on the fact that "it was impossible to keep away from that contrast between his life and his brother's" ("Poor Ed" 124). Ed views the Midwest from a distorted perception. He is unable to embrace Freeport's simple life, which he believes to be restrictive, because of his biases and insecurities and his desire to prove himself a success. With this outlook, Ed separates

himself from the people of his community and the region, showing his ambivalence toward the place.

Although there are no events that signify any social bondage to Midwestern conventional mores as in other Glaspell stories, we can observe that Ed is imprisoned by his own narrow-minded thoughts about Freeport. His insular beliefs are quite ironic since he regards himself as "the teacher of the nation—constantly interpreting and admonishing, ever finding the significance of things which other people had not known significant" and "a man of importance" (125; 127). His parochial understanding of the Midwest allows him to consider himself superior to the inhabitants of Freeport and his condescending attitude toward his hometown and its people, who ride the streets of Freeport in "horse and buggy," becomes understandable (122).

Different from his brother, Henry is portrayed as the loyal, hard-working Midwestern farmer. Peter Thompson, a representative community-minded and modest Midwestern farmer and Henry's neighbor, describes Henry as "a good enough farmer" having "a way of doing what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it, and not always what he ought to do when it should be done" (123). Here, Glaspell, relying on autobiographical material, subtly makes references to some of her grandfather Silas's personality traits.[3] The experimental spirit, a feature of Midwestern pioneers that shaped Silas, is also seen in Henry. Peter Thompson's description of his neighbor not only hints at Silas's personality, but also attacks Ed's prejudiced thoughts about "the country people" and his conceited image of himself (122). The only way Ed measures his self-worth and his success is by amplifying his brother's failure as a farmer. Ironically, he is clearly unaware of Henry's experimental spirit, one that is not unfamiliar to Glaspell herself.[4] His misconception of Henry as a mere unenlightened Midwesterner collides with Thompson's opinion of Henry as being of broad understanding and having a unique personality. The satire here targets Ed, who comes off as self-righteous and superficial. By highlighting this contrast between the two brothers, Glaspell reinforces her contradictory feelings about Midwestern life and her depiction of how the region affects individuals differently.

In *Susan Glaspell and the Anxiety of Expression*, Kristina Hinz-Bode discusses Glaspell's major plays in relation to the themes of isolation and communication. She investigates characters such as Seymore Standish in *Chains of Dew* who have problems communi-

cating with "narrow-minded people with shallow concerns and petty lives" (134). Seymore is very similar to Ed; both characters feel superior to their communities due to their knowledge, positions (Ed, an eminent writer, and Seymore, an acclaimed poet) and urban experience (Chicago and New York, respectively). Their egocentric perceptions of themselves increase their dubious feelings about their hometowns. However, Glaspell tends to use such characters not as a means of demeaning the Midwest or its people, but rather as a way to mock their failure to view the Midwest as a rich, cultural place filled with hidden treasures, such as loyalty to the land, devotion to ancestors and the importance of communal life, which are valued only from the perspective of simple loyal farmers like Henry.

"Poor Ed" is certainly a precursor of larger works such as the plays *Inheritors* and *Chains of Dew* and novels such as *Brook Evans* and *Judd Rankin's Daughter* in which Glaspell explores her knowledge of the Midwest by extensively delving into the topics of the effects of the landscape on characters' identities and ideologies and their inner conflicts of belonging. A short story that deals with similar thematic concerns is "Pollen," which was published in 1919, a year after "Poor Ed." In "Pollen," Glaspell continues her search for the topographies that shape her characters' connection or disconnection to the Midwest. To serve this purpose, Glaspell portrays one character, Ira Mead, who is devoted to his region, yet who contradicts and rejects the characteristics and customs that define it. The tension between devotion and rejection in "Pollen," unlike in "Poor Ed," is embodied in Ira's internal struggle.

The story revolves around Ira's quest to find the perfect planting technique that can better his corn crops. Through this event, Glaspell presents the subject of pioneers and their descendants and their dedication to the land. Glaspell, again, alludes to her grandfather's experimental nature as she does through Henry's character in "Poor Ed." Like, Henry, Ira, who does things "in his own way," is an experimentalist who does not conform to the conventional farming rules ("Pollen" 161). His creativity shines in his implementation of novel agrarian techniques, and his interest in the past results from his fascination for the first settlers and the spirit of the fields. Ira attempts to maintain some of the culture and traditions of the original immigrants, showing pride in what he does as a farmer. In the story, he ponders, ". . . when that . . . little boy—his father's father—came to

this middle western country he found the maize which the Indians were cultivating" (164).

Ira's reminiscing about the Indians clearly expresses Glaspell's acknowledgement of her paternal grandmother's stories of her antecedents: "My grandmother made the trip from Maine to Iowa in a 'prairie schooner.' As a little girl she knew the Indians. With what regret I think that although I used to hang upon her words when she told of pioneer days and of pioneer upbuilding of a democracy, I did not learn more from her" (Rohe 4). Grandmother Glaspell told her granddaughter stories about the early settlers and the Indians and spoke extensively about the values and importance of hard work. From these tales, Glaspell learned to respect the sacredness of the land and the need to be a worthy inheritor (Ben-Zvi 7). Like Glaspell, Ira acknowledges and appreciates the Indians' history and believes that their felt presence in the present is an important part of his fields and his family heritage even after their exit. His thoughts about his ancestors deepen his devotion to the land and exhibit his fidelity to the Midwest. In addition, Ira's attachment to the land is further reinforced by the Midwestern agricultural values of the people who have settled in the area long before he did and which he cherishes. We see this connection in his dedication to preserve the Mead orchard and turn it into a productive farm.

However, even though Ira can be classified as a Midwestern farmer with enduring pioneer values, such as self-reliance, his ambition, independence, and determination have hardened into less admirable traits. As Noe writes, "The self-reliance and determination that the pioneers developed to survive on the prairies have turned to self-absorption and obstinacy in their descendants" (Noe, "Midwestern Character" 9). Ira stubbornly tries to be a better farmer than his neighbors. He insists on creating a new kind of corn to "prove [his] supremacy over Balches and Dietzes and all other people around there" ("Pollen" 166). Also in his opinion, "when you are apart from others, what you do has to be superior" (162). From this quotation, we can infer that the idea of supremacy is intricately fused with the notion of isolation.

Similar to Ed, the protagonist of "Poor Ed," Ira is determined to feel greater than the members of his community by seeking perfection in production of a unique and improved corn type. His continuous trials for the perfect crop project his disassociation from Midwestern society; and his territorial, parochial view of the people

in his region is insular due to his disinclination to be part of Freeport's community. And even though he is devoted to the region, he is not committed to the people that inhabit it. Ira's detachment from his peers exemplifies his conflicting feelings toward the Midwest as he rejects the need for communal life. He may not desire to escape his hometown like Ed, who leaves for the East, yet he resembles him in his adamant rejection of its conventions regarding regional life and in his considering himself superior to the people of his society.

Ira is also different from Ed's brother Henry, who values his friends and is more community-oriented. He constantly rejects any form of human communication with the members of his society and prefers his isolation and privacy, thus proving his personality to be stolid and conservative. Ironically, regardless of their intrusive nature, Ira's neighbors prove to be significant sources of strength and support, and Ira learns this fact when his corn crops begin to wither due to a deficiency in cross-fertilization. Mary E. Papke explains that "the scientism of Mead's experiment serves to move him away from isolationism and towards community" (27). From observing his corn, Ira learns that, unlike him, his crop needs to associate with other corn to procreate. This is shown in the excerpt below:

> Corn was not at all like Ira Mead. It associated with other corn. You could fairly see it doing it. He stood one afternoon and watched the golden dust go through the air on a day of sunshine and wind—pollen from his standardized Mead corn blowing over and fertilizing his experiment corn, whose cross-fertilization he himself wanted to direct. There it came—procreate golden dust . . . . From the depth of a bitter isolation Ira Mead hated this golden dust. ("Pollen" 168)

Ira's invention of the Mead corn comes close to failure as he deprives his crops of pollination by "the golden dust," the pollen of other fertilized corn. This image of the corn crops serves two purposes. First, it signifies and emphasizes the corn's nature of needing to associate with other corn to grow and reproduce. Second, it motivates Ira to resort to his peers for help, one lesson that Glaspell learned from her grandmother on the importance of the community. Thus, in this analogy, the corn represents loyalty to the land's conventions, a feature inherent in its nature, and stands in opposition to Ira's ambivalence about the Midwest.

Papke's claim also resonates with one of the messages of "A Jury of Her Peers" where Glaspell, through Mrs. Hale, one of main char-

acters in the story, expresses a paradoxical thought that "We live close together, and we live far apart" (99). Here, Mrs. Hale acknowledges some of her community's attitudes about maintaining privacy or perhaps aloofness. Her insight is instigated by her feelings of guilt for not having reached out to Minnie Wright, the absent protagonist, at points of distress and despair. Simultaneously, Minnie Wright has preserved her aloofness. Similarly, in "Pollen," the narrator describes that "most of the people Ira knew were farmers, with a lean to the taciturn, and a feeling that it would be better if other folks minded their own business" (161). Both stories reflect Midwestern communities of the 1900s, which were considered to be privacy-oriented and regarded intervention in their affairs as breaking societal codes even if under oath (Bryan and Wolf xii). Ira, mirroring the attitudes of the time regarding the guidelines of privacy, endorses the idea of minding his own business and finds pride in doing so; in return, he expects his people to do the same. Ira ignores that the Midwest is a community-based society because he values his detachment from society. He believes that "to make his own thing perfect seems a way of showing he needed nothing from without" ("Pollen" 164). In this sense, isolation may be linked to privacy. Since Ira is known for his aloofness, he demands privacy, and through both his aloofness and privacy, Glaspell shows his ambivalence toward, not the Midwest per se, but the community and what the region represents.

Glaspell tried to understand the Midwest by composing stories characterized by individuals who were shaped by the positive and negative features of the region. She showed how some, such as Ed in "Poor Ed," chose to leave it for a better chance at life or perhaps as a means of escape, and also conveyed how those who stayed in it, such as the self-reliant characters in "Poor Ed" and "Pollen," were captivated by its past and their connection to the land. As it is a place that may stifle residents due to its rigidity, Iowa is also a place which copper-fastens their strength. Glaspell clearly dealt with her own feelings of uncertainty and loyalty towards her hometown through her stories, first by showing an obvious conflict between two individuals and their outlook on the region and second by establishing her artistic maturity by mirroring her own conflict through one character's internal struggle in making sense of his community.

Certainly, Iowa had a powerful impact on Susan Glaspell. Her story-telling is not intended to escape reality, but rather to plunge into it. And even though Glaspell attempts to show ways of escaping the

Midwest, a place in which she felt stifled, she wrote about it to explore its limitations and its way of forming the people born in it. Bartholomew Crawford states that "the Middle Western scene was for [Susan Glaspell] not something to be lived down or forgotten but one of her richest resources; and in every reference to the region of birth there is affectionate understanding and sympathy" (517-21). Glaspell's home was the Midwest, and Davenport was not just her home; it was the place that helped shape who she became. It fostered her social and professional independence. Glaspell celebrated the Midwest, its culture and customs by valuing them in her works because she was concerned with the meaning of a Midwestern heritage and the characteristics that defined the region. However, she never hid her disapproval of her birthplace's socio-cultural conventions, for she often criticized it and its inhabitants, while simultaneously cherishing and loving it as home.

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NOTES

[1]The Glaspell family first moved from England or Wales to the United States in 1755. After settling in southern New Jersey for nearly sixty years, the family moved west to Ohio and then to Kentucky in 1817. Finally, in August of 1839, Susan Glaspell's great-grandfather James moved to Davenport, Iowa, where he resided for the rest of his life (Ben-Zvi 13). His eldest son and Susan's grandfather, Silas Glaspell, inherited forty acres upon James's death, where he resided for forty-one years (Ben-Zvi 15). It is likely that both James and Silas were models for the character of Silas Morton in Glaspell's 1921 play, *Inheritors*.

[2]Having been raised in a community where women's place was in the home, Glaspell faced several difficulties as a woman who dreamed of a life not limited to matrimony and domesticity. For example, her father Elmer was against her attending university and she was considered an outsider for having pursued a writing career. Glaspell was also attacked for falling in love with George Cram Cook, a married man who had married twice before her. However, Glaspell defied her society's conventions; she graduated from Drake University in 1899, wrote for the Des Moines *Daily News* and the Davenport *Weekly Outlook*, married Cook, and became a novelist and a playwright. Glaspell voiced her convictions against the conventionality of her society in many of her writings, both fiction and nonfiction. In her columns for the *Weekly Outlook*, she attacks certain conventions that affected women's status, such as women's obligation to get married and lead domestic lives instead of continuing their education, pursuing professional careers, or simply choosing lives of their own. She was extremely vocal about the conventionality and superficiality of her society. Also, in her stories and plays, she portrays unconventional women who defy their families in pursuit of their aspirations and desires. In their biographies, Linda Ben-Zvi and Barbara Ozieblo recount many of Glaspell's struggles with social conventions.

[3]Continuing to reside in Davenport after his father's death, Silas inherited forty acres of land which he turned into a fruit farm. He enjoyed experimenting with his crops (Ben-Zvi 15). Characters reminiscent of Silas also appear in Glaspell's fiction, notably *Ambrose Holt and Family, Judd Rankin's Daughter,* and "Pollen."

[4]Glaspell was clearly influenced by her grandfather's experimental spirit, which is reflected in the innovative stagecraft seen in plays such as *Trifles, Bernice,* and *Alison's House*, in which the protagonist never appears onstage; and *The Verge*, in which she makes use of expressionist techniques.

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"NOTHING EVER DIES": REMEMORY, TRAUMA, AND PLACE IN *BELOVED* AND *PARADISE*

KRISTIN M. DISTEL

Since the 1997 publication of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, Morrison scholars have been looking for thematic and stylistic intersections between *Beloved* and *Paradise*. Many critics have situated their analyses of these two novels in the milieu of motherhood, which is certainly a fecund area of exploration and discussion.[1] Morrison scholar Sandra Cox has argued, for example, that both novels "portray female subjects in crisis due to motherloss, but each of these crises is more than a singular instance of bereavement" (97). Motherhood is somewhat outside the scope of my present discussion, but I would like to emphasize and extend Cox's argument that the women of *Paradise* experience "crises" that are "more than a single instance of bereavement" (97). Indeed, I will consider the ways in which the women share their memories and their senses of suffering, which Morrison consistently situates in specific, significant locations.

I propose that one as-yet-unexplored link between these two novels is Morrison's concept of "rememory." In *Beloved,* Sethe defines "rememory" as a remembrance that is inextricably tied to two factors: 1) a specific place, and 2) life-altering trauma. Denver tells Sethe that she has seen a figure—a baby in a white gown—holding onto Sethe's waist during prayer. She explains to Denver that she "just talk[s]" but does not pray, and that she was "talking about time." Sethe says:

> It's just so hard for me to believe in [time]. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out

> there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened. (36).

Sethe ultimately tells Denver that because of rememory, "Nothing ever [dies]" (36). The present essay applies this concept of rememory as described in *Beloved* to Morrison's *Paradise*. Establishing a connection between these two novels is important in part because *Paradise* is the third novel in what Morrison has described as a trilogy, one that begins with *Beloved* and continues with *Jazz*.

While *Beloved* is the starting point for my examination of rememory, trauma, and place, it will primarily serve as a point of departure for my argument; that is, I will apply the concept of rememory as a lens through which to analyze *Paradise*. I suggest that rememory serves as a framework by which to read the epigraph and complex, opaque conclusion of *Paradise*. Part of my analysis will rely upon Sandra Bartky's theory of shared suffering, which provides a taxonomy with which to interpret the way in which the Convent women deal with their traumatic pasts. In short, I suggest that a consideration of rememory in *Paradise* helps explain the ultimate fate of the Convent women, who seem simultaneously alive and dead in the novel's final chapter. In this way, the murdered women of *Paradise* are similar to the eponymous child, Beloved, in that they each experience life after supposed or apparent death.

Because *Paradise* is a less frequently discussed text when considered in the larger context of Morrison's body of work, I will provide a brief description of the Convent women—Connie, Mavis, Grace, Seneca, and Pallas—and the manner in which they form their unlikely feminist community. The Convent houses five women who have been abused, abandoned, raped, or otherwise harmed, often, though not exclusively, by men. They individually stumble upon a dilapidated former girls' school seventeen miles outside of the town of Ruby, Oklahoma, which is populated exclusively by people of African American descent. Each woman has been abused, abandoned, or otherwise traumatized, often at the hands of family members. Connie was brought to the Convent as a young girl in order to attend the school; Mary Magna, one of the Sisters from the school, rescued Connie from systematic sexual abuse in Brazil. Mavis, for example, escaped her abusive husband and her three living children who (she believed) sought her death as punishment for the suffoca-

tion of her two youngest children; the twins died in a hot car while Mavis was in the grocery store. Seneca is a nineteen-year-old woman who was abandoned at the age of five by the woman she believes to be her sister; she stumbles upon the Convent after having been sexually abused in myriad foster homes. Grace, too, comes to the Convent unintentionally, traumatized both by witnessing the Oakland race riots and by her father's unrelated criminal conviction and sentencing to Death Row. Pallas Truelove, pregnant, fifteen, and mute with trauma, is brought to the Convent by Billie Delia Best after the former sees her mother, Dee Dee, having intercourse with Pallas's own fiancé. This sight prompts her to flee her mother's home; she is subsequently run off the road by a group of men who rape her while she attempts to hide in a swamp.

It is in the Convent, where the women have found a sense of community, that they are able to access their rememories—and to share their trauma with others. Of course, readers of *Paradise* will remember the novel's startling first lines: "They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time" (3). Nine men from Ruby, who claim that sin, witchcraft, homosexuality, and deviance occur unchecked within the Convent, burst into the women's home and shoot them. However, in the novel's concluding section, Connie, Mavis, Grace, Seneca, and Pallas each appear very much alive.

The epigraph of *Paradise* is essential to an understanding of this enigmatic resurrection of the women, though the epigraph has received almost no critical attention. The epigraph is excerpted from a gnostic poem called "Thunder, Perfect Mind," found in the Nag Hammadi Nile Valley in 1945.[2] The poem was written in praise of Isis, the Egyptian patroness of magic and the wife of Osiris, whom Isis resurrected after he had been murdered. The passage that serves as Morrison's epigraph is as follows:

> For many are the pleasant forms which exist in
> numerous sins,
> and incontinencies,
> and disgraceful passions
> and fleeting pleasures,
> which men embrace until they become
> sober
> and go up to their resting place.
> And they will find me there,
> and they will live,

and they will not die *again*. (Emphasis added)

This final sentiment, "And they will live, and they will not die again," indicates that death is an impermanent state; this notion of temporary death underlies both *Beloved* and *Paradise*. Thus, a reading of the final chapter of *Paradise* through the lens of the epigraph indicates that the Convent women *are* both murdered and then alive—pieced together and revivified, perhaps by Connie's power of "stepping in" and raising the dead, similar to Isis's act of restoring Osiris. Morrison scholars, especially Sarah Appleton Aguiar and Justine Tally, have fruitfully and extensively debated whether the Convent women are, in fact, murdered.[3] Morrison's own drafts of the novel and her hand-scrawled notes from the early stages of writing the book indicate that she herself considered many different fates for the Convent women. (One of these early ideas included having the women escape through a tunnel in the basement of the Convent, which the original owner—an embezzler—had built as an escape route.) However, the epigraph indicates that the women *do* indeed die on the morning that the Ruby men attack the Convent, yet supernaturally, they are alive after this assault. Morrison describes the women as physically feeling pain from the wounds they received that morning; they are indeed alive and animated. For example, after the massacre at the Convent, Mavis winces and says "ouch" when touched on her side, explaining that her "side hurts a bit" (315). At this point, a parallel between the Convent women and *Beloved* becomes particularly clear and germane: in these books, death is transient. These characters are murdered, yet they live.

For the purposes of my analysis, though, the fact that the Convent women seem to exist in an ersatz resurrected state is less significant than are the places to which they go and the people whom they visit after the murders. What is important is rememory—the ways in which trauma and place converge via a sense of suffering. With the exception of Connie's presence at an idyllic island called Piedade, the fact that these postresurrection visits have their respective bases in traumatic experiences is generally uncontested. Mavis visits her daughter Sally, whom Mavis was convinced wanted to punish and kill her after the twins died. Grace, clad in army fatigues and carrying a gun, visits her father in jail; he has recently been freed from Death Row. Seneca encounters her sister who had abandoned her; their conversation is focused on trying to remember where, exactly,

the apartment complex where they once lived was located. Pallas, carrying both her baby and a sword, goes to her mother's house, where she saw her mother and fiancé being intimate just before Pallas was, it is suggested, the victim of a gang rape. Rememory, then, is not simply tied to trauma but, more specifically, *trauma that arises from a sense of betrayal*. Betrayal-induced trauma is especially harmful because it involves a breaking of trust, especially between close family members.

The Convent women do not simply feel traumatized because of the horrifying things that have happened to them and the unthinkable ways in which they have suffered; rather, they are devastated by having been betrayed by the people who had the power to protect them and, perhaps more importantly, the people who should have loved them unconditionally. For some of the Convent women, this sense of betrayal directs the places that the women visit after they are murdered. Pallas, for example, does not return to the lake where she hid from her rapists because the rapists' actions, while undeniably horrific, differ from betrayal by a family member. The novel privileges an ethic of familial closeness and defense of one's loved ones; the concepts of sisterhood and, especially, female solidarity pervade the novel and the conversations of the Convent women.

Two aforementioned factors—places and people—are inextricably tied to rememory; this connection helps contextualize and explain the similarities between *Beloved* and *Paradise*. In their resurrected states, Beloved and the women of the Convent return to the physical site of their respective trauma—Beloved to 124 Bluestone Road, where Sethe killed her, and the Convent women to the presence (and sometimes the homes) of the family members who abused and neglected them. Sethe's aforementioned belief that places, especially physical sites of betrayal and trauma, are alive, malevolent, and ultimately inescapable, helps explain why these characters seem tied to traumatic places in both life and the afterlife. Thus, both novels establish a connection between death, place, and trauma—a connection that is summed up in the concept of rememory.

The Convent depicted in *Paradise* demonstrates what feminist scholar Sandra Lee Bartky refers to as "feeling with" (86). "Feeling with" is characterized by deep compassion for others' suffering. Bartky's concept is more complex than is the more common and normative concept of empathy, though. Since 1946, the Oxford English Dictionary has defined *empathy* as the "ability to understand and

appreciate another person's feelings [and] experience." By contrast, "feeling with" requires one to experience others' pain alongside them; it is a shared response to shared suffering (Bartky 73-79). To "feel with" is to suffer when someone else suffers; it is a self-sacrificial means by which to ease another's pain. An empathetic person says, "I, too, know what it is like to experience grief and to feel betrayed"; one who "feels with" says, "I will suffer so that you may suffer less." The conversation between Connie and Mavis on the day Mavis arrives typifies the basic tenet that underpins the Convent; Connie chides Mavis for lying, not because lying is wrong but because it is unnecessary to hide one's shame or suffering in the Convent. Connie says that in the Convent, "[e]very true thing is okay" (38).

Because of this ethic of acceptance and empathy, one in which sufferers are encouraged to speak truthfully about their experiences, the Convent will accept anyone who needs a separatist space that removes them from their oppressors—and from the physical site of their oppression and betrayal. For example, Menus Jury, a man from Ruby who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Vietnam, comes to the Convent and is nearly nonverbal with fear and trauma. Rather than valuing their ethic of "feeling with," however, he is prompted by the rigid and prideful nature of Ruby, his town, to feel ashamed of his weakness and the women's kindness; he is one of the nine men who attack the Convent and murder the women who live there:

> Spending those weeks out there drying out, you'd think he'd be grateful. Those women must have witnessed some things, seen some things he didn't want ranging around in anybody's mind in case they fell out of their mouths . . . Getting rid of some unattached women who had wiped up after him, washed his drawers, removed his vomit, listened to his curses as well as his sobs might convince him for a while that he was truly a man unpolluted by his mother's weakness, worthy of his father's patience . . . . (277-78)

The Convent women allow Menus to stay as long as he wants, listen to him (when he is able to speak), and, though Grace is bothered by his presence, the women refuse to shame him when his remembered suffering causes him to lose control of his bowels and he defecates in their bed. In line with Bartky's analysis, the women of the Convent feel *with* Menus—*and* with anyone whose pain brings them to their

home. All are welcome, knowing that in the Convent others will share their sense of suffering—that they will feel *with* them. Bartky's notion of "feeling with" becomes especially apparent during the "loud dreaming" scene that occurs shortly before the Convent women are murdered.

As the novel draws toward its conclusion, storytelling and confessional-style divulgences become increasingly important means of combating trauma. Connie, the Convent's maternal figure and "a new and revised Reverend Mother" prompts the five battered, neglected Convent women to participate in what she terms "loud dreaming" sessions, in which Connie traces outlines of the women's naked bodies on the basement floor (265, 264). These sessions compel the women to reveal to one another their traumatic histories; the sessions also allow the women to exorcise the ghosts that haunt them. Seneca tells the four other Convent women about the abandonment she experienced as a child while she draws neat red lines on her painted form, which represent Seneca's habit of cutting herself. One of the Convent women asks Seneca of this abandonment, "Are you sure she was your sister? Maybe she was your mother. *Why?* Because a mother might, but no sister would do such a thing. Seneca capped her tube" (265, emphasis added). This exchange—or realization, rather—prompts an ontological shift within Seneca's character. Hereafter, her lived experience as an abused and abandoned child does not mark her in the same way that it does earlier in the text, particularly in that Seneca no longer engages in self-harm. The unnamed Convent woman who has helped Seneca understand the abuse she suffered has done more than solve the mystery of Seneca's parentage; she has taken away some of Seneca's suffering.

Morrison explains the women's act of "feeling with" one another in the following passage:

> That is how the loud dreaming began . . . In spite of or because their bodies ache, they step easily into the dreamer's tale. They enter the heat in the Cadillac, feel the smack of the cold air in the Higgledy Piggledy. They know their tennis shoes are unlaced and that a bra strap annoys them each time it slips from the shoulder . . . They inhale the perfume of sleeping infants and feel parent-cozy although they notice one's head is turned awkwardly . . . They kick their legs underwater, but not too hard for fear of waking fins or scales also down below . . . Each one blinks and gags from tear gas, moves her hand slowly to the scraped shin, the torn ligament. Runs up and down the

> halls by day, sleeps in a ball with the lights on at night . . . So, exhausted and enraged, they rise and go to their beds vowing never to submit to that again but knowing full well they will. And they do. (264)

Two elements of this passage are especially important. First, the pronoun "they" is remarkable; Mavis is no longer alone when she realizes her twins are dead. The four other Convent women are there too, suffering for and with her. They are with Pallas as she hides in the water from her rapists. They are with Grace in the Oakland riots, and they are curled up in a fetal position next to Seneca as she waits for her mother to return to their apartment. The women no longer suffer alone; their rememory has become collective.

The second important element of this loud dreaming scene is that each woman's shared memory is based in a distinct place—the site of her trauma. This again reiterates Morrison's use of rememory, first established in *Beloved* and then employed in *Paradise*. Sethe tells Denver that places remain, even if our memories become compromised or forgetful. The sites where we have suffered, where we see unspeakable things, will never fade; they house our rememories. When we share our suffering with others—or, rather, when others agree to take on part of our suffering and "feel with" us—the sites of our suffering become real for them, too.

The Convent women are able to return to the site of their trauma because, after the loud dreaming session, their painful memories are now communal among four other women—it is *shared* suffering and thus a comparatively more manageable burden. The women's rememories and bodies remain traumatized, but four other people are taking on part of that burden—that is, the memory of pain that they shared in the loud dreaming session—and the distribution of their trauma makes it more endurable. They are "feeling with" one another, and they no longer suffer alone in a strange place.

The Convent women have shared their stories of trauma and harm—that is, their memories of betrayal that are tied to a specific place, a place that *should* have provided safety for the women. Effectively, they have shared their rememory—that is, their recollection of trauma that is connected to a particular (and often familial) space. Morrison has defined her trilogy as "an exploration of love, in all its forms of recognition and value in African American experience" (Jessee 129). It seems that in *Paradise,* one of the many ways

that this love manifests is in sharing the suffering of others; it is an act of grace that ultimately allows the Convent women to share their stories, and their rememories.

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NOTES

[1]Representative of this area of Morrison scholarship are Renee Lee Gardner's "Subverting Patriarchy with Vulnerability: Dismantling the Motherhood Mandate in Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* "Terry Otten's "'To Be One or to Have One'" 'Motherlove' in the Fiction of Toni Morrison," Bharati Parikh's "Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," Kimberley Yates's "Explosions of "Maternal Instinct": Images of Motherhood in Selected Novels of Toni Morrison," and Linda Wagner-Martin's *Toni Morrison and the Maternal: From* The Bluest Eye *to* Home.

[2]In his preface to *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts,* James Robinson explains the significance of this discovery: "The Nag Hammadi Scriptures is a collection of thirteen papyrus codices . . . that were buried near the city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt most likely in the second half of the fourth century CE. They had been brought together earlier in that century and then buried in a jar for safe-keeping at the foot of the Jabal al-Tarif, a cliff close to the hamlet Hamra Dum. In all, there are some fifty-two tractates in the collection of Nag Hammadi codices, and, since six are duplicates, there are forty-six different texts. Of these, forty-one are texts that were not previously extant, but ten are very fragmentary, so that one may say that the discovery has added about thirty-one new texts to our knowledge of religion and philosophy in antiquity" (xi).

[3]Aguiar proposes that the women in the Convent are dead throughout the duration of their time in the Convent. Tally usefully outlines some possible explanations for the novel's conclusion: "Unless the reader wants to believe the rather unconvincing possibility that these women were not murdered . . . Morrison offers the reappearance of these 'ghosts' right out of the African belief system. There is, perhaps, an alternative interpretation: that these apparitions are, in fact, the creation of longing and desire, an attempt to fill the emptiness of loss" (40). Ultimately, though, Tally argues that the women exist as revenants at the close of the novel.

[4]For an extended analysis of this scene, I refer readers to my essay, "'Are You Sure She Was Your Sister?': Sororal Love and Maternal Failure in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *Toni Morrison on Mothers and Motherhood*. Ed. Lee Baxter and Martha Satz. Bradford, Ontario: Demeter P, 2017. 122-39.

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"I ONLY REMEMBERED THE HORSES": MASCULINITY, MEMORY, AND NOSTALGIA IN TONI MORRISON'S *HOME*

AARON BABCOCK

South African author J.M. Coetzee, during a series of dialogues with the psychologist Arabella Kurtz, poses a question about the willful invention of false memories. He asks of "the memories that make up one's past . . . Why those memories should be immutable—why they should not be amenable to revision, to being given an alternative spin, even at an extreme to being wiped out and replaced by more desirable memories" (20). Though Coetzee's concern is primarily one of craft motivated by an attempt to determine "the qualities of a good (a plausible, even compelling) story," this question could be directed at Frank Money, the protagonist of Toni Morrison's tenth novel, *Home,* published in 2012 (1). Money, an African American Korean War veteran in the mid-1950s, is haunted by his personal history of the war. Traveling from the West Coast through the Midwest before arriving "home" in Lotus, Georgia—a place Frank describes as " . . . *the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield*"—his narrative is one of repeated encounters with history, his own and that of the United States (Morrison 83). For Frank, who desires only ". . . something that stirred no feelings, encouraged no memory—sweet or shameful," the past is something to be buried, denied, or replaced (7-8). Nevertheless, his journey home to Lotus—whose name suggests the *Odyssey's* lotus-eaters and Alfred Lord Tennyson's languid, forgetful land "[i]n which it seemed always afternoon"—ironically forces Frank to confront not only his past, but also the roots of his masculine identity (54).

The tension between suppressing and confronting a painful past is central to *Home* and to Frank's construction of his own masculine identity. Though gripped by trauma from the war that manifests itself through sudden "pictures" of violence that "never [go] away," what

Frank tries most to bury are his persistent self-doubts about his status as a man (Morrison 20). In the end, Frank is consumed most not by the images of his comrades dying, but instead by the query he asks of himself: "*What type of man is that?*" (134). While this question is motivated specifically by his *"shame"* at his sexual exploitation and murder of *"[a] wee little girl"* in Korea, his recollections throughout *Home* are intimately tied to anxieties about his male identity (133-34). Beset by a lingering sense of masculine failure, Frank instead turns to re-imagining nostalgically the events of his past in order to reconcile his experiences with a sentimentalized, patriarchal, and white ideal of masculine identity.

Critical scholarship has rightly identified trauma and masculinity as two central themes of the novel. In Frank, scholars find Morrison "effectively deconstruct[ing] the troublesome heroic stereotype" of masculinity and in the process "remak[ing] the old self into someone new and authentic" (Fulman 143). For Justine Baillie, this self-fashioning and critique of stereotypes are found in the narrative's mix of third-person narration and direct address from Frank, which she asserts is the formal expression of "the fictionality underpinning America's racial and ideological structure" (196). Yet, despite the critical attention paid to the novel's exploration of what one critic calls "typically masculine experiences," of historical memory as biased or flawed, and of self-regeneration of the black male body and psyche, little space has been devoted to the connections in the novel between masculinity and cultural, or public, memory (Ibarrola 110).

Frank's healing transformation in the novel is profoundly personal, but it is not wholly individualistic. His rejection of a blinding nostalgia and subsequent awakening to a new form of masculinity parallels a larger cultural awakening to the racist and violent realities of the 1950s and their persistent place in our contemporary moment. Morrison remarks on this aspect of her novel when she speaks of the 1950s as an open wound only partially healed, the causes of which have been seldom acknowledged in popular histories or culture. Of the '50s she states, "I wanted to rip the scab off that period. There's all this *Leave It to Beaver* nostalgia. That it was all comfortable and happy and everyone had a job. Oh, please. There was violent racism. There was [Joe] McCarthy. There was this horrible war we didn't call a war, where 58,000 people died" (Minzesheimer). Put another way, the relationship between masculinity and memory in *Home* bears

weight beyond Frank's self-transformation; indeed, it engages directly with the ideologies that make such a historical vision—or revisioning—possible: white supremacy and patriarchal masculinity.

Frank's status as the masculine protagonist of the novel is unusual within Morrison's body of work. As such, her decision to dismantle the myth of the 1950s with a male lead is worth consideration. His masculinity is initially in line with what bell hooks defines in *Black Looks* as "the white colonizer's notions of manhood and masculinity . . . evident in black male slave narratives [in which] . . . black men engaged in racial uplift were often most likely to accept the norms of masculinity set by white culture" (90). Crucially, this set of "patriarchal norms" includes "the use of violence as a means of social control" (98) and a status defined by the male's ability to "work, make money, and provide" (91). Furthermore, hooks defines this particular brand of black masculinity as emerging more profoundly in the North, whereas "in southern black communities there were many avenues for obtaining communal respect" (91). All of this is to suggest that Frank's odyssey from Korea through the Midwest and into the deep South is less about saving his sister Cee and more about revealing the ways his masculinity and his past have been shaped and structured by the ideologies of white supremacy.

Morrison opens *Home* with an event that links gender and racial supremacy when Frank retells his childhood experience witnessing the burial of a black man in a horse pasture by white men in Lotus while accompanied by his younger sister Cee. Of the traumatic memory he states that "*I really forgot about the burial. I only remembered the horses. They were so beautiful. So brutal. And they stood like men"* (Morrison 5). Frank's way of remembering the event is revealing for the way it transposes elements of the masculinity of the white perpetrators of the violence—their savage cruelty, their upright, stances—onto the bodies of the horses and subsequently romanticizes these traits as being "like" those of men. Additionally, he reframes the event to erase the prone and implicitly unmanned black body of the victim, shifting the focus to an image of maleness that is brutal only in its stoic indifference. As such, the heart of the memory for Frank is not the sight of white men *"pull[ing a black] body from a wheelbarrow and throw[ing] it into a hole already waiting,"* but the sight of the horses (5). Exposed to the racially motivated violence against—and the negation of—black masculine bodies, Frank creates an alternative memory in which the horses occupy a mythically

masculine place. They serve as emblems of an identity and agency denied to black men throughout the American South and counter a memory of what Frank perceives as the failure of the black male body.

Furthermore, Frank attempts to inhabit the role of a patriarch for Cee by hiding the reality of the violence before them: *"When she saw that black foot with its creamy pink and mud-streaked sole being whacked into the grave, her whole body began to shake. I hugged her shoulders tight and tried to pull her trembling into my own bones because, as a brother four years older, I thought I could handle it"* (4). Frank's desire to shield his sister from the events happening before her is framed in his mind as an act that is profoundly noble and deeply masculine. The body thrust into the pit, with its "creamy pink" foot is suggestively feminized and softened by Frank's narration while he simultaneously focuses on the solidity of his own body in contrast by bringing the quivering Cee close to his rigid "bones" and their "brutal" hardness. He perceives it as his responsibility in this moment to mitigate her fear, and his expression of a desire to bring her body into the shelter of his own is a dramatic illustration of his "long[ing] to assume full patriarchal responsibility for famil[y] and kin" (hooks 90). Presented with the death of an adult black male who is a symbolic and, as revealed late in the novel, literal father figure, Frank responds by recasting himself in the role of a stoic male protector.

The memory, then, that opens the novel couples personal and communal history and identity; it is traumatic and lingering for Frank and the African American community in Lotus. Frank is very much aware of its centrality to his identity, but it also unconsciously colors his relationships with women in the novel. Of Lily, a woman he has been living and sleeping with in the North for an extended period of time, he states that she "has no competition in [his] mind except for the horses, a man's foot, and [Cee] trembling under [his] arm" (Morrison 69). His sense of self derives from this adolescent memory of violence and the women in his life that he views in simplistic and stereotyped roles with little regard for their individuality. First and foremost, they are—to Frank—the means to his masculinity. Tellingly, it is in the midst of his relationship with Lily, who grows weary of "the burden of shouldering a tilted man"— a man, it seems, who cannot "stand like a man" without leaning upon and exploiting for monetary support the domestic labor, sex, and self-definition of

the women he encounters—that Frank admits he centers his identity on the altered memory of his protection of Cee and the sight of the horses (80).

Unable to act as patriarch for Lily due as much to his own traumatic memories of the war that leave "him idle . . . just sitting on the sofa staring at the rug" as to Lily's strong drive for her own independence in contrast to what she perceives as "his clear indifference," Frank retreats into a familiar, selectively recalled memory in which he imagines himself as the male protector for Cee (78-79). After their relationship devolves into what Lily refers to as a series of "complaints" that "grew into one-sided arguments, since he wouldn't engage," Frank suddenly departs for Lotus in an effort to rescue Cee (78). His own narration is slippery on this point as he remarks that were it not *"for that letter"* about his sister's illness as the result of medical experiments by her employer, the eugenicist Dr. Beauregard Scott, he would *"still be hanging from her apron strings"* (69). Yet Lily's narration illustrates that "the tilted man," no longer able to rely on an increasingly assertive Lily as a crutch for his masculinity, heads South in search of the sister whose "trembling" in the horse pasture gave him a sense of male identity.

Indeed, of the women Frank relies upon to define himself, Cee is consistently the most prominent. He views her as containing the essence of his selfhood—the part of him akin to the horses in its strength, brutality, and willingness to face violence and remain unscathed. In one of the direct address portions of the novel, Frank remarks at length upon *"Cee . . . [m]y sister"* who *"was a shadow for most of my life, a presence marking its own absence, or maybe mine. Who am I without her . . . Deep down inside her lived my secret picture of myself—a strong good me tied to the memory of those horses and the burial of a stranger"* (103-04). This reliance on Cee for his sense of self is crucial, both for his masculinity and for his ability to create an alternative memory of the event tinged with a yearning to enact a specific type of masculinity. Again, the reader is presented with Frank reconfiguring the traumatic memory of the burial of a dead black man into the means of asserting his own masculinity: a "good" masculinity that is informed by the dominant, white ideologies of manliness. He is (supposedly) unaffected by violence, capable of sheltering "his" women and kin, and defined by self-mastery and control.

But, as readers, we also know that this image of himself as a sort of chivalric and patriarchal protector is built upon a brittle foundation. Frank is constantly required to shore up his patriarchal masculinity with revised memories and brash, violent actions that he perceives as his defense of womanhood. Symptomatic of this skewed perspective is Frank's getting a particular "thrill" from "each blow" he lands on a pimp callously watching two women fight in the dirt (101). Afterwards he "wonder[s] at the excitement, the wild joy the fight had given him" and concludes that the "violence was personal in its delight" and, furthermore, "he might need that thrill to claim his sister" (102). In other words, violent experiences for Frank are almost always interconnected by memories of Cee and, by extension, the memory of the "brutal" and "beautiful" horses—Frank's first foray into enacting patriarchal protection of femininity.

A similar instance of such a coupling of memory, violence, and gendered roles occurs in his recollection of a young girl who comes scavenging for food near his unit's camp. Frank begins by linking the young girl to his sister, remarking that her search for food *"[r]eminded me of Cee and me trying to steal peaches off the ground under Miss Robinson's tree, sneaking, crawling, being as quiet as we could so she wouldn't see us and grab a belt"* (94). Crawling in the dirt, a prone figure hugging the ground on his belly instead of standing, Frank, as well as Cee, is grasping after erotically suggestive and symbolically feminine peaches. Thus, Frank recalls an event that is at once comforting as it confirms him as Cee's protector and tinged with the tantalizing promise of erotic violence from the unmarried Miss Robinson. His linkage of Cee, the Korean girl, and Miss Robinson exposes Frank's view of women as occupying a supporting and often sexualized role in his masculine fantasies. Transported from the sexual exploitation and murderous violence of his experiences in the war to a fantasy in which he protects a young woman from violence while also experiencing the threat of the comparatively harmless, but still sexualized, disciplinary violence of the belt, Frank is placed in dual masculine roles: he is at once the chaste protector of his sister's "virginal" purity and a sexually viable partner for an adult woman.

The connection between Cee and his memory of the young girl propositioning an unnamed soldier is further complicated when the reader learns the soldier is, in fact, Frank. When first recounting the memory, Frank inhabits the role of detached observer, replacing himself with an anonymous soldier; Frank obscures and comments upon

the unnamed soldier's masculinity at a distance. Frank recalls: *"She smiles, reaches for the soldier's crotch, touches it. It surprises him . . . he blows her away . . . Thinking back on it now, I think the guard felt more than disgust. I think he felt tempted and that is what he had to kill"* (95-96). There is a dual move here: his recollection is at once a distancing from an event that nearly upends his view of himself as a masculine protector of women and a means of bolstering his own masculinity in comparison. Only later does Frank confess that it is he who is *"the one she touched"* and that it was *"[b]etter she should die. How could I let her live after she took me down to a place I didn't even know was in me . . . What type of man is that?"* (133-34).

Perceived as a fall from his uprightness, Frank's truthful memory of the event unmoors him from the masculine identity he so carefully cultivated through denial and revision. In admitting to his true actions in the moment, Frank tries to reclaim a semblance of the masculinity he has so highly valued in *Home* by perversely justifying his murder of the girl as a way of erasing the "proof" of his fall from the ideal Frank has set for himself. Ironically, he has mimicked the set of masculine behaviors he viewed as a boy in the horse pasture; but they are not those of the sentimentalized standing horses he claims to cherish. Instead, Frank mirrors the actions of the white men hiding the evidence of their guilt.

Thus, memory and masculinity are intimately connected for Frank. It is through reconstructed and altered memories that he repeatedly attempts to answer the question of what type of man he embodies. He has built his sense of self out of a set of traumatic moments from his past and, furthermore, he has tried to deny in these reconstructed memories that the events themselves were traumatic. In his retelling, he shifts the weight of the trauma to others (Cee, the unnamed soldier), and it falls to him to take on an altogether different burden, one less damaging to his masculinity. Out of these refashioned memories, Frank constructs a masculinity that is in accordance with the dominant national understanding of the male as not only a patriarchal protector, but also, implicitly, a white man. As such, Frank must engage in repeated acts of self-negation, suppressing his racial identity in favor of a patriarchal masculinity that nevertheless will never be recognized as legitimate due to the color of his skin. Traumatized from his youth, Frank conceives of masculinity in terms of sexual mastery and brute force—a view of maleness influenced by white supremacy and further strengthened by his experience as a sol-

dier among a population of racially othered Koreans whom he can dehumanize without consequences. The white masculinity he internalized as a boy in the pasture leads him to assert power and control over populations with less social power: women and nonwhites.

Additionally, the costs for Frank's sense of self bear weight beyond his individual experience; they reflect a much wider negation of identity occurring in numerous instances throughout *Home*. As Evelyn Schreiber states in *Race, Trauma, and Home*, "In a culture where whiteness is the norm, black identity is marginalized, and the nuances of this marginalization suggest a range of trauma associated with black experience" (1). A significant part of this trauma for Frank is his own fetishizing of white masculinity and the effect this has on his conception of black male bodies. The narrative illustrates the effect that white norms of masculinity and white assumptions about black bodies and masculinity have had on Frank, when he has a dreamlike vision of "a small man . . . [in a] wide-brimmed hat . . . in a pale blue zoot suit" (Morrison 33). Frank views the man as "comic" rather than as resisting dominant cultural and racialized images of masculinity, thinking to himself that

> He had heard about those suits, but never saw anybody wearing one. If they were signals of manhood, he would have preferred a loincloth and some white paint artfully smeared on forehead and cheeks. Holding a spear, of course. But the zoot-suiters chose another costume: wide shoulders, wide-brimmed hats, watch chains, pants ballooned up from narrow cuffs beyond the waist to the chest. It had been enough of a fashion statement to interest riot cops on each coast.
>
> Damn! He didn't want some new dream ghost for company. Unless it was a sign trying to tell him something. Was it about his sister? (34)

Frank's musing on his dream is fascinating as he professes to prefer the "Hollywood" image of the black male as a violent savage while implicitly feminizing the zoot-suiters. He would rather be reduced to stereotype than to an identity that bears even a whiff of femininity. Additionally, Frank, while dismissing them as unmanly, tries to connect the image to his sister. This search for a hidden meaning to the dream suggests that Frank is trying to make sense of it by using a traditionally white and patriarchal lens. The male body makes sense to Frank only as it relates to patriarchal duty. Regardless, the

zoot-suiters are not to be emulated despite (or perhaps because of) their racial agitation. Frank has no interest in what Robin Kelley refers to as the zoot-suiters' "identity that resisted the hegemonic culture and its attendant racism and patriotism" (165). Frank, it seems, views them similarly to how they were constructed in white popular media as "Draft dodging . . . unpatriotic dandies" (172). Association with such an image of black masculinity is in Frank's mind to be barred forever from attaining the patriarchal maleness that he has been striving for since he and Cee observed the burial.

The rejection of the zoot suit image in favor of a grotesque stereotype of blackness gains further significance at the novel's end when Frank and Cee re-inter the body of the unknown man they saw being buried years before who was murdered as the result of what Fish Eye refers to as "'men-treated-like-dog fights'" (Morrison 138). Frank further learns that the racially-motivated death of the unnamed man was the result of his sacrifice for his son, as they were "'[m]ade [to] fight each other. With knives . . . to the death'" (138). But rather than embrace a violent ideal, the man instead surrenders to violence in order to give his son a chance to live and escape. Coupled with the revelation that the horses central to Frank's memory have long since been sold "'[t]o a slaughterhouse'" for food, Frank is confronted with a completely different masculine ideal: one that eschews violence in favor of sacrifice as a means of protecting others (140). The supposedly invulnerable masculinity Frank has pursued so relentlessly—and with such detrimental consequences for himself, his sister, and others in the novel—is exposed as flawed, illusory, and ultimately just as subject to violence as the black body of the unnamed man buried in the field. Worse yet, Frank's method of remembering, and the masculinity he embraces, are the denial of both communal and personal history.

As such, it is important that at the novel's close, Frank and Cee set out to re-open the memory. The pair set off "[j]ust as long ago . . . hand in hand into unknown territory," and, though Frank is still described as her "big brother," Cee is no longer subordinated by his masculine posturing (142). Frank makes no effort to shield her from the sight of the dead man's "clean and smiling" skull and "[t]his time [Cee] did not cringe or close her eyes" when confronted with the bodily remains of racially motivated violence (143). The pair of them, as equals, set out to not only confront a now-shared past, but also to begin the process of healing the community as a whole.

The act of re-interring the remains allows for two significant and intimately linked events to occur. The first of these is the reappearance of the ghostly zoot-suiter, this time seen by Cee, watching them bury the body "[a]nd grinning" at them from "across the water" (144). This ghostly image is immediately paired with Frank's epitaph for the body, carved into "the sweet bay tree . . . beheaded, [but] undead" that reads "Here Stands A Man" (145). In this moment, then, Frank's masculinity is reconfigured and connected with that of the ghostly zoot-suiter who allowed himself to be killed in order to save his son. Frank no longer sees brutality and stoic detachment from events as a beautiful masculinity, but instead finds it in love and sacrifice. The confrontation of the past allows for a true self to emerge, one unburdened by white masculine ideals, and memory—even traumatic memory—becomes a path to self-healing for Frank and, by extension, the community of Lotus as a whole. Like the sweet bay tree with "[i]ts olive-green leaves [going] wild in the glow of a fat cherry-red sun," Frank, though brutalized by the violence of the Korean War and the violence of growing up as a young black man in the American South, finds that by confronting that violent past he is now more vibrantly alive than ever (145).

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NOTE

[1]All italicized quotations appear in italics in the original.

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REVIEW ESSAY:
RECENT HEMINGWAY BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN FENSTERMAKER

Hemingway at Eighteen: The Pivotal Year That Launched an American Legend, by Steve Paul. Chicago: Chicago Review P, 2018. 230 pages.

Ernest Hemingway: A New Life, by James M. Hutchisson. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2016. 292 pages.

Ernest Hemingway: A Biography, by Mary V. Dearborn. NY: Knopf, 2017. 735 pages.

Ernest Hemingway arrived in Kansas City in the fall of 1917 at the age of eighteen years and three months—if no longer a boy, still a very young man. A worthy Oak Park son, he was respectful, responsible, eager, ambitious, *and more*—a quick study, a wit, a lively talker, an embellisher. Steve Paul pursued Hemingway—particularly this young reporter—through more than forty years as writer and editor for the *Kansas City Star*, and, recently, as co-editor of *War + Ink: New Perspectives on Ernest Hemingway's Early Life and Writings*. Fellow biographer Paul Hendrickson (*Hemingway's Boat*) images in his foreword the focus of *Hemingway at Eighteen*: "The period of 1917-1918, for both America and Hemingway, was hugely important. For both century and man, there was an exit from the garden, a kind of going from innocence to sin, from shelter to what Bob Dylan might call 'no direction home'" (viii). Understood thus, Hemingway's *annus mirabilis* invites serious attention.

Hemingway's eighteenth year hardly presents uncharted territory. Do we need another biography, one emphasizing the earliest published writing and that—journalism? Hemingway actually told bibliographer Louis Henry Cohn that "[i]t is the height of silliness to go into newspaper stuff I have written, which has nothing to do with the other writing" (qtd. in Paul 24). In fact, Hemingway's six-and-

a-half months' *Kansas City Star* experiences surface in each of his story collections: "Chapter VIII" (*In Our Time*); "The Pursuit Race" (*Men Without Women*); "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" (*Winner Take Nothing*). Establishing this point, Paul uncovers a provocative anomaly—and subject for another day: Hemingway's substantial Nick Adams chronicle ignores altogether his Kansas City experiences (10).

Uninterested in college, but having written nearly 15,000 words for the high school *Trapeze,* Hemingway, through his Uncle Tyler, accepted an entry-level reporter's position with the *Kansas City Star* in October of 1917. Paul sets the scene: Kansas City's steady growth (population 300,000) and prosperity center in grain, cattle, an active railhead; its culture ranging from Jascha Heifetz to William S. Hart; its daily newspaper among the nation's best; city and nation then embracing wartime footing.

Publisher William Rockhill Nelson champions "everyday lives" (qtd. in Paul 64), presented without bylines in the uniform *Star* "voice" (qtd. in Paul 27). A wartime exception is Teddy Roosevelt—outdoorsman, patriot, Hemingway's boyhood idol, prophet for the "morally strenuous life" (28). "[A] terrible thing that our loved ones should face great danger, but . . . a far more terrible thing if . . . they were not treading the hard path of duty and honor" (qtd. in Paul 121). Duly swayed, Hemingway joined the Missouri Home Guard. To sister Marcelline he wrote that "I will go not because of any love of gold braid glory etc. but because I couldn't face anybody after the war and not have been in it" (qtd. in Paul 42). Later claiming eleven attempts to enlist, Hemingway—hampered by a weak left eye but encouraged by co-worker Theodore Brumback, a friend who lost an eye—ultimately committed to the Red Cross (accepting those unable to meet armed forces requirements).

Typically, patriotism partners with religion. Not in this "immoral" Midwestern hub. Government authorities threatened a quarantine: "[Those] who entice soldiers to whisky, drugs, and women are a worse menace to the Nation's defense than the German army" (qtd. in Paul 69). Paul shapes Hemingway's assigned "posts" as moral vantage points: the *police station*, featuring anti-social behavior from the ways and wiles of prostitutes to multivarious violences like the deadly robbery underpinning his later "Drevitts and Boyle" vignette (*In Our Time*); and the *railway station*—where, more positively, Hemingway pleased his proud-father-baseball-fan by

interviewing renowned Grover Cleveland Alexander, now a Cubs pitcher (Paul 118). For his father, Hemingway is always high energy, hard-working, successful: "Having to write a half-column story with every name, address and initial verified and remembering to use good style, perfect style in fact, and get all the facts and in the correct order, make it have snap and wallop and write it in fifteen minutes, five sentences at a time to catch an edition as it goes to press . . ." (Paul 125).

Paul humanizes Hemingway, not least by dramatizing his simultaneous presence in Kansas City and Oak Park. Ernest wrote mother Grace praising her baking, regularly shared with appreciative *Star* co-workers, and steadily reaffirming his moral uprightness despite her fearing big-city temptations. Actually, early on Ernest initiated a multi-faceted adult self, distanced from the "conventional, pedantic, moralistic" universe of father and uncle. Regardless, Paul finds no personal excesses: although "knowledgeable of brothels," Hemingway "remained a sexual innocent" (136). Nicknames proved a wholesome pattern central to Oak Park and Kansas City: "Hemingstein" among *Star* co-workers denominates "Smith the Beamer," "Lackpants Hicks," "Broken Bill." His siblings' nicknames continued unchanged—Bipehouse, Nunbones, Nubs—but they were to write him now as the "great litterateur—Stien" (sic). With Marcelline, he remained her familiar "old Brute" (63).

Hemingway's most comprehensive reporting center was the General Hospital. His words, among twenty-nine *Star* hospital stories in January and February of 1918, remain indeterminate. He did work throughout on investigations touching administrative incompetence, political corruption, graft (73, 85), even routine issues worsening during wartime: staff shortages, smallpox and spinal meningitis, inadequate space/facilities. Hemingway's known texts—epitomized in "At the End of the Ambulance Run" (20 January) offer moving human snapshots employing an "unsentimental tone, presentation of character through speech, use of detail" (93). Marcelline expresses a core truth: Hemingway "soaked up other people's experiences like a blotter. . . ." often later "making them his own" (qtd. in Paul 137). Paul summarizes more broadly: "In six and a half months at the *Star,* Hemingway experienced a compressed, streetwise alternative to a college education that opened his eyes to urban violence, the power of literature, the hard work of writing, and a constantly swirling stage of human comedy and drama."

Fleshing out these judgments, Paul's appendix presents four Hemingway articles— humanizing character studies capturing contemporary social/cultural moments and figures: a diminutive immigrant prize-fighter; a "street-walker" back-grounded by soldiers partying with fashionable young women her age; wide-ranging personalities anchoring ambulance/emergency room dramas; patriotic males volunteering for army tank duty. Important, too, a coda details Paul's research (and solution?) regarding a long-standing conundrum: Hemingway did/did not lie under a Ford while detectives shot two internal revenue agents ("Battle of Raid Squads," 1/6/18). Unearthed by Paul, the court witness list answers affirmatively.

Paul's Kansas City tale is exact, compelling. Less exact are claims closing Hemingway's *annus mirabilis* detailing his Red Cross/Italy period from May to July 1918. On a light note, Paul cites actress Mae Marsh's husband of forty-eight years affirming that she and Hemingway never met, conclusively debunking the love-leading-to-imminent-marriage story Hemingway briefly sprung upon his parents, Marcelline, and the *Star* newsroom from New York in May. Paul reports more serious fabrications in Italy: the braggadocio of a wounded—later medaled—Hemingway is unappreciated by some others who had been wounded and by certain Red Cross authorities; he writes home, knowingly misstating: "I'm the first American wounded in Italy." (Red Cross Captain Edward McKey—a month before Hemingway's wounding and in the same approximate area—was killed). Paul also considers *possible*, the improbable: Hemingway's physically assisting an incapacitated soldier (154-55, 157), despite having a machine gun bullet in his right knee, another in his foot, and ten serious shrapnel wounds. Religion, too, enters Paul's vision of Hemingway's wounding, and necessitates at least one correction: the priest administered the "Last Rites," not Baptism. Also, regarding religion, Paul's conclusion misfires: "What remains essential in Hemingway's experience on the moonless night at Fossalta was that at a crucial moment he imagined that he had felt his soul 'go out of me and go off and then come back'" (qtd. in Pau1 157). These words—fictional Frederic Henry's a decade later—convey what meaning here?

Hemingway's understanding of his Red Cross wartime experiences would clarify only slowly. Not so his writing skills. These developed inordinately in Kansas City—notable and noted in the

newsroom. Steve Paul—newsman/journalist/biographer—appreciates this truth and presents it beautifully in the encouraging good-bye sentiments of fellow *Star* reporter Tubby Williams—Ernest then leaving for war: "Write at war! It will be the making of you—the beginning of a career . . . It will be the making of you. You see things. You read human interest like a book. And above all you can tell it" (qtd. in Paul 133-35).

In 2016, James M. Hutchisson's *Ernest Hemingway: A New Life* laid claim to being the first comprehensive single-volume Hemingway biography in a quarter century, roughly since Mellow's *A Life Without Consequences* (1992). To be clear, contemporary Hemingway biographical studies actually are ubiquitous. Published in 2016-17 alone: Leslie Blume's *Everybody Behaves Badly*; Andrew Farah's *Hemingway's Brain*; Verna Kale's *Ernest Hemingway*; Terry Mort's *Hemingway at War*; Steve Paul's *Hemingway at Eighteen*; Nicholas Reynolds's *Writer, Sailor, Soldier, Spy*; Linda Wagner-Martin's *Hemingway's Wars*. The difference: none of these volumes features Hutchisson's comprehensiveness.

Breadth warrants praise, but focus here can confuse. Jacket blurbs emphasize the former, i.e., not the more typical narrow, even singular, interests: war, journalism, gender, mental health, sport, artistry. Hutchisson tracks Hemingway's art and biography from multiple perspectives: (a) favorite geographies (from Chicago and Michigan to France, Key West, Spain, Cuba); (b) particularly in the later years, Hemingway's increasingly serious mental and physical issues; and (c) tracing throughout a recurring creative inspiration—also Hutchisson's principal focus: "viewing each major novel in terms of Hemingway's relationship with a female," not necessarily a sexual partner, but including women he loved and lost: wives, lovers, mistresses (3).

Unclear, also, under this new lens, Hutchisson's visuals: the front and back covers; the twenty-three photos. These frozen moments shape his story how? Inexplicably, six jacket blurbs, including a lengthy publisher's description, ignore both Henry Strater's 1922 famous *Boxer Portrait* (front cover) and the 1916 photograph of Hemingway hiking lakeside in Michigan (back cover). Each image presents a striking Hemingway (in Strater, the "mature" face of a pensive, intelligent young adult; in the black/white Michigan photo, a confident, well-outfitted teen-aged sportsman, soon to *be* Strater's young adult). The issue? Neither image suggests Hutchisson's prin-

cipal focus: viewing each major Hemingway novel in terms of his relationship with a female; moreover, the Michigan image suggests a hallmark photo of Nick Adams—for all his importance, not a character in a Hemingway novel. These perspectives hold promise, but "issues" exist (e.g., emphasizing novels obviously reduces focus on Hemingway's short stories).

Hemingway appears in sixteen of the twenty-three black/white photos. Particularly moving: an aging, white-haired Hemingway sitting bedside beneath a crucifix while reading a letter (1959). Particularly requiring clarification: a full-page reproduction of a well-known photo: an attractive Hemingway posing in his self-designed, self-aggrandizing Red Cross officer's uniform. Hutchisson's point?

The women pictured are those expected: Agnes von Kurowsky, Hadley Richardson Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Pauline Pfeiffer Hemingway, Jane Mason, Martha Gellhorn Hemingway, Mary Welsh Hemingway, Adriana Ivancich. Among fourteen chapter titles, Hutchisson links six women explicitly to five "major" works: Duff Twysden (no photo) [*The Sun Also Rises*]; Pauline Hemingway [*A Farewell to Arms*]; Jane Mason [*To Have and Have Not*]; Martha Gellhorn [T*he Fifth Column* (a play)]; Mary Hemingway/Adriana Ivancich [*Across the River and Into the Trees*]. Two other women appear in early chapter titles; neither is associated explicitly with a novel, but rather with a time and place: Agnes [Italy] and Hadley [Michigan, Chicago]. Grace Hemingway appears only in an early family photo (1905).

The complete female cast presents what "markers" for the reader? Wives Pauline and Martha appear alone. Mary, wife the longest, has the smallest picture, and only Mary *shares* a chapter heading—with youthful Adriana. Notable in this context, Adriana's photo (she and Hemingway "intimately" juxtaposed) is the largest among the women. Unclear: how the jacket-cover images and these photos underscore Hutchisson's primary emphases, particularly his "viewing each major novel in terms of Hemingway's relationship with a female."

Chapter titles confuse and may even unravel expectations. Chapter one, "The Midwest: Childhood and Youth," emphasizes no woman specifically—not even Grace Hemingway in Oak Park (although Hemingway's complicated relationship with his mother is introduced, and more fully considered, particularly vis-à-vis live-in

housekeeper Ruth Arnold, in chapter three). In Michigan, Katy Smith is not mentioned, but Native American Prudence Boulton is. She, Hemingway's first sexual partner, inadvertently effects a rare short-story intrusion into this novel-driven study: she is Prudie in "Ten Indians," Trudy in "Fathers and Sons." Later, because no woman is associated with more than one novel, only Jane Mason and Martha Gellhorn appear in chapter titles across Hemingway's most prolific decade (1930-1940) during which he wrote eight books. Moreover, Gellhorn's presence anchors in her Spanish Civil War reporting the substance of Hemingway's minor work, *The Fifth Column* (1938). Then, clear exceptions develop touching Hutchisson's central organizing principle. No woman centers the discussion of the Pulitzer Prize-nominated *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940); with Mary/Adriana associated with *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950). No female impetus underwrites the Pulitzer Prize- winning *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). Neither *The Fifth Column* nor *The Old Man and the Sea* is listed in a chapter title—although the latter is appropriately praised, including its role in Hemingway's Nobel Prize (1954).

As critic and biographer, Hutchisson values accuracy, for example recognizing as overzealous and hence inaccurate, John O'Hara's famous Hemingway assessment in the *New York Times Book Review* (1950): the "greatest writer since Shakespeare" (qtd. in Hutchisson 213). Unexpected, then, are Hutchisson's own overstatements—from his first words: "Ernest Hemingway is probably the most famous literary figure of all time. Some might argue that Hemingway wasn't the greatest American writer, or even the creator of the best American book. But Ernest Hemingway certainly is *the* American writer" (1). Hemingway's "letters to his wives and wives-to-be are among the most passionate and heartfelt in all of literary history" (3). Such effusions appear throughout: "The stratospheric success of *A Farewell to Arms* brought Hemingway to the pinnacle of his career" (107). Of course, intensity does not guarantee correctness, as in the hyperbolic statement that "in most of Hemingway's work death is abrupt and savage" (109)—or erroneous: "Cuba had much greater impact on his creativity than any other location in Europe or the United States." Some Hutchisson hyperbole may be debatable: for example, that "Hemingway's keystone, his chief fictive subject, was violent death" (2, 6). Obviously accurate regarding *Death in the Afternoon*, does this statement apply to *The Sun Also Rises*? to the Nick Adams stories? Francis Macomber dies violently, but his

growth, not his death, is the story's subject. (Again, Hutchisson's focusing primarily on novels makes Hemingway's achievements in the short story difficult to insert.)

For this study's users—both students and professionals—issues not factual but organizational arise, particularly involving the index and bibliography. Hutchisson's index excludes individual entries for all of Hemingway's fictional characters—e.g., women: Catherine (*A Farewell to Arms*), the wonderful monologists Marie and Helen (*To Have and Have Not*), Pilar and Maria (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*), Renata (*Across the River and Into the Trees*). Similarly, the fictional men: no Jake Barnes; Sir Henry Morgan but not Harry Morgan; no Nick Adams, Hemingway's most fully developed character. Finding discussions of Hemingway's characters through the titles of the works in which they appear is possible for Jake (although not easy, given how many indexed pages deal with *The Sun Also Rises*), or Santiago, but not for Nick or Bill or Marge,—who remembers all the titles of the Nick Adams stories? Not indexing Hemingway's characters is a mistake. The bibliography issue is simpler: sources fully cited in chapter notes generally are not listed in the "Selected Bibliography" or in "Other Sources," making discovery of their existence uncertain.

Despite these reservations, Hutchisson's "life" possesses numerous strengths. His prose is direct, fluid, clear. Hemingway's 1930s may demonstrate:

> • Language: Hutchisson explores debates over expletives, profanity, obscenity: in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) (rephrasings, dashes); in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) (blanks: "f—k"). With *To Have and Have Not* (1937), a breakthrough: Harry dying is allowed to aver thematically—". . . a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance." The continuous threat of language censorship ends unexpectedly in 1940. Hemingway's collapsing marriage and expensive lifestyle underwritten by Pauline's wealthy father and uncle necessitate—in light of divorce—a bestseller; a narrative without profanity, Hutchisson argues, stood a better chance of best-seller status (170). Thus, despite language awkwardnesses, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* presented Scribner's no "unacceptable" words.
>
> • Finances: Hemingway reached beyond his art in the 1930s to "lesser" forms—*Death in the Afternoon, The Fifth Column*—and journalism: *Esquire, Ken, NANA* (170). These experiments proved

costly: his book sales in the 1930s were 116,072, just 14,397 more than for *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929 alone (170).

• Professional man of letters? Despite inordinate pressures, Hemingway claimed indifference to the "social significance" of authorship, particularly regarding attacks on *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa*: "A thousand years makes economics silly and a work of art endures forever, but it is very difficult to do and now it is not fashionable" (146); later, regarding *To Have and Have Not*, Hutchisson argues that Hemingway's "poor showing may have just gone to prove his contention that advancing social theories was not the job of great literature. Great art conveyed an emotional response to the universal human condition of human suffering not to economic injustice" (150).

• Spanish Civil War: Despite criticism, Hemingway committed himself to Spain. Hutchisson offers various "touch points." Martha acts more bravely than Hemingway, but much matter here is verbal: "Fascism is a lie"—League of American Writers (156); *NANA* texts; *The Spanish Earth* vignettes (MacLeish, Hellman, March, Ivens, Welles); *The Fifth Column*.

Hutchisson's concluding details begin post-1945 as "land, sea, air" themes begin to emerge as *Across the River and Into the Trees* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. These and other plans are "realized" posthumously in *A Moveable Feast, Islands in the Stream, The Garden of Eden*—particularly the latter mingling artistic, personal, and sexual identities (204-05; 235-37)—and *Under Kilimanjaro*. The finality—mental health. Hutchisson's concluding fifty pages track Hemingway's decline, precipitous after the two African plane crashes in 1954. These precisely detailed pages, relatively unhampered by technical terms, chart the not easily summarized: depression, suicide attempts, incompatible medications. Hutchisson's dark albeit well-documented conclusion: women, conflicting medicines, personal medical history explain all.

Mary V. Dearborn's *Ernest Hemingway* is the first comprehensive Hemingway biography written by a woman. Dearborn, formerly a Mellon Fellow in the Humanities at Columbia, is an accomplished biographer, her subjects ranging broadly: Peggy Guggenheim, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Louise Bryant, John Dewey. Knopf's cover jacket is both ambitious and curious. On the inside flaps, the publisher shapes a detailed 500-word blurb: "Drawing on newly available materials—among them, the vast collection of papers left behind

when Hemingway fled Cuba in 1960; his medical records; his complete FBI file detailing his wartime experience; the newly opened files of the KGB; the papers of his mistress . . . ." Powerfully underwriting Dearborn's biographical focus—who was Ernest Hemingway, what made him that person—a dramatically domestic boxed text heads the back jacket: "'All families have skeletons in their closets,' said Ernest Hemingway, 'but the Hemingways have heaps.'" After the death of his mother, he wrote, "'How beautiful she was when she was young, before everything went to hell in our family and how happy we all were as children, before it all broke up . . .'" Without doubt, these sentiments, memories, anchor much of the biographical detail that follows here as Hemingway moves from a strong, intact family unit (although Dearborn does include his father's knowledge of and objections to his wife's lesbian relationship with live-in housekeeper Ruth Arnold) to a descent into suicidal madness.

The four back cover blurbs disappoint. None is from a Hemingway biographer; none claims for Dearborn's study any singular contribution to Hemingway studies: "Hemingway was acting out a rage that burned him up inside. It wasn't exuberance over life that drove him on, but a desire to eat the world alive. This is a biography about a dangerous, brilliant writer." From a starred review in *Publishers' Weekly*, the clichéd assertion: "Dearborn revisits one of America's most popular writers with insight and finesse, in this rich, detailed biography. Dearborn's account shines from beginning to end."

Anomalies among the blurbs pale in the harsh light of the half-page cover photo: thirty-three-year-old Ernest Hemingway points and sights a Thompson submachine gun at the reader! This "macho" image suggests the negative "Hemingway character" of biographical studies in the first three decades following his death—'60s to '80s—when readings of Hemingway's life affected by images such as this one shaped and misshaped readings of his texts. Over the past three decades, Hemingway biographical and critical studies have broadened substantially. Today, both gender studies and environmentalism (each touched on explicitly in Dearborn's prologue) appear routinely in Hemingway criticism, downplaying the negative potential in this "macho," machine-gunning cover figure. As Dearborn, herself, observes: "I think we should look away from what feeds into the

legend and consider what formed this remarkably complex man and brilliant writer" (7).

Dearborn's text, of course, is the principal subject at hand. Her prose is direct, matter of fact. Her tale—unfolding across thirty-two title-less chapters—centers on well-known figures. Early, in postwar Chicago, we find Anderson, Dreiser, Frost, Lardner, Lindsay, Masters, and Sandburg. Later, in Paris, appear Callaghan, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Loeb, McAlmon, Pound, Stein, and Wilson. Places and things—houses, ships, landscapes—are touched upon only lightly in the text, or ignored. Similarly, among the volume's fifty photographs, most feature people, often a single person and only rarely objects: no Paris scenes (e.g., no iconic Sylvia Beach/Shakespeare and Company), no Pilar or record fish, no lions, no Finca—and no cats. (Despite local lore, Ernest and Pauline had *no* cats in Key West.)

Dearborn's primary focus is *not* literary criticism—no ranking or explicating works already understood to be worthy. Her subject is *people,* personal interactions. Hemingway is three-dimensional and often painfully human—"finding it difficult to give and receive love, to be a faithful friend . . . to tell the truth, even to himself" (9). Dearborn reconfigures the man using new data, and she "narrates"—essentially through biographical sketches. Hemingway is an artist, yes, but primarily we see him interacting with family or developing relationships among his many male and female friends—and enemies. A characteristic example involving friendships (material published here for the first time) focuses upon *In Our Time*, Hemingway's first American publication. It centers on two early friends and fellow professionals, both publishing with Boni and Liveright. The *In Our Time* manuscript was about to be rejected. Harold Loeb intervened and "insisted that it be reconsidered"; Sherwood Anderson phoned publisher Liveright directly (176-77). Although aware, Hemingway never spoke of these details; what is worse, within a year he certainly "responded most unkindly" regarding each fellow author in *The Torrents of Spring* (Anderson) and in *The Sun Also Rises* (Loeb).

While this story involving literary figures is revealing, a narrative closer to Dearborn's more purely biographical concerns unfolded a bit earlier: young wife Hadley "lost" in the railroad station essentially all of Hemingway's works in progress—manuscripts and carbons. He became dramatically furious. Dearborn offers

telling perspectives. Ezra Pound is brief: "No one is *known* to have lost anything by *suppression* of early work" (i.e., begin again!). Dearborn expatiates: " . . . it gave Ernest an out when a novel was expected from him; his first novelistic effort had been traumatically lost. It was a dramatic, even a romantic, story, and it was seamlessly absorbed into the saga of Ernest's nascent career, becoming a legend about the legend" (133). Dearborn's biographical point: Hadley's grief at this loss was deeply felt and lifelong. "Ernest never forgot, never forgave. More, he never let her forget that he had not forgotten . . . Whatever happened between them, he would always have this edge" (134).

Despite the personal downsides of early authorship in Paris—*In Our Time, The Torrents of Spring, The Sun Also Rises*—the decade closes on a dramatic note of success, memorialized here not by literary detail, but by another snapshot, a Key West sketch: Max Perkins, Scribner editor and consistent friend and helpmate, in the evenings reading the manuscript of *A Farewell to Arms*. Pleased, even excited, he rereads it on the train back to New York. "'It's a most beautiful book . . . It's full of lovely things.' It was all he could do not to buttonhole someone on the train and make them read it; as it was, he said he would take the bottle of absinthe Ernest had bestowed on him 'into the train's bathroom & drink a lonely health to you'" (272).

Although Dearborn's interest is primarily biographical, she is not silent on Hemingway's literary texts, particularly the short stories: "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "Big Two-Hearted River," "Soldier's Home," "In Another Country," "Now I Lay Me," "Cat in the Rain," "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and, most particularly, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." She emphasizes male/female tensions across the stories, and war, particularly, in the Nick Adams tales. She then takes up "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" for larger thematic purposes touching Pauline and Ernest, specifically, Hemingway's understanding of the attraction and role of Pauline's money. Fictional Harry's rich wife's money corrupts him and steals his power to write (208), a dire condition because, now dying, he has much to write about and recognizes his moral responsibility to do so: "He had seen the world change . . . It was his duty to write of it, but now he never would" (360). Hemingway's fear?

After *A Farewell to Arms,* Dearborn believes, "Ernest was careless . . . particularly in both *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), often going on for too long on specific sub-

jects, making much of his own observations, frequently overwriting . . . ." A similar lack of discipline, Dearborn argues, ruined *To Have and Have Not* (1937), when Hemingway yielded to warnings of libel (of Dos Passos, primarily) but failed to replace/rewrite at the points of deletion (361). His "weakest book," Dearborn protests, although commercially successful, was *Across the River and Into the Trees*—period! (513). Surprisingly, she can resist even indisputable success and uniform praise: of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Dearborn writes that it "lacked ambition and passion of his earlier work" and was "not a genuine earned representation of his art" (548).

An inappropriate biographical—as opposed to artistic—lack of discipline in this period (1933) involves Ernest, Mike Strater, and the submachine gun of the cover photo. Using the gun to kill sharks threatening hooked fish, Ernest shot a shark whose blood only attracted more sharks while Strater fought a fish. Strater landed the fish—even mutilated a record black marlin—but in photo sessions at the dock and later in *Time* and *Esquire* articles, Hemingway allowed, even furthered, the idea that the catch was essentially his, he having "spelled" a tiring Strater (346). Thus ended that friendship.

Hemingway's single greatest success, *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* 1940 (nearly 700,000 copies printed in America by 1943) was nominated for but denied the Pulitzer for its "sympathy" for communism and sexually explicit scenes. The 1940s end with Hemingway drinking "virtually without cease" (531) and facing a rising paranoia regarding his place as *the* writer of war fiction of his generation vs. Mailer, Vidal, Vance Bourjaily, Irwin Shaw, and James Jones; in 1948, ex-wife Martha Gellhorn publishes a war novel, *The Wine of Astonishment*.

The 1950s begin with Hotchner and Wallace Meyer working over the *Across the River and Into the Trees* manuscript for *Cosmopolitan,* but the decade is largely *biography* for Dearborn, emphasizing major published profiles by Malcolm Cowley (*Life* 1949) and Lillian Ross (*New Yorker* 1950). Pauline dies unexpectedly in 1951. Ernest: "I loved her very much for many years, and to hell with her faults"; Dearborn: "the single person in Ernest's life who loved him unequivocally" (545). *The Old Man and the Sea* wins the Pulitzer in 1953 and helps bring about the Nobel in 1954. Then, also that year, two plane crashes in Africa in two days deliver Hemingway the final concussive blows—following many serious head injuries (Dearborn focuses

particularly on the car crash and major concussion in London during the war).

The final years deal with the various states of what will be, posthumously, *A Moveable Feast, Islands in the Stream, Garden of Eden, The Dangerous Summer, Under Kilimanjaro*. Regardless, as Dearborn again demonstrates, the story here is biographical; her last fifty pages trace Hemingway's final descent into madness. The technical explanations and medical details may best be found and appreciated in Andrew Farah's *Hemingway's Brain* (also 2017), but the human dimension is captured in the unrelenting realistic details on Dearborn's final pages.

Dearborn's tale—as does Hemingway's life—abounds with ironies. Her reader likely remembers the excerpt on the jacket cover regarding how beautiful was Hemingway's mother, how "happy we all were as children" before "it all broke up," producing heaps of skeletons in the closet. As she says "truly," Hemingway's life would have "come off the rails": alcohol abuse, concussions, traumatic brain injuries—mental illness characterized by mania and depression. In a triumph of clarity and detail, Dearborn unspools this turbulent biography while offering throughout a continuing due diligence regarding this man, Ernest Hemingway, and his magnificent imaginative achievement.

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REVIEW ESSAY: FLYOVER LIVES?

MARCIA NOE

The Way-Back Room: A Memoir of a Detroit Childhood, by Mary Minock. Huron, OH: Bottom Dog P, 2011. 215 pp.
Detroit Hustle: A Memoir of Love, Life & Home, by Amy Haimerl. Philadelphia: Running P, 2016. 269 pp.
Love, Sex, and 4-H, by Anne-Marie Oomen. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2015. 220 pp.
The Art of the Wasted Day, by Patricia Hampl. NY: Viking, 2018. 271 pp.
Tuesday Mornings at the Trout Lily Café, by John Knoepfle. Springfield, IL: Christmas Publications, 2013. N.pag.
Here I Stand: The Education of David Pichaske, by David Pichaske. Granite Falls, MN: Ellis P, 2015. 426 pp.

"But what of lives lived in the flyover?" asks Patricia Hampl in *The Art of the Wasted Day* (184). The memoirs discussed in this essay offer a partial answer to Hampl's question, illustrating the varieties of contemporary Midwestern experience—rural and urban, contemplative and active, cosmopolitan and regional—with one common denominator: a life inflected by a time and a place: the contemporary Midwest.

For Mary Minock, that time and place is Detroit in its 1950s heyday of factory whistles and freighters loaded with brand-new Cadillacs, Fort Street shops with their smorgasbord of consumer delights, and Vernor Highway honky-tonks full of southern auto workers spending the kind of money they would never see at home. Due to skillful pacing, well-placed, realistic dialogue, incisive character portrayals, and adroit use of the principles of selection and emphasis, this compelling memoir reads like a novel as it relates the story of a child who has to grow up too soon to care for a widowed mother with mental health issues that manifest as hoarding. Minock's continual struggles to clear out and claim for herself the eponymous

way-back room—a jumble of old newspapers and magazines, toys, antiques, clothes, books, Avon cosmetics and the detritus of everyday life—become the book's controlling metaphor for her fraught coming-of-age, marked by two main sources of stress and strife: her misery-suffused Catholic school days and the everyday frustrations inherent in dealing with a dysfunctional mother who resists every attempt to maintain an orderly and harmonious home life.

The Way-Back Room is rich in arresting details that enable the reader to empathize with Minock as she wrestles with the confusion and pain of her growing-up years, as seen in this description of her encounter with a nun:

> One day Sister Florita was angrier than usual. Lunging down the aisle, she shouted, "Mary Rhodes!" She slapped me across the face, as she often did, yanked me up from my seat, again dragged me to the front of the room. Instead of shaking me and standing me up in the corner, this time she threw me against the blackboard. My body hit the chalk ledge and slid to the floor. The skirt of my uniform flew up, exposing my underpants to the class. (43)

Readers will find in *The Way-Back Room* not only a personal story and a family story, but also the story of a forever-vanished Detroit, the likes of which will not be seen again, despite the valiant efforts of its present-day revivers.

One of those present-day revivers is Amy Haimerl; her *Detroit Hustle* is a highly readable account of Haimerl's and her husband Karl Kaebnick's efforts to remodel and inhabit a decrepit historic home in an early twenty-first century Detroit, then in receivership, down several hundred thousand residents and saddled with a shrunken tax base that supported only sporadic police and fire protection, garbage pickup, and street maintenance. It also reveals a new Detroit aborning, as urban farmers, entrepreneurs, technology wizards, foodies, artisans and artists flocked to the new opportunities that the Detroit renaissance offered.

Haimerl clearly loves Detroit, yet just as clearly articulates the challenges faced by a city whose original residents sometimes feel pushed out by newcomers who don't acknowledge them in their rush to cash in on financial opportunities. "That's the real fear, if we get right down to it," Haimerl acknowledges, "a cultural gentrification . . . Will the things that this city valued and loved be shoved aside for me and mine? Or will we learn to coexist together, the new and the

old?" (226-27). Haimerl deftly weaves together several narrative strands: her working-class upbringing in Golden, Colorado; her earlier, less-than-successful sojourns in Brooklyn and Denver; and her current adventures in home improvement in Detroit, along with the city's past and recent troubled history, letting these strands inform one another, as seen in this evocative passage:

> The warm sweetness of prairie grasses baking in the summer sun transports me back to the fields behind my grandparents' house. The almost licentious smell of the earth after an evening rainstorm is that of freshly irrigated crops. The intoxicating scent of honeysuckle vines climbing up chain-link fences and corrugated metal walls recalls the construction sites and scrap yards of my childhood. Rich wood smoke, curling through Detroit's sharp winter skies, is the smell of safety, of my mother. Grease, dirt and sweat mix together to create the same musky scent of work that was always caught in my dad's Carhartts. The smells of my past mingle with my future, overlapping and intertwining like a jazz riff so that Detroit seems inevitable now, as if I'd been searching for this place since before I knew I was looking. (17-18)

A third Michigan memoir, *Love, Sex and 4-H*, takes the reader to rural Oceana County, where Anne-Marie Oomen learns sewing and jam-making skills to build self-confidence through 4-H competitions. Oomen came of age in the 1960s, when girls still wore corsages to high school dances, watched *The Roy Rogers Show* and *The Lone Ranger* on television, and pleaded with parents to take "the car" for Friday night fun. Like Minock, Oomen attended Catholic school; unlike Minock, when she graduated from eighth grade, she transferred to a new school, where she battled the stigma that accrued to a farm girl from a poor family. Ironically, the skills Oomen learned in 4-H enabled her to carve a place for herself in the townie-dominated high school cliques that ostracized the country kids, as she was able to fashion cool clothes that helped her attract the townie boyfriends who were her ticket to the high school social whirl.

Oomen's memoir describes in step-by-step and unrelenting detail how to sew various garments and make jam, so much so that the reader, immersed in such *minutiae,* finds it challenging to discern the major emphases of the book. One of these emphases is Oomen's quest to learn about love and sex, knowledge she was not able to acquire in either 4-H or Catholic school; moreover, both institutions

informed her character with values and attitudes that were inimical to the experiences she so badly desired:

> Through 4-H I had learned to make ever more bright dresses with simple lines that I could stitch up in just a few hours, so that I could answer the hunger rising in me. I had taken it with both hands. Look at me. Notice me. Love me. Standing against that were the oaths: head and heart and health and hands. I pledge. I pledge. Our Father who art in heaven. Those were the promises I had made every year since I was seven or eight. Between 4-H and the church, I was, as my father had wished, committed to the good. But here in the long hallway was flirting. Here was a skirt so short that if I bent over to pick up my books and lifted them to the top shelf of my locker, the snaps of the garter belt that held up my stockings would gleam."(92)

These tensions between the sacred and the profane, the urban and the rural continue to complicate Oomen's coming-of-age. Longing for a kiss from a would-be boyfriend, she slaps his face when the moment arrives; out with a gang of kids drinking and tooling through the back roads, she narrowly avoids a run-in with the cops by learning some survival skills not taught in Catholic school.

A strength of this memoir is that it encompasses larger tensions as well, offering not only an account of Anne-Marie's conflicted coming-of-age, but also of the growing pains of a nation: "If we had listened, we would have heard . . . the underpinnings of that culture shaking loose. Outside of that gym, beyond the town and the lakes, civil rights workers demonstrated, a war escalated, and protestors marched against that war on both east and west coasts" (124-25). Anne-Marie's adolescent conflicts and discoveries are played out against the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy assassination, the Detroit riots, giving additional depth and dimension to the book.

In contrast to the three memoirs previously discussed, Patricia Hampl's *The Art of the Wasted Day* focuses on the inner life, making a case for the value of leisure and reflecting on her St. Paul girlhood and how the time she spent there daydreaming under a beechnut tree helped her to construct an identity in which the life of the mind is primary. Hampl describes the state of mind induced by this kind of aimless woolgathering as "[t]he tendency to float, to depart, to *rest*" . . . (8), cherished because such daydreaming "*sees* things. Claims things, twirls them around, takes a good look. Possesses them. Embraces them. Makes something of them. Makes sense" (9). Hampl

opposes to this state, in which she experiences "self as a thinning, drifting cirrus cloud" (14), the kind of mindset characteristic of Benjamin Franklin, Jay Gatsby and other self-improvers and day organizers. She values a leisure ethic rather than a work ethic as the precondition to the state of negative capability that engenders new thinking, self-reflection and the subsequent construction of the self. The real to-do task, she writes, is to "waste your life in order to find it" (24).

Hampl asserts that the only way to achieve this goal is to undertake a journey. Her own travels in search of her "exemplars of leisure" take her to Freud's house in Vienna; to Iowa to replicate Dvorak's visit there; to Greece and Turkey to travel in the footsteps of St. Paul; to Lisieux and Assisi, seeking St. Therese and St. Francis; to England to find Julian of Norwich; to Amsterdam in pursuit of Anne Frank; to France for a visit to Montaigne's tower; and to a monastery in California. Her journeying is reminiscent of that of many a midwesterner who traveled in search of what Hampl calls the midwestern Elsewhere. "Maybe only a midwesterner can sustain this geographic passion over a lifetime," she muses, "the desire to be Elsewhere, even in the midst of a happy life . . . That deepest midwestern sense of place, the yearning to escape" (201). Yet Hampl appears not to be escaping from but escaping to, and finds that even as an adult, St. Paul, Minnesota, is a great place to waste a day.

As might be expected, *The Art of the Wasted Day* is beautifully written. The kind of linguistic virtuosity that seamlessly melds style and sense and that has made Hampl's reputation as one of the leading contemporary memoirists is in evidence in sentences such as this one: "Solitude is the beguiling illicit love luring us away from the proper marriage of domestic demands and delights or the civic responsibilities of citizenship" (237).

While Patricia Hampl travels the world, John Knoepfle discovers the world in a multicultural café in the middle of America. The Trout Lily Café in Springfield, Illinois, features Colombian and Guatamalan coffee, local art with a Chinese motif, a Spanish conversation group, visitors who have traveled or lived in Bolivia, Venezuela, Taiwan, and Ireland. While valuing the café's diversity, Knoepfle is also mindful that it is situated amid Illinois and Midwestern history: nearby are the law office of Lincoln and Herndon and the church where Mary Todd Lincoln worshipped. This tension between the global and the local animates Knoepfle's brief

memoir and nourishes the sense of connection and community that draws him to the café. His weekly musings, composed there during the fall and winter of 2006-2007, often reveal a poetic sensibility:

- "Now a spare change of people comes through the front door"
- "Singer sounds as if he is trying to swallow the lyrics upside down"
- " . . . a young woman steams for Sixth Street behind the red hot coal at the end of her cigarette"
- "This morning at five, there in the west a serenity of moonlight, golden moon caught for an instant in the weathered branches of a black locust"

These touches of poetry enrich Knoepfle's memoir, making it an apt companion piece for his 2015 volume of poems, *The Aloe of Evening*. Both books cap a distinguished career spanning six decades as poet, professor, broadcaster, social activist, and oral historian.

David Pichaske's voluminous autobiography, *Here I Stand*, covers his Italian and German ancestry; his boyhood in the East; his high school years in Springfield, Ohio; his time at Wittenberg and Ohio universities; his editorial work with the small presses he founded in Illinois, Spoon River Poetry Press and Ellis Press; and his career as professor of English at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, and Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota, where he won three Fulbright grants, helped to found a regional studies program, and published numerous books and articles.

No less readable for all its length, *Here I Stand* offers frank and forthright social, political, and cultural commentary. Pichaske is a big fan of his Lutheran minister father, Camille Paglia, Colonel John S. Mosby, Henry David Thoreau, and Bob Dylan and has a low opinion of abstract art, academic feminists, online courses, postmodernists, liberals, and CEO-type university administrators. Coming through loud and clear is his dated take on the inequities inherent in gendered power relations that third- and-fourth-wave feminists have successfully brought to the forefront of the contemporary conversation.

Published approximately two years before the #MeToo and Times Up movements that ignited the fourth wave of feminism, Pichaske's book waxes nostalgic for the Woodstock era, when the

mores of the sexual revolution elided the victims of rape, harassment, discrimination, and assault. As might be expected, the author of *Beowulf to Beatles* and *The Poetry of Rock* asserts, "I remain wedded to the sixties, with attendant values and behaviors" (155). The thinking of many sixties activists has evolved over the decades to embrace a more nuanced and complex view of gender; however, Pichaske remains stuck in a midcentury mindset: "I nicknamed [Chloe Hall] 10 because she is a 10" (302) and "I support women myself, but I support the good-looking, independent, intelligent women" (334). Sweeping, unsupported generalizations such as, "[t]he truth is that women inside of post-World War II academia experienced very little discrimination . . . ." (335) exemplify what logicians call invincible ignorance and William Lloyd Garrison called intelligent wickedness and are unworthy of anyone who purports to be a serious scholar and academician.

In refreshing contrast to Pichaske's antiquated and tone-deaf pronouncements on gender is his discussion of globalization. Here Pichaske was ahead of the curve by decades, with Fulbrights in Poland, Latvia, and Mongolia, where he furthered the educations and careers of many students, assisting them in their efforts to continue their studies in the United States, as well as facilitating study abroad for students at Southwest State. At once a regionalist and an internationalist, Pichaske here shows that he is capable of the kind of complex conceptualizing and critical thinking that is so sadly lacking in his approach to gender. Although he is a proponent of internationalism, he can also see the downside:

> In the countryside, I am told, Mongolia has traded herding for mining, to such an extent that raw beef in the Narantuul butcher shops has increased from about 50 cents a pound when I was there to over $3. Extensive mining operations have reduced the already scarce supply of water in the countryside, poisoned much of what remains, and trashed the landscape with tailings. What, I wonder gloomily, hath capitalism wrought? (304)

Although this book could have been more judiciously edited and carefully proofread, it makes for lively reading, despite its undue emphasis on its author's hobby horses and *bête noirs*.

Anyone valiant enough to tackle all six of these autobiographical works will set forth on a daunting but rewarding task that will pay off in a better grasp of what Midwestern life has been like for the better

part of seven decades. These so-called flyover lives are not isolated in the Midwest; rather, they intersect with those of Americans from other regions and citizens of other countries and with events occurring not only in the heartland but all over the world. Can we really talk about flyover lives in a globalized twenty-first century marked by migration and digital connectivity? The six books reviewed in this essay handily give the lie to that tired stereotype.

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ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2016

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This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, during 2016. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence within the twelve-state area that defines the Midwest. Fiction and poetry using Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including (if applicable) designations of locale within square brackets at the end of each citation. However, because of space constraints, primary source materials are limited to separately-published works; those appearing in literary journals and magazines are generally not included. Secondary sources, usually journal articles, books, or doctoral dissertations, are listed by subject; critical editions of Midwestern authors will be found here as well.

The third section lists *Library of America* editions of Midwestern authors issued in 2016; and periodicals published for the first time in 2016 that relate in some way to Midwestern literature, either in subject, content, or locale, are listed alphabetically by title in the fourth and final section of this bibliography.

Not included in this bibliography are the following types of material: works only published in electronic format; reprints or reissues of earlier works, except for some new or revised editions; baccalaureate or masters theses; entries in reference books; separate contents of collected essays or Festschriften; audio or video recordings; electronic databases; and internet websites which have the tendency to be unstable or ephemeral.

Abbreviations used in the citations denoting genre and publication types are as follows:

A	Anthology	jrnl	Journalism

bibl	Bibliography	juv	Juvenile fiction
biog	Biography	lang	Language; linguistics
corr	Correspondence	M	Memoir
crit	Criticism	N	Novel
D	Drama	P	Poetry
gen	General studies	pub	Publishing; printing
hist	History	rev	Review essay
I	Interview(s)	S	Short fiction

Citations for novels, poetry, short stories, memoirs, and other types of literature about the Midwest, as well as those written by Midwestern authors, are continually sought by the editor for inclusion in this annual bibliography. Please send them to Robert Beasecker, Director of Special Collections, Grand Valley State University Libraries, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale, Michigan 49401.

ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2016

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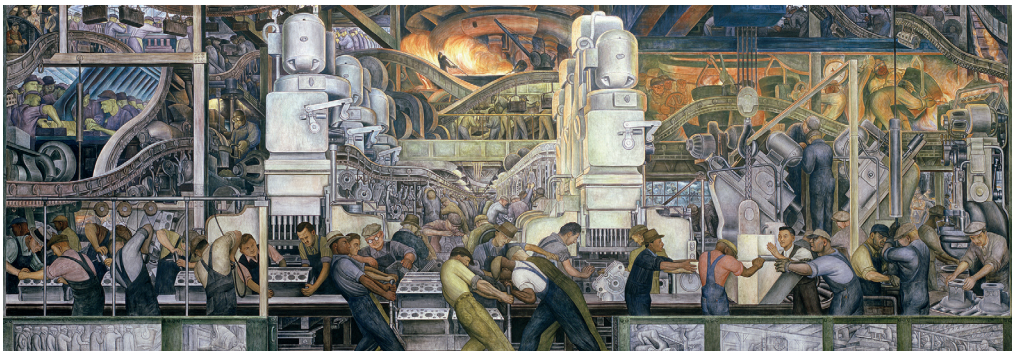
ERRATA

In the *MidAmerica* 2017 table of contents, an incorrect name was given for the author of "Catherine Barkley's Religious Crisis and *A Farewell to Arms*." His name is listed corrected on the title page of his essay as John Fenstermaker.

Four citations of works by James Purdy were inadvertently deleted from the Works Cited page of "Becoming James Purdy: *The 'New' Short Stories in The Complete Short Stories of James Purdy*": *Jeremy's Version* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), *Malcolm* (NY: Farrar, Straus, & Cudahy, 1959), *The Nephew* (NY: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1960), and *Selected Plays* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dees, 2009).

These errata have been corrected on the digital version of *MidAmerica* 2017, soon to be available from EBSCOHOST.



Dictionary of Midwestern Literature Volume 2

Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination
Edited by Philip A. Greasley

A project of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

The Midwest is often thought of as the most American of the nation's regions. Its literature and culture reflect its locales, landforms, and history while remaining vibrant, evolving entities that partake fully of national and international trends. Midwestern literature and culture are sophisticated, complex amalgams marked by diversity, egalitarian values, and emphasis on education.

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PHILIP A. GREASLEY is a retired Associate Professor of English, Dean, University Extension, and Associate Provost for University Engagement at the University of Kentucky. He has served as General Editor of the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature* and has published widely on Midwestern writers, the Chicago Renaissance, and modern poetics.

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