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PREFACE

Since the late 1980s, studies of First World War literature have moved away from Paul Fussell's highly influential description of the canon of World War I literature as being essentially ironic and male. More often than not, today's scholars adopt a pluralist perspective on the impact of the conflict, considering feminine, black, domestic, patriotic, and political perspectives alongside the more familiar idea of "Lost Generation" despondency. This issue of *Midwestern Miscellany*, on the subject of the Midwest and World War I, furthers the growing recognition of the First World War's multifaceted impact and the diversity of artistic responses it provoked.

Steven Trout continues the rehabilitation of Ohioan and World War I veteran Thomas Boyd's *Through the Wheat* in his essay on the incompatibility of cultural notions of masculinity with the experience of First World War combat. My own contribution draws on a variety of sources to highlight the continuities which existed between the Midwest and the European war zone, during and after the war. Hazel Hutchison examines Chicagoan Mary Borden's 1916 novel, *The Romantic Woman*, set in the fictional Midwestern town of Iroquois, and considers the role that the Midwestern upbringing of protagonist Joan Fairfax has, alongside international travel and the war, in shaping her identity. Sara Kosiba provides not only a much-needed scholarly look at the experience of Midwestern Germans during the war, but also brings attention to an important new source for that discussion in her essay on Michigan-born John Herrmann's unpublished novel *Foreign Born*. Finally, Ross Tangedal takes an unfamiliar approach to a more familiar text, considering not only how Gloria Patch is affected by the war in Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*, but also how she reflects the instability of personal and social identity in wartime.

We are now well into the centenary years of World War I, fast approaching the hundredth anniversary of America's entry into the war in April 2017. This collection has a role to play in highlighting how the study of war narratives both obscure and canonical empowers scholars to continue the work of uncovering the scope and nature of the war's influence.

CONTENTS

Preface 4

"Playing Indian in the Backyard": American Masculinity, Modern Warfare, and Thomas Boyd's *Through the Wheat* — Steven Trout 6

In the Fields of Democracy: The Midwest in World War I — David Alan Rennie 23

"Very Chicago": Mary Borden and the Art of Fiction — Hazel Hutchison 39

"Foreign Born": John Herrmann's Fictional Exploration of the German American Experience in World War I — Sara Kosiba 54

"At Last Everyone Had Something to Talk About": Gloria's War in Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* — Ross Tangedal 68

Midwestern Writers on World War I A Selected Bibliography — Meghan O'Dea 82

Recent Midwestern Fiction and Poetry 86

Lorine Niedecker CFP 87

Dictionary of Midwestern Literature 2 88

"PLAYING INDIAN IN THE BACKYARD": AMERICAN MASCULINITY, MODERN WARFARE, AND THOMAS BOYD'S *THROUGH THE WHEAT*

STEVEN TROUT

Two types of servicemen have long dominated the canon of American World War I literature. The first is, of course, the volunteer ambulance driver (represented by, among others, Malcolm Cowley, E.E. Cummings, John Dos Passos, and Ernest Hemingway). The second, less commonly noted, is the combat Marine. Although the actual number of Marines who saw action in World War I was relatively small—an army of over two million, the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) contained just one Marine Brigade (consisting of two regiments or roughly 7,000 men at full strength)—the Corps could boast of a concentration of literary talent in its ranks unrivalled by any other branch of the military. In all, five veterans of the Marine Brigade would go on to achieve notoriety as writers.[1] As a result, postwar depictions of doughboys—whether presented in works of fiction, stage plays, or Hollywood films— featured Marines with a frequency that gave little hint of the Corps' actual size in 1918. Indeed, one could even argue that in the imaginations of many Americans in the 1920s and 1930s, the "typical" American soldier of the Great War wore the globe and anchor, an impression completely at odds with statistical fact.

This positioning of Marine Corps experience near the center of public war memory represented a considerable public relations victory for a branch of the Armed Forces frequently underfunded and marginalized. Of the writers responsible, three stand out. First, there was Laurence Stallings, a charismatic Southerner who lost a leg as a result of wounds suffered at Belleau Wood. Stallings used his war experience as the basis for the co-authored (with Maxwell Anderson)

drama *What Price Glory* (1924), one of the most popular American stage plays of the interwar period, and *Plumes* (1924), a protest novel that targeted both the mechanized horrors of the Great War and the inadequate medical services offered afterward by the federal Veterans Bureau. Like many writers of his generation, Stallings was also drawn into the world of cinema. The first to confront the temptation of lucrative Hollywood contracts, Stallings, for a time in the mid-1920s, probably did more than any other creative figure to help shape American collective memory of the Great War. In 1925, he provided the plot outline for King Vidor's war epic, *The Big Parade*, the biggest American hit of the silent era; one year later he adapted *What Price Glory* to the screen and again received rave reviews. When it came to war-related projects, Stallings seemed to have the golden touch—at least until 1930, when his stage version of Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* closed after just a handful of performances.

William March, the pen name for Alabama-born William Edward Campbell, was the second most prominent of these Marines-turned-literary artists. A recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest award for valor, March reflected on his own experiences at Belleau Wood and elsewhere on the Western Front in a series of short stories published in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Then, in 1933, he completed the work for which he is best known: the novel *Company K*, a blistering analysis of the capacity for sadism and murder revealed within ordinary people during wartime. Reflecting the influence of High Modernism of the sort associated with William Faulkner, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, March's novel presents its dark vision of the so-called Great Adventure through 113 vignettes, each narrated by a different member of one Marine company. The resulting collage of atrocity and death ruthlessly shatters comforting fictions. The myth of American chivalry, for example, is dispatched when an American officer orders the massacre of a group of German prisoners. At another point in the novel, a psychotic doughboy frags a superior. And most chilling of all is the scene in which a dying Marine flings away his dog tags in an effort to thwart his postwar memorialization. Ironically, this very Marine becomes the Unknown Soldier enshrined at Arlington National Cemetery. *Company K* survived the considerable controversy that it generated to become one of the most popular war novels of the twentieth century, and it has rarely been out of print.

The final member of this literary trio is the Midwesterner Thomas Alexander Boyd, a comparatively shadowy figure whose reputation, based primarily on the novel *Through the Wheat* (1923), fell far short of either Stallings's or March's works. Published through the behind-the-scenes intervention of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who convinced Scribner's editor Maxwell Perkins to reconsider a rejection notice that he had, in fact, already mailed to Boyd, *Through the Wheat* tells a deceptively straightforward tale. The novel follows its protagonist, a nondescript enlisted man named William Hicks (about whose personality and civilian background we learn almost nothing), through three major battles—Belleau Wood, Soissons, and Blanc Mont. And as far as the story goes, that is essentially it. A dutiful soldier, Hicks tries his best to kill the enemy (with whom he has little direct contact). He endures terrifying artillery barrages and machine gun fire. He loses comrades. And he goes without sleep. The enervating world of combat dominates the narrative from beginning to end, one of many reasons why early reviewers repeatedly likened the novel to Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). The only plot, per se, resides in Hicks's gradual descent into a state of shell-shocked numbness, his condition on the final page. Lacking Stallings's gift for dialogue and uninterested in the kinds of explicitly modernist techniques employed by March, Boyd allows pages to go by without anything remotely resembling characterization and periodically punctuates the novel's seeming blandness with outbursts of startlingly original imagery and sudden shifts in point of view.

In short, Boyd's is the most subtle and, in many respects, the strangest of the post-World War I works that served to elevate the figure of the US Marine in public consciousness. It is a hard book to nail down. Is *Through the Wheat* an example of lower-case modernism? Or of literary naturalism? And what, ultimately, is the novel's ideological stance toward the subject of combat in the Great War? Does the book celebrate the survival of heroism on the Western Front? (Fitzgerald, as we will see, answered this question in the affirmative). Or does it suggest that heavy artillery, which accounted for seventy percent of all combat casualties in the Great War, and machine guns, which accounted for nearly all the rest, have made traditional notions of martial valor obsolete? My own reading of the novel will follow in the footsteps of David Alan Rennie, whose recent analysis of *Through the Wheat* beautifully illustrates why close reading should never go out of style, and it will focus on a specific pat-

tern of cultural imagery. Following a brief overview of Boyd's career, as well as a quick summary of the handful of analyses that *Through the Wheat* has attracted over the past half century, I will suggest some of the ways in which this understudied text mobilizes references to American frontier history and adventure fiction in its ultimately sophisticated treatment of three braided themes—American masculinity, heroism, and industrialized warfare.

Born in Defiance, Ohio, in 1898 and subsequently educated at the Elgin Academy near Chicago, Thomas Alexander Boyd volunteered for the Marine Corps in 1917 and narrowly survived frontline service in the three main battles—all of them bloodbaths for the Marine Brigade—described in *Through the Wheat*. After the war, he started a career in journalism that led him to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he had his fateful encounter with F. Scott Fitzgerald and where, with the latter's encouragement, he completed *Through the Wheat*. Unfortunately, nothing that Boyd wrote afterward matched the success of his first novel. In 1925, he completed a collection of excellent World War I short stories, *Points of Honor,* which Scribner's, now convinced of the Ohioan's literary talent, eagerly published. The collection attracted almost uniformly positive reviews, but few copies sold. Likewise, Boyd's historical novels—including *The Dark Cloud* (1924), *Samuel Drummond* (1925), and *Shadow of the Long Knives* (1928)—all failed commercially, as did a string of now almost completely forgotten biographies of historical figures such as the Revolutionary War general Mad Anthony Wayne and Light Horse Harry Lee (the father of Robert E. Lee). A committed Marxist, Boyd turned to politics with equally unimpressive results. In 1934, he ran as the Communist Party candidate in the Vermont gubernatorial election—and lost. Early the following year, the thirty-six-year-old writer suddenly suffered a mysterious cerebral hemorrhage, perhaps the delayed result of wartime wounds, and died just a few days before the publication of his final book, a sequel to *Through the Wheat* titled *In Time of Peace*. It, too, was a flop.

Among literary historians, Boyd's sad, almost stillborn career has, not surprisingly, attracted attention primarily in connection with F. Scott Fitzgerald, who befriended the young Ohioan during the early 1920s, when Boyd ran the book page of *The St. Paul Daily News* and managed the Kilmarnock Bookshop in St. Paul, a popular gathering place for Midwestern writers, including the likes of Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser. In the early stages of their

friendship, Boyd's combat experience, which Fitzgerald admired and envied, balanced the other writer's far greater literary gifts and weighty reputation as an established novelist in the House of Scribner. In this way, the two Midwesterners came together on a basis of mutual admiration and respect. Fitzgerald's lobbying effort on behalf of *Through the Wheat* reflected the warmth of his feelings for the former Marine and his considerable critical acumen. The book's sales—more than 12,000 copies in 1923 and 1924—and positive notices in, among others, *The Nation, The Bookman, The New York Times,* and *The Times Literary Supplement* demonstrated the wisdom of Fitzgerald's endorsement (Trout 67). By the mid-1920s, however, Fitzgerald had grown frustrated with what he now perceived as Boyd's mediocre abilities, and he ridiculed his former friend in a letter to Maxwell Perkins in a now notorious satire of American farm fiction published posthumously in *The Crack-Up*. Specifically, it was *Samuel Drummond* (1925), Boyd's novel of Ohio homesteading, that set Fitzgerald off. Boyd, Fitzgerald maintained, should have stuck with war fiction, his true forte, and avoided becoming a "barnyard boy" (qtd. in Bruce 137)—Fitzgerald's term for writers who focused on rural America while ignoring the nation's urban life, which Fitzgerald thought of as its true center of energy and culture. Fitzgerald's awareness that Boyd disliked *The Great Gatsby* probably didn't help matters. In 1925, the two writers broke off their correspondence and apparently never saw each other again.

Yet whatever his misgivings regarding Thomas Boyd, Fitzgerald would surely be pleased to know that the novel he so effectively championed in 1923 has come to occupy a secure position in the American canon of World War I literature. In 1967, critic Stanley Cooperman highlighted Boyd's work in his influential study, *World War I and the American Novel*. Eleven years later, editor Matthew J. Bruccoli brought the novel back into print as part of the Lost American Fiction series published by Southern Illinois University Press. James Dickey provided an enthusiastic afterword. Today, *Through the Wheat* is available as a Bison Books paperback, published by the University of Nebraska Press, featuring an introduction by retired Marine Corps General Edwin Howard Simmons. Since 2000, it has remained continuously in print.

However, critical analyses of the novel remain few in number, and those that it has received do not present a consensus of opinion. For example, Cooperman interprets *Through the Wheat* primarily as

an artistic polemic, one that (like *Company K*) systematically overturns the network of lies represented by American wartime propaganda. In contrast, Dickey views the novel chiefly as a sensual prose poem (as opposed to a work of protest). Boyd, he asserts, "raises carnage to the level of vision" (270). And Simmons, writing as a historian rather than a literary critic, casts the book as a thinly disguised memoir—as a historical document, that is, that only rarely departs from Boyd's actual combat experiences. The former general has little to say about the narrative's qualities as a work of art.

The two scholarly articles that have focused on *Through the Wheat*—and there are just two—offer somewhat differing appraisals. In "A Midwesterner in the Maelstrom of History: Thomas Boyd's Characterization of William Hicks" (1983), Douglas A. Noverr contends that "Boyd's outlook was essentially deterministic, behavioralistic, and naturalistic, linking him philosophically to Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser" (99). Noverr acknowledges that *Through the Wheat* is "highly internalized" in ways that naturalistic texts typically are not, but he nevertheless detects the presence of a Zolaesque preoccupation with socio-economic determinism: in particular, Boyd's "emphasis on the new technology of war certainly implies an awareness of the munitions and arms makers as a force behind the war" (104). David Alan Rennie's interpretation of the novel in "'The Best Combatant Story of the Great War'?: Topographical and Descriptive Juxtaposition in Thomas Boyd's *Through the Wheat*" nudges the book somewhat closer to literary modernism. Offering the most detailed analysis of the novel to date, Rennie concurs with Noverr regarding Boyd's fundamentally "naturalist outlook" (96); however, he demonstrates that the prose style of *Through the Wheat*—characterized by juxtapositions (not unlike those in Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*), poetic sensory imagery, and sudden departures from the limited third-person point of view—complicates considerably the way in which that outlook reaches the reader. Through a close reading of key passages, Rennie concludes that Boyd's language is essentially "destabilized" (101).

An expression of protest, a prose poem, a thinly disguised memoir, a novel in the naturalist tradition, and a work of near-modernist stylistic complexity—*Through the Wheat* is, it seems to me, all of these things. But it is also something more. A central theme flows through the novel's jabs at wartime propaganda, as well as its startling metaphors and passages of half-disclosed autobiography:

namely, the centrality of military heroics and frontier-style gunplay within the fantasy life of early twentieth-century American males. Moreover, *Through the Wheat* mercilessly emphasizes that its characters' culturally reinforced dreams of manly adventure and aggression are incompatible with the realities of the World War I battlefield. Like the analyses offered by Cooperman, Noverr, and Rennie, this essay will proceed from the assumption that Boyd's Marines fight and die within an environment of brutal deterministic forces. Individual will power and initiative have about as much place in the story of William Hicks as they do in John Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* (1921), whose doomed characters are, as the novel's section headings tell us, first produced in a "mould" and then ground "under the wheels." What I hope to add to the growing critical conversation on *Through the Wheat* is an awareness of how the text mobilizes various historical and literary allusions, especially those tied to the American frontier, in its depiction of Marines in battle.

Early on in the novel, Boyd establishes his central thematic concerns through a seemingly minor character named Private Kahl, a "light-weight boxer from Pennsylvania" (72). In a departure from the novel's limited third-person point of view, which ordinarily focuses on Hicks's consciousness, Boyd's narrator gives us a quick glimpse of Kahl's pugilistic personality as he "attack[s] a tin of corn beef" on the eve of the Battle of Belleau Wood:

> Kahl laughed exultantly. He felt that at last the time he had given to training was to be of some purpose. He abandoned trying to open the tin of meat because he feared that he would dull his bayonet. And he wanted it to be sharp, so sharp. Those dirty Huns. He drew his finger along the edge of the shiny piece of steel. That would cut, all right. That wouldn't be deflected by a coat button from piercing the intestines. (73-74)

Later in the same scene, Kahl obsessively oils and re-oils his bolt-action rifle and remarks to the protagonist, "Hicks, old fellow, if Kitty Kahl doesn't earn a Croix de Guerre tomorrow his mother will be without a son" (74-75).

Predictably enough, Kahl doesn't earn his Croix de Guerre, nor are his polished bayonet or his well-greased Model 1903 Springfield rifle ever put to their eagerly anticipated use. Within the first hour or so of his unit's advance into the Bois de Belleau, this would-be killing

machine finds himself face-to-face with the real thing—the Maxim machine gun:

> Hicks turned to Kahl. "My God, Kahl, we're lost!"
>
> The machine-gun bullets shaved the bark from the trunk of the tree behind which Hicks was lying. He flattened out, his face pressed into the grass.
>
> "Oh, Kahl, we're lost!"
>
> But Kahl did not hear him. Possibly he remembered what he had said earlier . . . . Possibly he was really a hero. Possibly again he saw himself as a little boy playing Indian in the back yard. Whatever were his thoughts, he rose on one knee, and, after peering intently in the direction from which the bullets had come, he raised his rifle to his shoulder and sighted along the shiny barrel.
>
> Ra-t-t-t-t-tat.
>
> A Maxim, but from an oblique direction, was firing, and Kahl sprawled on his face, his right arm falling on the shiny barrel of the gun. (95-96)

Among other things, the passage above vividly illustrates the complex—or as Rennie has put it, "destabilized" nature—of Boyd's prose. Note, for example, the way that the narrator, who had earlier entered Kahl's consciousness without any difficulty, now stands outside the character and engages in speculation. We learn what Kahl "possibly" thought during the seconds before he foolishly and fatally exposes himself. This shift away from interiority serves to transform the bellicose boxer from an individual into a typical American male, one whose thoughts can be approximated based on what the reader already knows about American culture. At the same time, the prose itself jarringly captures the disparity between what Kahl "possibly" thinks war is and the brutal reality of mechanized combat. After a string of phrases that might have appeared in a Western dime novel—"rose on one knee," "peered intently," "sighted along the shiny barrel"—we get the ugly sound of the machine gun ("Rat-t-t-t-tat"), which violently punctures the boyish language of the passage, just as the weapon's bullets perforate Kahl's body.

Thematically, the central irony located within this grotesque story of an aspiring hero turned cannon (or, rather, machine gun) fodder is anything but subtle—or original. Gung-ho novice soldiers with

dreams of glory meet with similar fates throughout the canonical literature of the First World War, in works ranging from Wilfred Owen's "Disabled" (1917) to Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). Nevertheless, Boyd packs his variation on the tale with a host of suggestive details. For example, Kahl's reference to the Germans as "Dirty Huns" echoes the verbal bellicosity of his bayonet instructor, featured earlier in the novel, who urges the Marines to visualize their targets, sacks of straw, as "dirty Huns—Huns that raped the Belgians, Huns that would have come over to the USA and raped our women if we hadn't got into the war" (14). A perfect target (in more ways than one, as it turns out) for the motivational rhetoric that was ubiquitous within the American Expeditionary Forces, Boyd's boxer demonstrates the insidious appeal of wartime propaganda, especially for men preconditioned to violence. And, if the reader is so inclined, there are sophisticated psychoanalytical touches to be found in Kahl's story as well. Note, for instance, that the bayonet instructor's imagery of marauding rapists (imagery linked to the phrase "Dirty Huns") floats just below the surface of Kahl's consciousness as he eagerly prepares to penetrate or to "pierce" another human being with his phallic blade. The character's obsessive attention to his rifle, which he lovingly lubricates, likewise suggests sexualized violence.

And then there are the non-Freudian ironies created by the anachronistic weapons that Kahl has turned into fetishes. Significantly, no one in this violence-filled narrative ever kills with—or is killed by—a bayonet. Instead, Boyd's Marines use this supposed weapon (when at all) as a can opener. Machine guns and long-range artillery have all but eliminated the close-quarters combat for which Private Kahl longs. And, in fact, the era of the bayonet—and the kind of face-to-face warfare associated with it—ended long before the Great War: most historians agree that bayonets caused only 0.4 percent of all wounds suffered by soldiers in the American Civil War (Frank 9). Thus, if cultural fictions shape Kahl's notions of battle, the same can be said of his Marine Corps instructors, men likewise new to the real thing.

The rifle that Kahl cannot wait to fire, the famous Model 1903 Springfield, also seems outmoded—an especially devastating irony given this firearm's reputation at the time as the finest bolt-action rifle in the world and its celebrated association with the neo-manly Theodore Roosevelt, who personally offered feedback during its

design.[2] Once again, we rarely see a rifle produce lethal results in Boyd's narrative. A qualified sharpshooter who proudly wears a "metal marksmanship badge on his tunic," Hicks manages to kill more Germans than almost any other member of his platoon, but he does so not with a Springfield, but with a lightweight French machine gun called a Chauchat, a crude firearm, notoriously susceptible to jamming, which nevertheless provided what the modern battlefield required: a hail of bullets, as opposed to precision marksmanship (2). And to further underscore the impersonal, mechanized nature of World War I killing, Boyd establishes in one scene a grim hierarchy of weapons, arranged by degrees of lethality. When the Marines overrun an enemy position, Hicks trades in his unreliable Chauchat for a German Model 1908/1915 Maxim machine gun, a weapon with far greater firepower (and concomitant bulk). However, before he can operate his trophy, a shell from a German howitzer blows it to smithereens. Such, Boyd suggests, is the overarching trajectory of modern warfare—a matter of ever-larger and more numerous chunks of metal hurled at human bodies with ever-greater force.

Yet perhaps the most richly ironic detail in Kahl's story is his reversion, at the moment of his death, to a child "playing Indian in the backyard" (96). Like Private Ron Kovic in the Oliver Stone film, *Born on the Fourth of July*, whose paralyzing wound occurs as he likewise rises on one knee in a moment of John Wayne-like bravado, Kahl is betrayed by childhood images of make-believe violence. Indeed, the Battle of Belleau Wood, where most Marine companies lost more than half their men, turns the boxer's boyhood game upside down. Ironically, the well-camouflaged Germans operate with the stealth associated with Native American warriors. Kahl, in contrast, performs a parody of an ambushed redcoat or hapless Seventh Cavalryman. Because the Maxim fires "from an oblique direction," he literally never sees what hits him (96). The phrase "playing Indian in the backyard" also evokes what we might call the "male youth culture" of middle-class America in the early twentieth century, a culture exemplified by western magazines and Zane Grey novels (which spoke to a longing for the now-closed frontier), the outdoor pursuit of the "strenuous life" advocated by Theodore Roosevelt, and the Native American trappings of the national Boy Scout movement. And it is this youth culture, with its innocent promise of American ruggedness and superiority, that reaches across the Atlantic to kill an

American soldier in the Bois de Belleau. Private Kahl cannot survive because beneath his libidinous ferocity, he has remained a child.

At first sight, Boyd's protagonist appears to have little in common with Kahl. Hicks does not seek erotic gratification from war (at least not on the surface) and during his first two battles, he sensibly keeps his head down. Nor does he hate the enemy. For Hicks, the Germans' greatest offense is not the rape of Belgium but the practice of goose-stepping: "He felt that for any people to march in that manner was embarrassing to the rest of humanity. Somehow it severed them from the rest of their kind" (231). Yet Hicks's expectations as a soldier prove no less naïve than Kahl's, and they derive from many of the same cultural fictions. Consider, for example, Hicks's sudden exuberance when he is selected to scout out a neighboring French regiment and establish contact with its commander. The task is a dangerous one, requiring speed and mobility. Thus, Hicks once again exchanges his clumsy Chauchat for a more appropriate weapon, in this case a Colt 45-caliber automatic pistol: "To his leg he buckled his holster until it interfered with the circulation of his blood. He liked the feel of the pistol against his thigh. It made him feel equal to any danger. He was a *Buffalo Bill*, a *Kit Carson*, a *D'Artagnon*" (238 emphasis mine).

Here again, Boyd gives us a quick glimpse into the childhood world of his characters, a world of Wild West Shows, legendary frontiersmen, and *The Three Musketeers*. Moreover, like Kahl, who fatally confuses the Bois de Belleau with his suburban backyard, Hicks responds to the nervous strain of combat through childish play-acting. Other soldiers behave similarly. For example, the incompetent commander of Hicks's company—who is, of course, a former English professor—issues his orders with a "Shakespearean voice" (97), wishes he could carry a "bowie-knife" (111) into battle, and self-consciously imitates General Sam Houston. A German shell closes the curtain on this character's theatrics, leaving nothing behind but a steel helmet "neatly holding a mess of brains" and a single "blood-soaked shoe" (140). Hicks's momentary role-playing offers more subtle ironies. Sadly, the fetishized pistol that makes him feel "equal to any danger" (yet another clichéd phrase drawn from adolescent fiction) by prompting images of Western shoot-'em-ups and European swordplay cannot save him from the combat fatigue that envelopes him by the end of the novel. And, as with Kahl's ineffectual rife and bayonet, Hicks's 45 automatic offers dubious protection

on the twentieth-century battlefield. Indeed, we see a handgun used just once in the entire novel—when Sergeant Harriman, distraught over receiving a Dear John letter, blows off one of his toes in hopes of being shipped stateside.

Other passages in the novel reveal Hicks’s Kahl-like dreams of military glory. When selected, during his unit’s first stint in the trenches, to join a group of men awaiting orders for a nighttime raid across no-man’s-land, Hicks indulges in a quick fantasy of cartoon-like heroics. Here, the protagonist muses, is an opportunity to display his soldierly virtues for Captain Adams, who, in an earlier chapter, catches Hicks sleeping on sentry duty but then drops the matter, predicting that the private may someday “make a good soldier” (27-8). Still a happy warrior at this point, Hicks toys with the idea of attacking the German Army single-handedly:

> He considered for a moment the advisability of clambering over the trench and setting forth into that unexplored field, never to return unless he brought back a German prisoner with him. Let’s see, how had they done it, he mused. There were plenty of heroes who could. They’d just fill their pockets with hand-grenades and blow up a machine-gun nest. “Major Adams, I fulfilled your prediction! Here!”—indicating three fierce-looking Germans with the stump of his left arm, which had been shot off during his single-handed assault. “And there were five more, but I would have had to carry them.” (31)

More of a realist than the ill-fated Private Kahl, Hicks offers his own one-word verdict on this literally over-the-top scenario—“bunk” (31). And once the order is given and the raiding party slips into no-man’s-land, he quickly learns that heroism is a surprisingly fragile construct, one dependent for its meaning on a combination of variables and located with alarming proximity to the absurd. When one of his comrades fails to return from the raid, Hicks goes back after him, again hoping for a chance to prove his mettle. But by the time he finds the missing soldier, the man is already dead. Now what?, Hicks wonders:

> To have saved Corporal Olin, to have brought him into the trench, staggering under the weight over his shoulder, would, he realized, have exonerated him completely in the eyes of Major Adams. Further, he would have received either a Distinguished Service Cross or Croix de Guerre. But how could he, what sort of a fool would he have looked like, carrying a dead man over his shoulder all the way

> to the trench. Well, it was just a case of misplaced heroism. He shrugged his shoulder and went on. (35-6)

Here again we see a clash of discourses within Boyd's "destabilized" prose. Appropriately enough, the language used to describe Hicks's heroic fantasy abounds with clichés from his adolescent reading. What literate American soldier in 1918 wouldn't have grown up with purplish phrases like "setting forth into that unexplored field" and "never to return"? Appropriately enough, Hicks's more mature reflections, offered in the second passage, are stylistically flattened out and drained of any grandiloquence. In primarily monosyllabic phrases like "what sort of a fool would he have looked" and "carrying a dead man," we can feel the romance seeping out of Hicks's war experience. And with the introduction of the paradoxical term "misplaced heroism"—a troubling term since true heroism presumably can't be misplaced (or can it?)—Boyd alerts us to the ambiguities and contradictions that will confront his protagonist throughout the narrative.

Two hundred pages—and three terrible battles—later, Hicks's sleep-deprived brain can no longer muster the energy required to determine whether heroism is "misplaced" in a given situation or not. Indeed, he has forgotten about heroism altogether. Emaciated by weeks of near-constant fighting and sustained only by sporadic doses of caffeine and tobacco, Hicks and his buddies wear the same thousand-yard stare that would be seen on the faces of Marines a generation later at places like Tarawa and Iwo Jima. And it is at this point in the novel, as we approach the nightmarish scene in which Hicks finally snaps and begins talking with battlefield cadavers, that Boyd delivers the coup de grace to the entire notion of martial heroism as conventionally understood. Several days into the battle of Blanc Mont, where Marine losses ran almost as high as they did at Belleau Wood, Hicks and his platoon find themselves pinned down by an invisible German machine gun located somewhere in the forest in front of them. Then, in a gesture that some reviewers in 1923 interpreted as the novel's one true instance of American nobility and self-sacrificial valor, Hicks suddenly rises to his feet:

> He rose straight as any of the posts from which was strung the fatal barbed wire. He stooped over and picked up his bandolier of ammunition. He looked around at the men lying there on the ground and a sneer came over his face. Methodically, as if he were walking home, he started toward the end of the barbed-wire pen. A bullet neatly sev-

> ered the fastening of his puttee. He was unmindful of the fact that it unrolled the folds of cloth falling about his feet. (245-46)

Predictably, Hicks's nearly suicidal action inspires his platoon, which immediately advances from its exposed position and routs the enemy: the Marines, we are told, "scoured the woods, charging the Germans with a white fury, recklessly throwing grenades in front of them" (247). It would seem, at this point, that Hicks has succeeded where Kahl failed, becoming a true hero ready to take his place among the legendary American frontiersmen and literary swashbucklers who populate his imagination. Surely an adventure-novel phrase like "charging the Germans with a white fury" signals as much.

However, a careful reading reveals that Boyd has laced this cliché-filled episode with characteristic irony. For example, Hicks launches his single-handed assault not because of any self-sacrificial impulse, but because of his fatigue, his "great tiredness." He is literally too weary and too nerve-strung by this point in the novel to care whether he lives or dies: "He felt no heroism at all, only an annoyance at having to lie there any longer. It all seemed so senseless" (252). In addition, the protagonist's perceptions while under fire are no longer rational. He likens the bullets that narrowly miss his skull to "annoying little insects" and strikes at his face, "trying to shoo the bothering little creatures away. How damned persistent they were!" (246). And as if such details were not already enough to cast doubt upon Hicks's supposed attainment of military glory, the narrator goes even further by explicitly insisting that the men who follow the protagonist into the woods are driven not by courage, but by "fear." Paradoxically, it is their "cowardice" that makes them "brave men": "Lying on the ground but a short time ago they had been frozen with fear. They were hounds on a leash being tortured. The leash had snapped and the fear was vanishing in the emotion of a greater fear—the maddening fight for self-preservation" (247).

By collapsing the distinction between courage and fear amid a climactic scene that, if handled more conventionally, might have come straight from a propagandist's account of the AEF in action, Boyd shifts his narrative as far as it can go from standard war novels or Hollywood epics. However, for Hicks, the worst is yet to come. In the last few pages of the novel, as the Marines are still mired in the assault upon Blanc Mont, he begins to hallucinate and converses with the dead soldiers who share his foxhole. Dementia then gives way

to torpor. Almost catatonic by this point, the protagonist finds that "[n]o longer did anything matter, neither the bayonets, the bullets, the barbed wire, the dead, nor the living." As Boyd writes in the novel's chilling final sentence: "The soul of Hicks was numb" (266).

Not everyone associated with the publication of *Through the Wheat* found this ending satisfactory. Indeed, Maxwell Perkins repeatedly asked Boyd to reconsider his final sentence—even after the appearance of the first edition. Nor, ironically, was F. Scott Fitzgerald open to what we can now perceive as the novel's central theme: namely, the collision between the cultural fictions that animate Boyd's characters and define their masculinity and the brutal, unforgiving realities of war in the twentieth century. In his predictably glowing review of *Through the Wheat,* published in the *New York Evening Post,* Fitzgerald claimed that Boyd's otherwise horrifying account of combat contained "one clear and unmistakable note of heroism, of tenuous and tough-minded exultation" (275). Boyd's friend and advocate presumably heard this "note" in the account of Hicks's somnambulistic advance at Blanc Mont—a momentary failure, perhaps, of the great writer's ordinarily well-tuned critical ear.

As Douglas A. Noverr observes, "much of Boyd's work looked back to the historical past as he sought to identify and trace the roots of an American experience and character that was distinctly Midwestern." For Noverr, this preoccupation with America in the eighteenth and nineteenth century precluded the adoption of "new fictional techniques and structures," perhaps the primary reason that Boyd remains a lesser-known writer (99). However, as I have tried to demonstrate in this essay, Boyd's interest in American history—or rather, the kind of history that Americans carry in their heads and that gives shape to our national character (our collective memory, in other words)—also plays a significant role in *Through the Wheat,* the Ohioan's closest approach to literary modernism. In its own way, this novel of Marines on the Western Front, published just five years after the Armistice, grapples with a more distant past. Through culturally loaded phrases like "playing Indian in the backyard" and references to Western figures like Sam Houston, Buffalo Bill and Kit Carson, Boyd's narrative places the mythic space of the frontier at the center of American male fantasy. Via the consciousnesses of characters like Kahl and Hicks, we learn that Marines fighting in World War I hope, in effect, to use their Springfields as modern-day Kentucky Rifles; to wield their bayonets like "Bowie knife[s]"; and to operate their Colt

45 automatics as though they were the sidearms of Western gun-fighters. All of these dreams die in a hail of machine gun bullets and high explosives. Moreover, the very language of the narrative, often unpredictable and "destabilized" in the manner that Rennie has observed, captures the collision between distinctly American cultural fictions (and the discourses that go with them) and the cruel realities of war in the twentieth century—war in which the only heroes are men too "numb" to care whether they live or die. Boyd's may not be most structurally audacious of the World War I novels written by former Marines—that title goes to William March's *Company K*—but it is a far more sophisticated and disturbing work than even F. Scott Fitzgerald fully realized.

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NOTES

[1]In addition to the three authors discussed below, former Marines John Thomason and William Scanlon both wrote important literary responses to their service on the Western Front. Scribner's published Thomason's short story collection, *Fix Bayonets,* (1926), which did well enough to pass through multiple editions. Scanlon's *God Have Mercy on Us!* (1929) shared an international war novel prize offered by Houghton-Mifflin and the American Legion.

[2]See Alexander Rose, *American Rifle: A Biography* (NY: Delta, 2009), 255-78.

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IN THE FIELDS OF DEMOCRACY: THE MIDWEST IN WORLD WAR I

DAVID ALAN RENNIE

In *One of Ours* (1922), Willa Cather describes the surprise of Claude Wheeler's Company "finding the old things instead of the new" on their arrival in France. Journeying through the countryside at harvest time, Company B is surprised to encounter "American binders, of well-known makes" and "familiar cottonwood, growing everywhere." Upon the first sighting of alfalfa, Cather writes, "the whole train rang with laughter; alfalfa was one thing, they believed, that had never been heard of outside their own prairie states" (339-40). Passages like this, which emphasize similarity between the French landscape and the rural topography of soldiers' homes thousands of miles away, are a recurrent feature of Midwestern World War I novels.[1] These descriptive moments simultaneously evoke feelings of disjunction and familiarity, as the French countryside calls to mind landscapes from which the American soldiers are geographically divorced. Further complicating this evocation is the fact that the Midwestern landscape is also present, in a sense, in terms of the massive agricultural contribution Midwestern farmers made to the Allied war effort.

In this essay I will discuss how contemporary literature and propaganda represented this agricultural role before examining how John Lewis Barkley, Willa Cather, and Thomas Boyd registered topographical similarities between French and Midwestern landscapes in their World War I works. In doing so I want to propose that the Midwestern experience of World War I dovetails reciprocating continuities running from west to east—in which Home Front production and conservation support the "off stage" war effort in Europe—and from east to west—in which soldiers are struck by the similarity

between the Old World and the one they have left behind in the Midwest. We might think of these reciprocities as the inverse of what Paul Fussell terms the "ridiculous proximity" of the British Front Line to "'home'" (64-69). The trenches were just seventy miles from London, close enough for perishable goods and newspapers, only a day old, to reach the them. While those on the south coast of England could hear artillery fire, Zeppelin attacks on London further narrowed the proximity of the civilian population to war. The Midwest may have been thousands of miles away from the actual fighting but, as with Fussell's examples, elements of "home" and "The Front" overlap and intersect with each other. Furthermore, this hemispheric intersection (emphasized by the fact that the Midwest was a landscape at peace, being farmed in part to support the war) continued following the Armistice. After the war America's domestic landscape—formerly separated from the ravages of war—itself faced the consequences of the conflict as its armies returned. With the increased wartime demand for agricultural produce gone, farmers struggled to pay debts incurred during the expanded production of the interwar years, while demobilized soldiers were faced with the difficulty of reintegrating into the society they were ostensibly safeguarding overseas.

The landscape of the Midwest has played a central role in the formation of American national identity. As William Barillas writes, it was the "wild, undeveloped expanses" of the New World hinterland "that distinguished the young nation from Europe" (40). Meanwhile, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, it was the "expansion westward" into those territories that "furnish[ed] the forces dominating American character" (3). Conceived of as a rural and egalitarian region, differentiated from the urban East and the western wilderness, the Middle West, by 1912, "came to symbolize the nation, to be seen as the most American part of America" (Shortridge 216). World War I, however, generated a new narrative in American mythology. The easterly crusade to save the Old World or, in President Wilson's words, to make the world "safe for democracy" reversed the nation's foundational movement of western exploration and settlement leading away from Europe. As Joseph Urgo describes it, "the close of the western continental frontier" was followed by "the opening of the global imperial frontier," inaugurating America's status as a global superpower (42). In addition to doubling back on America's foundational move to the west, the movement of Americans between the

New and Old Worlds during and after World War I was complicated by the development and redeployment of other cultural conceptions that had specifically Midwestern resonances. Throughout World War I, the concept of the Midwest as the democratic heartland of America was employed in the rhetoric of the nation's war effort. In a related sense, exhortations to expand Home Front production also tapped into this image.

Although World War I represented a "new myth of American destiny" (Trout 41) following the close of the frontier, the concept of the Midwest as the democratic, pastoral heartland of America had by no means expired in the eyes of some commentators. In *The Valley of Democracy* (1918), Meredith Nicholson writes that the "Middle Western pioneers were in every sense the fullest sons of democracy" (92). Nicholson makes it clear that the efficacy of the American fighting force and the values that it defends were generated in the American heartland, claiming that "if the Kaiser had known the spirit in which these august fields were tamed and peopled . . . he would not have so contemptuously courted our participation against him in his war for world-domination" (93). In an address delivered to the State Historical Society of Minnesota in 1918, Frederick Jackson Turner voiced similar sentiments. Turner described domestic war efforts and institutions such as the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. "as an inspiring prophecy of the revival of the old pioneer conception of the obligations and opportunities of neighborliness, broadening to a national and even to an international scope" (358). Turner also opposed the "Prussian discipline, the discipline of a harsh machine" with the "passionate belief that [a] democracy was possible," which he describes as being "the heritage of pioneer experience" (356-8). The expressions of Nicholson and Turner, then, frame the new era of American identity as that of the savior of democracy on the international stage and a continuation of, not a replacement for, pioneer ideals.

This same sense of ideological continuity can also be found in the rhetoric surrounding America's agricultural contribution to World War I. During the war, increased demand from Britain, Italy, and France strained American supply and raised domestic food prices. When America joined the war in April of 1917, ensuring a continuous wheat supply to the Allies became an imperative. In order to discourage speculators and ensure that farming remained commercially viable, the government fixed the price of wheat at two dollars per bushel. Consistently the most productive agricultural region in

America, the Midwest was the site of much of this increased farming. (Baltensperger 60-63). In *One of Ours*, Claude's father enters into the war spirit, leading a plough team himself in the belief that "[w]hatever happened on the other side of the world, they would need bread," behavior that prompts his neighbors to comment that "nobody but the Kaiser had ever been able to get Nat Wheeler down to regular work" (171). In Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920), while the sons of the town's businessmen are drafted into the army, Gopher Prairie is described as "booming, as a result of the war price of wheat" (413). In an article published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1918, Charles Harger presents a more complicated look at the agricultural impact of the war. Harger describes six Midwestern farmers meeting at a grain elevator to discuss the pressures exerted by the two-dollar fixed price. As they conclude, scarcity of labor and the increased costs of expanding production limit the profitability of wheat. But the article is keen to depict the farmers as willing contributors to the war effort and concludes with the assertion that "[t]he farmer has the nation's weal at heart and to the extent of his ability will be a good soldier, the soldier of the wheat field—as important to-day as the soldier of the field of battle" (88). In *The Valley of Democracy,* Nicholson also took a patriotic stance that paralleled America's military and agricultural contributions: "The farmer himself is roused to a new consciousness of his importance . . . every acre of his soil and every ear of corn and bushel of wheat in his bins or in process of cultivation has become a factor in the gigantic struggle to preserve and widen the dominion of democracy" (84).

Repeatedly American war propaganda called for greater production by farmers and conservation by households by paralleling these domestic efforts with the Allied military campaign. The image of a US thresher knocking the Kaiser over the head with a club was printed in the May 1918 issue of *Farm Implement News* above the caption "Competent Threshing Here Will Hasten the Thrashing Over There" (qtd. in Hurt 234). One poster issued by the US Food Administration shows soldiers charging into battle above the enjoinder "THEY ARE GIVING ALL—WILL YOU SEND THEM WHEAT?" (Dunn, see Figure 1). Another, encouraging households to "EAT MORE Cornmeal—Rye flour, Oatmeal *and* Barley," and to "Save the Wheat for the Fighters" superimposes images of storage jars labelled with these crops over a procession of American cavalry (Treidler). These juxtaposed images are emblematic of the continu-

ity between the home and military fronts that we see, in an ideological sense, in the rhetoric of Nicholson and Turner and in the agricultural activity recorded in the writing of Cather, Lewis, and Harger. Home Front activity was undertaken in the service of a military effort from which it was divorced geographically but linked to ideologically in visual propaganda and songs like George M. Cohan's patriotic "Over There." Therefore, literary descriptions of Midwestern soldiers "gazing homeward" as they find the French landscape reminiscent of their own are by no means one-sided. Propaganda and literature testify that imaginative projections going in the other direction, from US soil to the European theater of war, reciprocated the topographical similarities identified by soldiers.

Figure 1: *Harvey Dunn, They Are Giving All—Will You Send Them Wheat?* Reproduced under terms of the British Imperial War Museum's Non-Commercial License. Accessible at: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/8183

In his seminal study, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Fussell makes the influential claim that "Every war is ironic because . . . its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends" (7). In the same work, Fussell made the startling claim that "American writing about the war tends to be spare and one-dimensional . . . unresonant and inadequate for irony" (158). It is impossible to accept this definition of American World War I writing

as shallow or incapable of irony. Fussell's pejorative estimation of American World War I literature is amply disqualified by the dynamics of implication inherent in Hemingway's prose, Dos Passos's contrast of aesthete John Andrews with the bureaucratic military machine in *Three Soldiers*, E.E. Cummings's modernist allegory of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in *The Enormous Room*, and Ellen La Motte's relentless critique of hollow and nonsensical military lexicon in *The Backwash of War*. To this list we should add the hitherto under-recognized ways in which Midwestern authors have featured the kinds of topographical contrast and continuity that I have outlined—for the reason that the reciprocal continuities inherent in the Midwest's participation in World War I possess the very qualities of resonance and dimensionality that Fussell perceives as lacking in American World War I literature. Previously, John Rohrkemper has looked at how Hemingway, Dos Passos and Cather contrast the Edenic *concept* of the Midwest with war-torn Europe to emphasize the destruction of World War I, while Steven Trout has examined the role that sunrise and sunset imagery play in emphasizing the east-west dichotomy that structures Cather's *One of Ours* (41-7). However, recurrent descriptions of similarities between the Midwestern countryside and French battlefields play an as yet under-appreciated role in Midwestern World War I literature.

Born and raised in Missouri, John Lewis Barkley (1895-1966) served as a reconnaissance man in France as part of Company K, 4th Infantry Regiment, which belonged to the US Army's 3rd Division. On October 7, 1918, at a site near Cunel, France, Barkley single-handedly blocked the advance of hundreds of German soldiers by firing a captured German machine gun through the aperture in the gun turret of a discarded tank. Barkley was heavily decorated for his actions, including being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by General Pershing. Unfortunately, Barkley was less successful than others in managing to turn his heroic exploits into financially remunerative activities after the war. Originally published as *No Hard Feelings!*, Barkley's memoir entered the postwar book market in 1930, appearing as interest in World War I books declined after the publication of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Goodbye to All That* (both in 1929) and in the midst of the Great Depression, which blighted the book market in general. Barkley's memoir was reissued, however, under the title of *Scarlet Fields* by the University Press of Kansas in 2012. Barkley's vision of war runs counter to the more

familiar view offered by Robert Graves and John Dos Passos of war as a vortex of mass slaughter that overwhelms the individual. Instead, Barkley finds exhilaration in combat, but this never prevents him from registering the destruction around him.

Upon his first sight of the French countryside, Barkley thinks that "that glimpse of land had looked like home," in Missouri (49), and such reflections recur throughout the narrative. At one point Barkley records the aftermath of an artillery exchange between the American and German armies on the hills around Chateau-Thierry. In this scene the gunfire has ceased, but the corpses and still-living bodies of machine-gunned Germans continue to occupy the ground to the left of Barkley's position. Barkley records his reaction on looking to the right: "I caught my breath. I couldn't believe it for a minute, with the things I'd just seen on my mind. It didn't look any more like war than the country at home. For a minute I had a feeling that I'd just wakened up from a nightmare, and this *was* home" (68). The similarity the landscape bears to that found near his home in Missouri forms a powerful contrast to the human slaughter Barkley has just witnessed. Yet this contrast is accompanied by a further facet. Barkley has attained his position as an intelligence, or reconnaissance, man through the skills he has acquired as a Missouri backwoodsman. He is "terribly proud of the fact that Daniel Boone was some kind of ancestor of ours" (10). Thinking back to his youth during his army training in Kansas, Barkley comments: "As a kid wandering around the woods along Scalybark Creek I'd tried to model myself on Boone. Pretending to be a pioneer cutting new trails through unknown forests was more fun than school. Now it began to look as if those kid games had taught me things that were going to be important to know if I ever got to France" (34).

Not only does Barkley recognize the Missouri landscape in France, the very skills that he honed within the landscape of his youth fit him for his role as a reconnaissance man in war. In *The Frontier in American History*, Frederick Jackson Turner describes the real-life Boone's expansion of the frontier into Missouri as an act that "helped to open the way for civilization" (19). That Barkley, a man proud to be descended from Boone, should be adapting his backwoodsman skills to widen another American frontier of democracy forms a further strand of the complex of continuities running between the Midwest and the ways in which its sons, agriculture, and ideals were adapted and redeployed during World War I. Barkley's continual

awareness of the similarities between war-torn France and the Missouri backwoods lends *Scarlet Fields* moments of reflection that, alongside the occasional meditative passage, help to elevate his account beyond the level of a wartime adventure story.

Structurally, Willa Cather's *One of Ours* is built around the reciprocal east-to-west and west-to-east hemispheric paralleling that structures the Midwest's involvement in World War I. For Trout, Cather's novel "signals the death of the American frontier" and "even parallels . . . the Great Crusade as an antidote for the closing of the frontier" (42-3). In the town square in Denver, Claude looks at a westward-facing statue of Kit Carson, but for him, as Cather writes, "there was no west, in that sense, any more" (118). Much of the 260-plus pages of the novel's Nebraskan section deals exactly with the extinction of the pioneer west and the incursion of modernizing techniques and materialism, as symbolized by Claude's brother, Bayliss, while at the same time looking to the east, represented not only by increased wartime farming, but also by the interest of Claude and his mother in newspaper reports on the war's progress, the repeated use of maps to locate European locations, and Mahailey's preoccupation with anti-German propaganda.

In addition to these eastward proclivities, Cather prefigures the impending war by another device that adds to the novel's hemispheric paralleling. Following Britain's declaration of war on Germany, Claude meets Ernest Havel, the son of German neighbors, while driving back to Lovely Creek. The meeting, which takes place just before sundown when the fields are "still glimmering" in the declining daylight, is loaded with the west-east dichotomies that structure *One of Ours*. Against the symbolic gathering darkness, Ernest talks of the invincibility of the vast German army, claiming that "'Nobody can do anything'" to halt their advance (164). Following this, Ernest asks Claude a question that contrasts the bucolic and life-giving qualities of the landscape with the destruction of the impending war: "'How would you like it yourself, to be marched into a peaceful country like this, in the middle of harvest, and begin to destroy it?'" (165). Here we have a person of German descent asking a Nebraskan to project himself imaginatively thousands of miles east to the German invasion of a landscape comparable to the one on which they stand. The hemispheric reciprocity of the scene is enhanced by a further comment of Ernest's. Remarking that the German army has reached Liege, Ernest adds, "'I know where that is. I sailed from Antwerp when I came over here'"

(164). His remarks remind us that not only does the Great Crusade reverse the westward expansion and settlement of America's beginning, but also that it is a war being fought against the motherland of a significant proportion of the immigrants that make up the American population.

Harvest imagery pervades *One of Ours*. Not only does Ernest allude to harvest time in his question to Claude, he actually describes the war as "'the harvest of all that has been planted'" (165). Claude leaves home at harvest time and arrives in France to find "rolling uplands clad with harvest" occurring "a month later than at home" (339, 340). The visual similarity, and therefore continuity, between French and Midwestern landscapes ironically foreground the notion of "harvesting" young men, but also allude to the fact that the Midwestern harvest is also present in France, having been increased for cultivation and exportation to Europe in order to support the Allied war effort.

Once Claude is "over there," Cather emphasizes the violent destruction of warfare by juxtaposing an image of Claude's home—with its connotations of peace and security—with war-shattered France. In the sand of Mademoiselle Olive's garden, Claude draws a detailed plan of his Nebraskan farm, over which Cather superimposes an image of the artillery-damaged countryside: "There it all was, diagrammed on the yellow sand, with shadows gliding over it from the half-charred locus trees" (389). Yet the contrast between the Midwest and the European war zone does more than emphasize the destruction that takes place in the latter. For Claude, the war forms an antidote to the disappointment and limitations of his upbringing in rural Nebraska. By the time of *One of Ours*, William Barillas writes, Cather's "idealization of American expansion onto the Great Plains" that characterizes parts of *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia* had become superseded by works critiquing "crass materialism" in the Midwest (67, 80). In *One of Ours*, the French landscape in itself forms a point of contrast that accentuates the incursion of materialism into the Midwest. During his stay with the Jourbert family, Claude revels in an unprecedented sensation of purpose that he believes compensates him for the youth "which he had never experienced" in Nebraska (410). Cather writes that "[h]e knew that nothing like this would ever come again; the fields and woods would never again be laced over with this hazy enchantment" (411). This "hazy enchantment" is contrasted with a nightmare vision of his past:

"One night he dreamed that he was at home; out in the ploughed fields, where he could see nothing but the furrowed brown earth, stretching from horizon to horizon . . . Poor Claude, he would never, never get away; he was going to miss everything!" (411). Here the contrast between the stultifying atmosphere of Claude's youth and the exhilaration he feels in the army is supported by the contrast in agricultural imagery. The fields in Claude's nightmare fill his vision with dull brown earth to the exclusion of all else—an imprisoning rather than enchanting presence. The ambiguity that *One of Ours* displays towards war—as a force of destruction that also provides Claude with a sense of acceptance within the army—is buttressed by the combined presence of these intersecting east-west parallels and their complex symbolic resonances.

In a manner comparable to Cather's strategy in *One of Ours*, Thomas Boyd (1898-1935) also registers continuity between the agrarian landscapes of France and the Midwest in his partly autobiographical World War I novel, *Through the Wheat* (1923). The French countryside in which nondescript protagonist William Hicks finds himself reminds him of his Midwestern home, with Boyd writing that "this particular sector looked very much like one of the calm farms which Hicks was accustomed to see in many parts of Ohio" (21-2). Furthermore, Boyd also tells us that Hicks was used to "contemplating such a pastoral scene from the window of a railway train or from a northern Michigan farmhouse" (22). Having created these topographical connections, Boyd then, like Barkley and Cather, uses them to emphasize the destruction of combat, albeit on a more graphic scale. Boyd writes of "full heads of grain . . . like slender lances raised by an army of a million men," at once conflating the bucolic and the martial, yet also connecting the soldiers to the grain itself, continuing the novel's ironic harvest imagery (195). Wheat imagery permeates the book, onto which Boyd superimposes images of wounding. At one point, heat from the rising sun causes a "nauseating smell" to rise from the corpses on the battlefield which, as Boyd describes it, "seemed to cover all the objects in one's line of vision with a sticky green. Even the tops of wheat . . . looked as if they were coated with a fetid substance" (133). In Barkley's book the reciprocity between the Midwest and France adds a reflective dimension; in Cather's they are part of a sophisticated scheme of dichotomous imagery that critiques and finds merit in both the Midwest and in warfare. What distinguishes Boyd's book is the expressive, almost

poetic, charge of his imagery. *Through the Wheat* is regularly punctuated by unconventional, eccentric, and highly charged imagery that makes it one of the most distinctive of all First World War novels.

As Hicks's platoon arranges into battle formation, Boyd writes, "Ahead, through a scattered line of trees, stretched a spacious prairie, covered thick with wheat—a slightly rolling sea, majestically and omnipotently engulfing the universe" (184). The image that Boyd creates here forms a distillation of the reciprocal continuities that structure the Midwestern war experience. The wheat itself is symbolic of sending not just that particular crop, but also soldiers from an indigenous landscape to another that partially resembles it, while the universal interrelation of the prairie "omnipotently engulfing the universe" suggests the global nature of the First World War. Boyd's imagery here, of a pervasive natural beauty, assumes Whitmanesque dimensions. In *Specimen Days*, Whitman recalls that while journeying through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri he admired "broad expanses of living green, in every direction . . . that feature of the topography of your western central world—that vast Something, stretching out on its own unbounded scale, unconfined, which there is in these prairies, combining the real and ideal, and beautiful as dreams [sic]" (141).

As well as recalling the central metaphor of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Boyd's image of the prairie wheat "majestically and omnipotently engulfing the universe" echoes the notion of a "vast Something, stretching out on its own unbounded scale" that Whitman found in the Midwestern prairies. Steven Mack describes what he terms Whitman's "theory of organic democracy" as one in which "the universe, with all its conflicts and contradictions, is an organic whole—and democracy is its defining quality and animating principle" (137-8). Boyd's image of a unified and majestic agrarian beauty connotes exactly the kind of holistic democracy that Whitman located in the Midwestern prairies. These resonances take on further significance given that Hicks and his fellow Marines are in France and, as his drill sergeant reminds him, are "supposed to be saving the world for democracy" (15). Boyd's image suggests a tranquil organic beauty uniting the universe and temporarily suspending the thought of war. His contrasting the beauty of the landscape with the destruction that unfolds there highlights the juncture between ideals and actuality in fighting a war to make the world "safe for democracy"

while maintaining an unflinching focus on the human cost of such an undertaking.

Yet the cost of the war was not, of course, limited to combat fatalities and wounding. The postwar narrative of returning soldiers attempting to reintegrate into society and the effect of the war on the postwar economy are among the less-well-remembered narratives of America's involvement in World War I. The hemispheric agrarian paralleling of the Midwest's involvement continued, not only in the return of solders to the New World, but also in the impact that increased wartime farming had on the postwar economy. In the final passages of *Through the Wheat*, Boyd describes a French rural landscape marred by the destruction of war. Corpses line the battlefield, which will form "a festival for the bugs which now only inquisitively inspected them," through which Hicks walks "dimly sensing the dead, the odors," amid the splatter of bullets (265-6). However, the impact of the war was inscribed on the agricultural landscapes of America as well as on European battlefields.

Increased wartime production had severe repercussions for some farmers after the war. As Niall Palmer writes, "Wartime price supports had encouraged many farmers to invest heavily in crop experimentation, new machinery and the construction or renovation of farm buildings. When prices began to slide dramatically in 1920, with wheat falling from $2.50 to under a dollar per bushel by late 1921, thousands of small farmers had insufficient capital to meet their loan repayments" (39). A resurgent international grain market and domestic overproduction resulted in the 1921 Emergency Tariff, raising the import tax on meat, wheat, and other agricultural products in an effort to alleviate the problem. Charles Harger, who had placed the farmer beside the soldier in terms of importance to the war in 1918, records an impression of the postwar years as being full of "discouragement, unrest and uncertainty" for farmers, during which times "meagre yields and low prices, often below the cost of production, have sapped the courage of the farm country" ("Fortune Smiles," 570).

"Trampled Grain" was the provisional title for Boyd's posthumously published *In Time of Peace* (1935), a sequel to *Through the Wheat* (Bruce 137). Boyd's initial title sought to redirect the agricultural imagery of *Through the Wheat* to postwar Chicago, in which *In Time of Peace* is set. Even though Boyd opted for the latter title, the agrarian imagery of his original choice is a strong indication of the

deliberate continuity that exists between the works. *In Time of Peace* is a naturalistic work that forcefully articulates Boyd's view that the war forms an extension of the indifferent capitalist economy. Between *Through the Wheat* and *In Time of Peace*, Boyd wrote three more novels, a collection of World War I-related stories, and four biographies of historic American figures. Despite the impressive productivity of his short career, terminated by his early death in 1935 (possibly related to health complications from his war injuries), Boyd never enjoyed long-term financial security. Boyd's career was further hit by the decline in the book market during the Depression years, a failure further aggravated by his inability to succeed as a Hollywood script writer. Discouraged, Boyd finally turned to communism, standing (unsuccessfully) as the party candidate for Vermont in the 1934 gubernatorial elections.

Boyd would fictionalize many of these biographical and ideological developments in *In Time of Peace*. When we pick up his story, Hicks is working in a Chicago factory and is engaged to marry a journalist named Patsy Hughes. At Patsy's insistence Hicks tries a job as a newspaper reporter and, in time, works his way into a prosperous career. However, Hicks loses his job following the Crash of 1929 and, despairing of what he comes to see as the exploitative nature of capitalism, turns to communism. The novel opens with Hicks in a machine shop, struggling through a twelve-hour shift of manual labor. Initially Hicks is enthusiastic about his job but later becomes discouraged:

> It was no longer a contest between himself and the machine . . . As Hicks realized this he also realized that he could never make headway against the combination. It was always the same. Every night, once his sore muscles had limbered up, he worked with increasing strength and confidence till after midnight, when, hour by hour, the machine gained over his tired body. (7)

This struggle between man and a literal machine prefigures the main concern of the text: the struggle of the individual within the economic apparatus of society.

Early in the novel Hicks is confident that he can beat the system: "It had been obvious to him for a long time that the average person was bound to poverty and failure. Still, he thought as an individual he might succeed" (38). However, Hicks becomes increasingly skeptical about this prospect and begins to be convinced of the exploita-

tive nature of capitalism. Gradually, Hicks's outrage assumes a political focus as his neighbor Rolfer inculcates an awareness of the political processes behind the capitalist market. "'Markets!' Rolfer said. 'Big countries have to find new markets for their goods. When the capitalists make so much more than their own workers can buy, they get into a war to rob some other country of its markets'" (200).

Yet not only is Boyd convinced about the exploitative nature of capitalism, he seeks to portray America's involvement in World War I as an extension of this system. For instance, the aged and impoverished John Butler, who kills his landlord, blames his downfall on the war: '"[H]e used to tell some story about how he got too patriotic during the war—how all them four-minute speakers made him put all his money into the Liberty Bonds and how he couldn't get his money out again when he needed it'" (108). Likewise, one of Hicks's fellow journalists makes a sarcastic comparison between a candidate's chances of winning a local election and America's commitment to postwar international politics: "Jones laughed. 'And maybe we'll join the League of Nations'" (186). As Douglas A. Noverr comments, "Hicks realizes that peace is an illusion; the ongoing war is one of economic survival and class warfare" (106). Like Boyd, Hicks comes "to believe, especially after the disillusioning experience of World War I, that wars were instigated and encouraged by the politically ambitious and by financial interests" (100).

The panorama of individual experience of *In Time of Peace,* which touches on the lives of journalists, politicians, housewives, and blue-collar workers, represents a remarkable development from the single consciousness of *Through the Wheat* to the fully realized cast of an economic city novel. It is only at the end of the work, however, that Hicks commits to resisting the existing economic system. In the final scene, the crowd with which Hicks is picketing a local magnate's factory is shot at by the police with machine guns. The passage reads: "Then the numbness left . . . Back of the guards stood the police, back of the police the politicians, back of the politicians the Libbys, and behind them all the sacred name of Property . . . Hicks gritted his teeth. If it was war again, he was glad to know it. He at least had something to fight for now" (323).

Like "Trampled Grain," the eventual title, *In Time of Peace,* looks back to Boyd's first novel and creates a sense of continuity between the two works that bookend his career. Boyd elaborates this continuity but crucially also challenges it in the ending of *In Time of*

Peace, which is set up to parallel but to also contradict key components of the finale of *Through the Wheat*. That novel ends with Hicks walking back towards his own lines after having ventured across the battlefield to retrieve his rifle: “No longer did anything matter, neither the bayonets, the bullets, the barbed wire, the dead, nor the living. The soul of Hicks was numb” (266). In the final scene of *In Time of Peace*, Hicks is still being fired upon, not by German soldiers in France but by his own countrymen on a domestic battlefield. However, this time Hicks is no longer “numb”; the “numbness” quite literally leaves him as the apathetic and mechanical movements of *Through the Wheat* are replaced by his conviction to resist social inequality. Finally, Boyd directly references Hicks’s service in World War I in the concluding lines, “If it was war again, he was glad to know it. He at least had something to fight for now.” This last sentence refers in part to the narrative time frame of *In Time of Peace,* during which Hicks has been struggling to support his family, but it also suggests that the fighting he took part in during the war was actually for nothing and that only now is Hicks committing himself to a “war” that may benefit him. In reflexively paralleling the endings of his William Hicks novels, Boyd embodies the very forms of reciprocal contrast and continuity that structure the Midwestern experience of World War I, forms that we can now incorporate into our growing scholarly recognition of the diversity of experience and artistic response engendered by America’s participation in that war.

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NOTE

[1]While this essay focuses on the World War I writings of John Lewis Barkley, Willa Cather, and Thomas Boyd, references to topographical similarities between France and the Midwest can be found in other Midwestern World War I literature. Surveying the French country, the eponymous private in James Stevens’s *Mattock* contemplates how “the land stretched away level and flat, much like the country back in good old Kansas” (9), while the French cornfields of John Dos Passos’s *Three Soldiers* prompt Chris Chrisfield to remark, “‘Out Indiana way we wouldn’t look at a cornfield that size. But this sort o’ reminds me [sic] the way it used to be out home in the spring o’ the year’” (112).

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“VERY CHICAGO”: MARY BORDEN AND THE ART OF FICTION

Hazel Hutchison

Mary Borden’s searing account of the Western Front, *The Forbidden Zone*, has recently become one of the most celebrated texts about the First World War by a female writer. Unflinching in its descriptions of the horrors and ironies of life and death in a military hospital, Borden’s book, largely composed while she was running L’Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1 for the French Army at Rousbrugge in Belgium, deserves every line of the attention that has, rather belatedly, come its way. Rejected in 1917 by publishers wary of censorship regulations and criticized by reviewers when it finally appeared in 1929 as “dreadful,” full of “mannerisms” and “ugly” images, *The Forbidden Zone* was largely ignored by readers and scholars over the following decades and was never a success in Borden’s lifetime (*Times Literary Supplement* 1030). However, since the 1990s, with an upsurge of interest in women’s writing from the war and with a broadening awareness of international perspectives on the war, sections have found their way into anthologies, the book has been reprinted, and scholars such as Christine Hallett, Margaret Higonnet, Angela K. Smith, and Santanu Das have given it a place in the history of nursing narratives and in the development of modernist literary methods. Jane Conway’s finely researched biography has also pieced together the story of Borden’s dramatic life from her childhood in Chicago to her adult life in the political and literary elite of British society, allowing her work to be understood in its context. *The Forbidden Zone* looks set, at last, to be recognized for what it is, a classic text of the First World War. Hard-hitting, pensive, innovative in style and structure, fearless in its examination of the mystery of human suffering, this book offers a view of the consequences of

war as damning and as eloquent as any of the more celebrated war texts by writers such as Siegfried Sassoon, Erich Marie Remarque or Vera Britten (Hutchison 87-96).

However, *The Forbidden Zone*—fragmented, inventive and brilliant as it is—was not Borden's only statement about the war. Like many of her generation, Borden found the war all-engrossing, a physical and emotional ordeal that left a lasting impression of the fragility of human society and redefined her sense of her own identity. Borden's identity is heavily masked in *The Forbidden Zone*. The prose sketches that make up the book deliberately confuse any sense of a consistent speaking voice, using first, third, and even second-person narration, destabilizing the reader's viewpoint to create the sense of dislocation and detachment that was such a distinctive feature of the front-line experience. Although it is often described as a memoir, there is little information in this text about how Borden came to be at the Front, nor is there any discussion of her Midwestern background, her politics, or even the practicalities of her role there. Indeed, one of the virtues of this remarkable little book is its vivid depiction of the claustrophobia of the war zone, the apparent irrelevance of all experience beyond the limits of the hospital compound, and the difficulty of conceiving of a world either before or after the war. Many sections in the book are framed in present tense, thus affirming the intensity of these moments of perception as they unfold and the hopelessness of a world in which war seems the only eternal truth. As she phrases it in the verbal sketch "Moonlight," "[i]t had no beginning, it will have no end. War, the Alpha and the Omega, world without end—I don't mind it. I am used to it" (*The Forbidden Zone* 53).

In contrast, Borden's fiction relating to the war generates a very different voice. The novels that she wrote during and about the war offer more open explorations of the impact of the war on society and on personal relationships, and provide the cultural context so markedly absent from *The Forbidden Zone*. Given Borden's tendency to draw on her own experiences in her art, these novels also provide, if not exactly biographical information, at least an exploration of feelings and responses related to Borden's own as she struggled to make sense of the meaning of the war in her own life and the lives of those around her. Borden's novels are mostly out of print and are firmly off the radar of both popular readers and literary scholars. They have never been taken seriously as war literature—although that is a category increasingly hard to define. Nor has Borden's dis-

tinguished writing career right through the mid-twentieth century been much remembered in the decades since her death. This essay explores how Borden's war novels might redefine the literary persona that has recently been constructed for her largely in the light of that enigmatic text, *The Forbidden Zone*. By engaging with her fiction, especially *The Romantic Woman* (1916), it asks how her response to the First World War can be understood within a wider agenda of her views about identity, society and art. Gertrude Stein, who knew Borden in Paris during the years of the war, remarked that she was "very Chicago" (Stein 185). It was probably not a compliment. However, Stein's comment does raise the question of the influence of Borden's Midwestern upbringing on her social attitudes and aesthetic choices—or perhaps the deliberate rejection of any such influence. Stein notes that "chicagoans [sic] spend so much energy losing Chicago that often it is difficult to know what they are." She was partly referring to the Chicago "voice" and to the ways in which people from Chicago tempered their distinctive accents in other contexts, but she was also talking about identity—regional and personal. Borden's early international experiences, like those of her protagonist, Joan, in *The Romantic Woman*, can be read as a story of how in losing Chicago, she set herself the task of discovering what else she might be. For Borden, as an emerging writer in the 1910s, this search for an identity and a literary "voice" of her own was also motivated by the desire to harness her creative abilities. Therefore, this early novel offers a useful insight into how Borden's cultural identity impacted on her reactions to the war in Europe and shaped the ways in which she wrote about it.

Borden's own life was so colorful that one might be forgiven for mistaking her biography for a work of fiction. Born in 1886, the daughter of a Chicago property and mining magnate, Borden grew up in a luxurious house on Lake Shore Drive. She played freely in the city streets but was also welcome in the finest houses in Chicago. She was taught to appreciate books and art, both elements of cultural life enjoying a new prominence in the city from the 1890s onward, and through her mother's involvement in the Moody Church, she was introduced both to evangelical Christianity and to social networks in less privileged strata of the Chicago population. She was not always comfortable in this setting, but it gave her more of an insight into the lives and concerns of more ordinary people than most young people of her social grouping might ever have. As a teenager, Borden was

educated at Vassar College, and then, aged just twenty, on her father's death, she inherited a share of his estate which provided a lavish income of around $50,000 or £10,000 a year. Catching something of her mother's religious fervor and displaying the passionate idealism that was such a feature of her own personality, Borden developed an ambition to serve as a missionary overseas. She set off with family friends to visit mission stations in the Far East that the family had supported financially and on the journey met a charismatic young Scots missionary named Douglas Turner, based in India, whom she married in 1908. After several years running a mission station in Punjab, the Turners returned to Britain and settled in London, where May, as she was known to family and friends, established herself in literary and upper-class social circles, started a family, and began to write novels under the pen name Bridget Maclagan. Her circle of friends and contacts included Ford Madox Ford, Noel Coward, Julian Huxley, George Bernard Shaw, and E. M. Forster, who had been friends with Turner in India. As Borden's marriage to Turner became increasingly unhappy, she also had an affair with the radical young writer-artist Wyndham Lewis that broke up shortly before the outbreak of the First World War.

In early 1915, Borden volunteered with the French Red Cross in a typhoid hospital in Dunkirk but found herself appalled at the lack of medical resources and staff and swiftly offered—without previous training or experience—to run a mobile field surgery unit for the French Army. This she would largely fund from her own fortune and by appeals to her network of upper-class friends and relatives on both sides of the Atlantic. From May of 1915 until the end of the war, Borden spent most of her time at the Western Front with her unit, working near Ypres, at the Somme, and at Le Chemin des Dames during the disastrous Nivelle Offensive. During this time, her daughters, one of whom was only a few months old when Borden left for the Front, were left in the charge of a nurse, and Turner worked as an interpreter with an Indian Cavalry Regiment. In 1917, Borden began a passionate affair with Edward Spears, a young English staff officer. When Turner found out about the affair, the marriage collapsed and Borden married Spears in Paris in March of 1918. They lived in Paris during the excitement and tension of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 but then settled in England. After the war, Spears had a high-profile career in business and politics, and May continued to write—especially after the loss of her family fortune in the Wall Street Crash

of 1929. Her work sold well and gained some critical success. The couple had a son, Michael, and despite protracted custody wrangles and legal disputes with Turner, Borden's three daughters mostly lived with her and Spears. During the Second World War, Spears served Churchill's administration first as a liaison to the French Government and then, after the fall of Paris in 1940, as British Minister to the Levant States. Not to be outdone, May, then in her fifties, formed another mobile medical unit and travelled with it, initially in Northern France and then in North Africa with the Free French Army, a period of her life recounted in *Journey Down a Blind Alley* (1946). After the war, she continued to publish fiction, memoir and criticism. Despite Spears's long-term affair with his secretary, Nancy Maurice, he and Borden remained together until her death in 1968.

Given the drama, the glamor, the danger and the intense personal passions through which she lived, it is not surprising that many of Borden's novels appear to have their roots in her own life. However, as a highly self-conscious artist, she was wary of drawing too close a connection between her own biography and that of her characters, insisting that the alchemical process of transforming reality into fiction was far from straightforward. In 1956, Borden presented a speech, "Personal Experience and the Art of Fiction," to the Royal Society of Literature upon being admitted as a Fellow. Like Henry James's essay, "The Art of Fiction," which clearly offered a model for her own view of the novel, Borden's talk examines the problem of the technical relationship between life and literary creativity. The writer, she insists, must do more than "rewrite his own story again and again" ("Personal Experience" 89).

Indeed, looking back over her own career—and she had written by this time some twenty novels—Borden sees the ability to handle more than one's own personal experience as the hallmark of growth in a writer: "For the fact is that whereas the novice, or the writer of inadequate imaginative power, is limited for this subject-matter to his intimate immediate world, for the great artist, the fleeting impression of a moment, the flash of light on a stranger's face, or the sound of a voice heard only for an instant, may be enough to start the process of incubation that will result in a full-length novel" ("Personal Experience" 90). However, Borden also asserts that life has rights of its own, that it is too important to be seen—even by the writer—as nothing more than material for fiction. Although, as she admits, many of the details of her life have found their way into her work, she also

insists that much of her own experience has completely escaped her artistic control. "No," she writes, "I have not used the fundamental experiences of life. I have ceased to be a writer while I was in their grip. They, on the contrary have used me, and having used me, I can do nothing with them. They are too private" ("Personal Experience" 93). In choosing the problem of the relationship between experience and art for her lecture, Borden not only puts her finger on one of the most thorny issues of literary inquiry, she also shrewdly identifies a running theme within her own *oeuvre,* which does indeed develop more complex strategies for processing personal memories over the years yet is always probing that problematic relationship between the public and private self—in effect also a consideration of the nature of the authorial persona. Not all of Borden's novels are autobiographical or even set in the kind of world in which she moved. Some explore her complex attitude toward her Christian faith, which was disrupted and renegotiated in the light of her own divorce and the traumas of wartime. In 1933, her novel, *Mary of Nazareth*, a fictionalization of the life of Jesus's mother, caused something of a sensation when it was denounced as heretical in the *Catholic Herald* newspaper, a charge which Borden challenged in court. The sequel, *The King of the Jews* (1935), proved equally contentious, challenging as it did the traditional interpretation of the resurrection. Later in Borden's career, *Martin Merridew* (1955) explored the likely treatment of a modern-day Christlike figure, prosecuted as a traitor for unpatriotic behavior in wartime and then placed indefinitely in a mental hospital. Other novels, such as *For the Record* (1950), published in the US as *Catspaw,* and *Margin of Error* (1954) took her into more legal and political arenas.

However, it is in the novels that deal closely with the First World War that we see Borden most obviously working through elements of her own upbringing and the social circle in which she moved, perhaps as a strategy for exploring her own consciousness and her troubled response to wartime events. It would be easy to bracket her fictions connected to the war as "Home Front" novels. However, this is not exactly accurate, and they offer something much more sophisticated than a simple account of conditions and relationships in the shadow of a distant war. Borden's project seems—more ambitiously—to offer readings of society that locate the war as an integral element of modern life both in America and Europe. In *The Romantic Woman* and in *Jane Our Stranger* (1923), she provides a critique of

the prewar decadence, restrictive social norms, and underlying violence in capitalistic society at the turn of the century that made a large-scale conflict an inevitability. In *Jericho Sands* (1924) and *Sarah Gay* (1931), she goes on to explore the physical and emotional legacy of the war and offers a bleak view of the damaged world that follows.

The Romantic Woman was Borden's third novel. Her publishing career had begun with the placing of two short stories in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1909. However, she began writing in earnest after she and Turner moved to London and began mingling with literary society. Her earliest novels, *The Mistress of Kingdoms* (1912) and *Collision* (1913), were both published under the name Bridget Maclagan, probably as a means of cloaking their highly autobiographical content and, as Conway suggests, of avoiding the disapproval of Borden's mother, whose distaste at her daughter's writings would grow over the years as they tackled more and more controversial material (Conway 29 and 160). Both books drew heavily on Borden's experiences: *The Mistress of Kingdoms* depicted the adventures of an American heiress who found herself trapped in a passionless marriage to a missionary in India. *Collision,* despite its rather rambling form, showed Borden's willingness to tackle a powerful subject with a plot line again set in India but this time based on the question of interracial relationships.

The Romantic Woman also drew on material recognizably close to Borden's own experience. However, in this text, she created a more successful synthesis of recollection with social satire and artistic design to create a much more coherent work of fiction. The novel was largely written in 1915 while she was working at the Front or on leave in Paris and was published by the London firm Constable in the autumn of 1916, again under her pen name. With a first-person narrative, a nonlinear time frame and a fascination with subjective and distorted perspective, this novel also shows how Borden was beginning to experiment with the kind of stream-of-consciousness narratives that were beginning to emerge in the mid-1910s, especially in the novels of Dorothy Richardson, whose first book, *Pointed Roofs,* appeared in 1915. Borden's relationship with Lewis and her friendship with Ford had put her in touch with the very latest avant-garde influences in both literature and visual art. In *The Romantic Woman*, she was beginning to put this knowledge to creative use but very much on her own terms.

On one level, the novel is the story of a murder—not exactly a whodunnit, as we know from the opening sequence of the novel that Jim Van Orden will be a killer by the end of the novel. However, the reader has to wait to find out who will die and, more importantly, why, as the story doubles back into the past and then jolts forward in a sequence of flashbacks, tracking its way through the twists and turns of the interconnecting friendships and relationships of Joan Fairfax as she grows up, marries, and matures. Thus, on another level, the novel is more of an exploration of Joan's consciousness, of the core experiences and memories that have given her the voice with which she tells her story. The daughter of the steelworks tycoon John J. Fairfax, Joan grows up in a lakeside mansion with two brothers and a mother caught up in the activities of an evangelical congregation. As a child, Joan plays in the streets as part of a gang called the Hot Push, made up of children from the affluent homes in town, that wages war on the Micks, a gang of poorer, tougher kids, many from immigrant families, including the colorful Pat O'Brien, who will rescue Joan's brother and her childhood sweetheart, Jim, from the frozen lake; will grow up to marry Joan's friend, the remote, desirable Phyllis; and will work his way up to be governor of the state. This setting is clearly recognizable as the world of Borden's childhood, and, as Joan's story unfolds, we are made to see how she is shaped by this environment, but also how she defines herself against it, carving out her own identity. Throughout the novel, the fluidity of Joan's identity is underscored by her continually changing names and titles. As well as "Joan" and "Miss Fairfax," she is "Johnny" to her school friends—a blurring of her female role and an identification with her father, John J. Fairfax. Later, she is "Kiddie" to Binky, the young English aristocrat whom she will marry midway through the novel, then "Mrs. Dawkins," and then later again "the Duchess," a title she has never coveted and finds frankly absurd, but that is nevertheless the signal of her maturity.

Mary Borden, known as May to distinguish her from her mother, was clearly alert to the problematic role of names in shaping identity, especially in the creation of an artistic persona. "Bridget Maclagan" allowed Borden to find a foothold in the literary marketplace, but she gradually felt able to publish under her own name. The poems and essays that she published during the war—some of which would later form part of *The Forbidden Zone*—appeared as the work of "Mary Borden-Turner," and to many in the years before and during the war,

including her head nurse Agnes Warner, she was simply known as Mrs. Turner (Warner 92). However, when *The Romantic Woman* was published in the US after the war, Borden had sufficiently grown in confidence to use her own name on the title page. Although by this time she was legally Mary Spears, later to be Lady Spears when her husband received a knighthood in 1942, all her subsequent writings would be issued with the "Mary Borden" label. After the runaway success of her next novel, *Jane Our Stranger* (1923), she republished *The Romantic Woman*, this time as "Mary Borden," with her new British publisher, Heinemann, in 1924. However, she never re-issued the two earlier novels and for many years would not tell anyone their titles, believing that they were not good enough to own in public. Thus, in many ways, *The Romantic Woman* stands in the place of Borden's first novel and emerges from a period of her life during which the process of negotiating her own identity, both personal and artistic, was in full swing, a process further complicated and intensified by the pressures and dislocations of the war. So, it is no surprise that the novel should be so focused on the theme of inner development, nor that Borden should look to previous literary models as a means of placing this process within her cultural heritage.

True to its title, the novel operates within the Romantic period genre of the bildungsroman, the novel of education in which the ideal must accommodate the real before the protagonist can take his or her place in society. As Mhairi Pooler points out, the bildungsroman and its more specialized form, the kunstlerroman or artist-novel, were key narrative models for writers of the modernist era, both in autobiographical texts and in autobiographical fictions of the mind, such as those of Richardson, which were quickly coming into vogue in the 1910s (Pooler 5-19). The explosion of memoir writing during and after the First World War, that, for many who survived the war, provided a means of processing the mental trauma of what they had witnessed, was also, therefore, connected to a recurring cultural fascination of the period with the inner workings of consciousness and the means by which experience shapes thought. Joan, thus, is "Romantic" not just in her fascination with love relationships or even in her self-conscious interest in the nature of her own identity but also in her desire for the unattainable, her habit of "looking beyond the horizon" for some sublime element of human experience. As she says of her initial impressions of Binky, "I am for ever [sic] believing that there is more in people than they really amount to, finding more

meaning in things than really exists there, expecting more excitement from an experience than the experience can possibly supply; and so I call this the story of a romantic woman, the story of self-inflicted disappointment" (*The Romantic Woman* 134). To be "Romantic" is not a virtue in this novel. It is a trait that Joan must outgrow to survive in modern society. However, her tendency to look beyond the mundane makes her an excellent narrator: sharp-eyed, observant, philosophical about the nature of her experiences, ever searching after patterns of behavior and underlying motives. There is something very Fitzgeraldlike in the mix of idealism and cynicism, of verbal richness and slang, that is the result of Joan's narrative. Indeed, her tone often sounds something like that of a female Nick Carraway—unable to articulate what it is about her chaotic and decadent friends that makes them so worthy of her eloquence and yet reluctant all the same to give up the idea of their greatness.

This text, then, that charts the development of Joan's consciousness and that represents Borden's own assertion of her own literary voice, has a great deal to say about the nature of personal identity. However, Borden's choice to have Joan narrate the story from a point in time during the First World War sets the story on a wider canvas and connects the very personal themes of jealousy and desire to larger, international elements of national identity and conflict. But in the same way that Borden cloaks her own identity in that of her fictional character and her pen name, she also places her exploration of regional and national identity at a distance. Despite the obvious use of her own childhood experiences, the action of *The Romantic Woman* is not set in Chicago at all, but in the fictional city of "Iroquois," which stands on the shore of a great lake bordered by a concrete beach, a center of Midwestern commerce and industry, constructed out of fragments of old Europe and yet profoundly representative of American identity:

> If you can imagine the whole of industrial Manchester, a large slice of the Riviera, most of the East End of London, with half a dozen Polish, Hungarian, and Italian towns thrown into one, and all spread upon a brand new prairie by the side of a lake as big as a sea, you will have an idea of Iroquois, a place of gigantic incongruities and pretentions! And Iroquois is American as no other city in the United States is American. New York is New York, but Iroquois is American; it is gigantic, it is provincial; it has sprouted like a mushroom out of

> the inexhaustible riches of the prairie; it is more or less exactly in the geographical center of the United States. (*The Romantic Woman* 19)

Borden offers a powerfully satiric perspective on Midwestern city life. From the overemotional church of Ebenezer Sprott to the petty snobbery of the upper-class mothers ambitious for their daughters to make the best match, her narrator, Joan, is ruthless in her derision of the world of her youth. Iroquois is a patchwork of different ethnic groups and communities: Irish, Jewish and—as Borden is at pains to emphasize—German. It is vivid, sordid, glamorous and claustrophobic all at once. Intriguingly, the Irish overtones of Borden's choice of pen name suggest a desire to identify with this immigrant class of Midwestern society rather than with the English and Dutch who compose the Iroquois elite, whose surnames, like Fairfax, Bowers, and Van Orden, prevail in upper-class American circles of the period. The multicultural melting pot of Iroquois, with its shady business deals and red-light district, is, however, also to be admired in the novel as the place that has produced Joan's father, John J. Fairfax, in all his "grand simplicity." It is a community that is capable of recognizing the greatness of such a man, as evidenced by the practice of driving tour carriages past his house, which is considered one of the city's great sights.

Fairfax is the embodiment of American opportunity, the self-made millionaire who has also acquired gravitas, experience, and culture without losing his calm good nature. "What he had learned, he had learned with great effort," Joan says of him. "His mind was full of knowledge, carefully gathered and fastidiously selected. And this dignity of his manner was just the perfectly smooth expression of his mind" (*The Romantic Woman* 48). Such smoothness and depth are unavailable elsewhere. Joan travels to India, marries into the British aristocracy, and flirts with the literati of her day but is continually disappointed at the superficiality of Imperial and European society, which—like a heroine in a Henry James novel—she had expected would offer something more substantial. Throughout the book, Fairfax represents the ideal of wise judgement and tolerance, the qualities so painfully lacking in Joan's international circle of friends and lovers. Her father's qualities, she knows, are not of Iroquois, are not generated by the environment of the city. Nevertheless, they do reside there with him, and the other networks in which she operates all fail to live up to this standard. Fairfax is

partly the author's tribute to her own father, Richard Borden, but he is also a representation of an American ideal of fatherhood, offering material and emotional stability in a shifting and uncertain social landscape. Yet in 1916, Borden's readers might well have considered the irony that the Fairfax steelworks would very likely be manufacturing the munitions and warships that were fueling the current conflict in Europe. Thus, Iroquois in *The Romantic Woman* stands for both the very best and the very worst of the stereotypes of American identity: the faux morality, the casual violence, the materialism, and grasping ambition on the one hand and the democratic optimism, idealism and self-reliance on the other.

All of this is set in contrast to the upper-class British society into which Joan marries. Naïve at the outset about the intrigues and affairs taking place under the surface of the respectable routine of the military outpost on the Afghan frontier where she meets Binky, Joan is quickly made aware of the looser moral code that applies here—although one of the outcomes of the plot will be her realization that there is really little choice between European decadence and the American version. Joan is soon outraged to discover that Binky, as Major Dawkins is known to all, has been conducting a long-term affair with Claire Hobbes, the wife of his commanding officer. Joan realizes that she has been the victim of a plot in which Claire has set her up as a suitable match for Binky, the heir to his uncle's dukedom, who sorely needs the Fairfax money to restore his family's fortunes. But even with this knowledge, Joan cannot resist Binky's charms and the glamor of his aristocratic world. Her marriage is later shaken by the discovery that Claire has borne a son to Binky before his marriage, and the emotional turmoil that follows sets in motion the flirtations and jealousies that culminate in Jim's impulsive shooting of his wife, Louise, the shrill, prim, relentless society belle who wrongly suspects him of having an affair with Joan. However, in the aftermath of this tragedy and the effective cover-up conducted by her British friends that allows Jim to escape to the war, Joan comes to understand Claire's motives and to see her as the inevitable product of upper-class life. Looking back, Joan bluntly compares her to a sausage machine that "grinds up little animals into sausage meat," but also admits that, like a sausage machine, "[s]he fulfils herself perfectly and obeys the laws that have made her, and the laws that have made her are the laws of English society" (*The Romantic Woman* 162). Indeed, in rescuing her compromised marriage with Binky and

returning to his ancestral home at Saracens to take up their life as Duke and Duchess, Joan also accepts these laws as her own and adapts herself to the social duties of that system. She is under no illusions about its virtues, but the superficial order that it creates may be preferable, the novel implies, to the individualistic, emotional chaos that is the outcome of the social system of Iroquois—the system that leads to Jim's murder of Louise.

The shadow of violence thus falls over all levels of society, both American and British, from the childish fistfights of the Hot Push and the Micks to the relentless emotional aggression of Claire Hobbes. And, as Joan repeatedly points out in her narrative, there is a short distance between the small violences of personal life and the large-scale violence of war. This is most evident in her portrayal of Binky, whose inner world is best explained by the metaphors of the Army in which he is most truly himself. Unselfconscious and blithely selfish, Binky is ideally adapted to the environment of war, where self-preservation and a lack of sensitivity to the suffering of others are practical advantages. Binky is the person in the novel least damaged by its violence. Indeed, the war is very much the making of him, giving a focus and a purpose to his otherwise feckless existence. As Joan puts it at the book's opening, chronologically the most recent point of the narrative, "[h]is soul is quiet amidst the shuddering convulsions of the universe. It's a splendid thing for a man to keep his will rigid against the raving lunacies let loose by the noise of cannon and the sight of grotesque agonies" (*The Romantic Woman* 16). Ironically, the war creates a new bond between Joan and her husband: "It has reduced my life to the simplest terms," she writes, "it has destroyed all fictitious values and left me with a very few simple ones." She is ashamed to admit that she is "in debt to the greatest horror of all time" for her own peace of mind (*The Romantic Woman* 16). But as the story that follows demonstrates, Joan's mind is really far from peaceful, crowded as it is with the recollected contradictions of her own history or, as she puts it, with the "vices and virtues of mongrels and thoroughbreds, of civilized people and uncivilized people, and upon the relative beauties of wildernesses and gardens" (*The Romantic Woman* 17). It is left to the reader to decide which of these labels might apply to which of the characters and settings that the story presents.

The Romantic Woman has its flaws. It is a little sentimental in some places, rather too sensational in others. Some elements are too close to reality—the grimy young poet, Joseph, is rather obviously a

portrayal of Wyndham Lewis, who would later take his literary revenge by casting Borden as Mrs. Wellesley-Crooks in *The Roaring Queen*—others, such as the cover-up of Louis's murder, are too implausible (Egremont 17). Nevertheless, it is a highly complex and superbly readable novel that serves as a powerful springboard for Borden's literary development in the decades that followed. Not only does it help the reader locate her literary voice as one that, despite its transatlantic overtones, remains firmly rooted in its Midwestern origins, a voice which was always "very Chicago," it also dramatizes the very process of how the self-absorption of youth is jolted into awareness, often through processes of emotional upset or physical stress. As such, this novel enacts the very process that Borden sees as the ripening of the writer into maturity, of catching a glimpse of other lives alien to one's own, a glimpse that "lights the spark and produces that rare jewel, a story or a novel that is a work of art" ("Personal Experience" 90). It is no accident that, in the months that followed the writing of this text, she went on to create the fragments of text that would later coalesce into that extraordinary work, *The Forbidden Zone*. Having so thoroughly examined the world of her own past and asserted her ability to speak, Borden was ready to lose sight of herself among the images of war.

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"FOREIGN BORN": JOHN HERRMANN'S FICTIONAL EXPLORATION OF THE GERMAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN WORLD WAR I

Sara Kosiba

One of the widely known issues throughout the United States during the years of World War I was the rise in anti-German sentiment toward German Americans in the United States. However, despite such widespread knowledge of the discriminatory and, at times, violent practices that occurred from 1914-1918, discussion of this subject does not often appear in American literature written during and around the time period of the war. While German immigrants could be found in many regions of the United States, a significant number settled in the Midwest, and Midwestern literature is just as enigmatic in its references to the World War I experiences of many of those settlers as is American literature as a whole. I recently discovered an unpublished novel by Michigan-born writer John Herrmann, "Foreign Born," that is the most comprehensive source yet in addressing the anti-German sentiment in the Midwest during the World War I years; the work delves into the complicated dynamics of heritage, patriotism, and prejudice.

Herrmann's novel is valuable for its detailed and extended representation of a Midwestern German immigrant experience during a significant moment in American and world history, one that has been underrepresented and underexplored by other writers of the time. [1]

In his declaration of war in April 1917, President Wilson clearly realized there was a large population of German Americans in the United States and the potential for internal conflict; however, he advocated consideration and respect for German citizens and their relations and descendants:

> We shall, happily, still have an opportunity to prove that friendship in our daily attitude and actions towards the millions of men and women of German birth and native sympathy who live amongst us and share our life, and we shall be proud to prove it towards all who are in fact loyal to their neighbors and to the Government in the hour of test. They are, most of them, as true and loyal Americans as if they had never known any other fealty or allegiance. They will be prompt to stand with us in rebuking and restraining the few who may be of a different mind and purpose. If there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern repression; but, if it lifts its head at all, it will lift it only here and there and without countenance except from a lawless and malignant few. (Wilson)

Unfortunately, newspaper searches for the years between 1914 and 1918 show that German Americans were under considerable scrutiny all across the United States and that the "firm hand of stern repression" was not always accurately at work. Suspicion abounded. For example, as early as 1915, the *Chicago Tribune* was cautioning about the risks of "overpartisanship" in an editorial. They explain that there would be no issue with partisan opinions regarding the current conflict but that things can go too far when "American citizens of German or Irish extraction . . . have gone to congress [sic] to urge legislation to close down American factories and put American citizens out of work in order to benefit one of the contesting parties" (Editorial 6). In Kansas, the front page of the *Leavenworth Times* on January 8, 1916, reported on disparagement of German Americans by a US senator and how his colleagues shut down his argument as they feared a rise of hatred in the country. As US involvement in the conflict neared, newspapers increasingly covered stories related to German Americans and fear of pro-German concerns. For example, the *Lincoln Daily Star* in Nebraska, on February 12, 1917, contained a story about the untimely death of "a German sympathizer" after "an argument over the present national crisis" ("Pro-German" 4).

The antagonism grew once the United States entered World War I, with increasing accusations and acts of violence throughout the Midwest and the country as a whole. In three counties in southern Illinois, citizen vigilantes forced those they found guilty of pro-German sentiments to partake in public confessions, swear loyalty oaths, and, in a few cases, they tarred and feathered individuals ("After Pro-Germans" 6). Unfortunately, the extreme patriotic fervor and resulting climate of suspicion toward anyone who did not

share such effusive views often led to unverified and incorrect accusations and the harassment of innocent civilians.

Historians have well documented many of the issues surrounding anti-German sentiments in the Midwest. For example, Stephen J. Frese notes some of the extreme examples of anti-German sentiment in Iowa that followed the state governor's "Babel Proclamation" in May 1918. The teaching of German had already been discontinued in Iowa schools, but on May 23, 1918, Governor William L. Harding of Iowa banned the use of all foreign languages, effectively making English the official language of the state, unifying the citizens "during a time of crisis," and demonizing those who failed to comply with such a patriotic effort (Frese 61). While the action was later repealed, it augmented an already tense and suspicious climate. Paul J. Ramsey notes similar efforts against foreign languages in the efforts to remove the teaching of German from schools in Indianapolis, Indiana, and throughout the rest of the state.

In focusing on the experience of McLean County, Illinois, between the years of 1913-1918, Tina Stewart Brakebill examines how the area went from having a population that grandly celebrated "German Days" in October of 1913 to one highly antagonistic toward all things German after the start of the war. As many citizens of the county were second- and third-generation descendants of German immigrants (numbering roughly thirty percent of the county's population), the idea of German heritage was initially strong throughout the region. The change occurred subtly and eventually suddenly, as Brakebill notes, "As late as January 1918, the papers continued to give positive coverage to the events of German-American organizations and churches, and German-American businesses continued to advertise into the spring of 1918" (159). There were aberrant incidents of violence and hatred during those early years, but they were isolated outbreaks of patriotism gone awry. By spring of 1918, however, Brakebill notes the stark turn in sentiment within the county. Actions were taken to close German language newspapers, and schools, churches, and businesses that embraced German heritage were threatened with closure if they did not amend their focus to one hundred percent Americanism. An increase in violence showed the consequences of suspicion and noncompliance: "In early April 1918, in LaSalle, Illinois, a physician was attacked by a mob of several hundred men, dunked in a canal, and forced to kiss the United States flag for allegedly calling the Secretary of War a 'fat head.' A German

immigrant was lynched by a mob for allegedly 'disloyal remarks' on April 4, 1918, in Collinsville, Illinois" (Brakebill 164). All of these actions took place in communities where there was evidence of German immigrants and their descendants enlisting in the war effort and showing patriotism in other ways. Brakebill's examination shows how one corner of the Midwest went from embracing its immigrant citizens to letting propaganda and suspicion make them into the very biased evil against which they were professing to fight.

There are a few references to the experiences of German Americans during World War I in some prominent works of Midwestern fiction; however, no other author covered the subject matter in as much detail as John Herrmann did in "Foreign Born." For example, in *Main Street* (1920), Sinclair Lewis mentions in passing the oppression that some German Americans experienced during the war. In one instance, Gopher Prairie tough Cy Bogart is noted as "whipping a farmboy named Adoph Pochbauer for being a 'damn hyphenated German'" (Lewis 294). Lewis notes the irony of this act of aggression by explaining that "[t]his was the younger Pochbauer, who was killed in the Argonne, while he was trying to bring the body of his Yankee captain back to the lines" (294). It is clear that the citizens of Gopher Prairie may have been well intentioned in their efforts (at least from their point of view), but their methods were often much more assertive or more preemptive than necessary. Later in the novel, as the radical Miles Bjornstam leaves town after the death of his wife and son, Will Kennicott loyally explains to his wife Carol, ". . . don't know but what the citizens' committee ought to have forced him to be patriotic—let on like they could send him to jail if he didn't volunteer and come through for bonds and the Y.M.C.A. They've worked that stunt fine with all these German farmers" (Lewis 343). Kennicott uses Bjornstam's radical and unconventional ideas regarding individual rights and the role of government and society to explain away the tragic loss—as if Bjornstam deserved it based on his beliefs.

Willa Cather's war novel, *One of Ours* (1922), also explores issues related to German Americans and World War I. Early in the novel, Claude Wheeler tries to reconcile the news of German aggression in Europe with the German American neighbors he has always appreciated:

> He had always been taught that the German people were pre-eminent in the virtues Americans most admire; a month ago he would have said they had all the ideals a decent American boy would fight for. The invasion of Belgium was contradictory to the German character as he knew it in his friends and neighbors. He still cherished the hope that there had been some great mistake; that this splendid people would apologize and right itself with the world. (Cather 187-88)

After Claude has joined the war effort, his parents report on the legal situations some of those same German neighbors face for speaking out in favor of their homeland. They are penalized for their actions, but the judge is sensitive to the position that German Americans are placed in due to the conflict: "You have allowed a sentiment, noble in itself, to carry you away and lead you to make extravagant statements, which I am confident neither of you mean. No man can demand that you cease from loving the country of your birth; but while you enjoy the benefits of this country, you should not defame its government to extol another" (Cather 272). The closest Cather comes toward portraying any violence or hostility toward German Americans occurs as Claude is traveling home by train from his military training and sees some young boys swipe a dinner bell from a woman of German heritage who runs a restaurant in one of the stops along his route. A reader's heart breaks for the woman in Cather's depiction, as she experiences relief at the sight of Claude: "'Oh, I tank Gott it was you and no more trouble coming! You know I ain't no spy or nodding, like what dem boys say. Dem young fellers is dreadful rough mit me. I sell dem candy since dey was babies, an' now dey turn on me like dis. Hindenburg, dey calls me, und Kaiser Bill!' She began to cry again, twisting her stumpy little fingers as if she would tear them off" (276). While Claude comes to her aid, regaining the bell for her and admonishing the boys in the process, the implication is clear through the attitude of the young thieves that their enthusiastic patriotism defies a fair assessment of the facts. Cather subtly suggests that this kind of behavior is quite common during this time period.

John Herrmann's own ethnic background likely fed his interest in and knowledge of this subject matter. Herrmann was named after his grandfather, John Theodore Herrmann, who emigrated to Lansing, Michigan, from Darmstadt, Germany, in 1872 with his wife and children, including Herrmann's father, Charles ("Improvements"). He established a successful tailoring business in Lansing that would last

well into the twentieth century, taken over by his sons after his death. It is clear that the Herrmann family connections to Germany continued in some capacity, as John visited relatives while in Germany in 1923, and, in the 1930s, John's ex-wife, Josephine Herbst, also visited his relatives based on addresses and information provided by the Herrmann family.[2]

Lansing, Michigan, had (and still has) a vibrant German cultural community, and it is highly probable that Herrmann was aware of this community's events and concerns. In an autobiographical fragment, Herrmann notes the existence of the local German Lutheran parochial school a block away from his house while growing up and the heckling he and his friends used to give the students who attended there ("I Intend"). The Lansing Liederkranz Club has also been in existence since 1868 ("Our History"), and while no current evidence directly ties Herrmann or his family members to this German musical organization, his awareness of it is highly likely considering he makes references to a Liederkranz club in "Foreign Born." There is also evidence that Lansing experienced some of the same anti-German sentiments and violence as other communities around and during the time of World War I. The Lansing Liederkranz Club, for example, suspended some of their activities during the war ("Our History").[3] A historical article in the April 28, 1955, issue of the *Lansing State Journal* noted in its headline that "Anti-Boche Hysteria Led to 'Vigilantes'" and highlighted the existence of "tar-and-feather 'parties'" (6-N). While Herrmann would have been sixteen when the United States entered World War I, it is highly likely that he would have at least heard rumors of these sentiments and activities while attending high school in Lansing.

Herrmann would turn to this subject matter as novelistic material several years after the war. Evidence points to Herrmann's writing the novel while working at a bookstore in Detroit in 1925 not long after his return from several years in Europe (and after his Parisian introduction in 1924 to fellow writers Ernest Hemingway, Robert McAlmon, Nathan Asch and others). "Foreign Born" was Herrmann's second novel, which he would circulate unsuccessfully for many years. A prior work, *What Happens,* was written while Herrmann was in Europe and published in 1926 by Robert McAlmon's Contact Publishing Company in Paris. Famed editor Maxwell Perkins, of Charles Scribner's Sons, would write apologetically in a letter dated January 29, 1927, that they could not take

"Foreign Born" but that the book showed "insight into human character." A reader for Simon & Schuster, simply noted as C.P.F., however, would write on August 15, 1928, about the novel's flaws when the manuscript was considered by that publisher: "Written in a two-syllable language, in a designedly dull, weary, humorless, slow, tawdry style." The closest the novel would come to any publication would be an October 1932 excerpt in *Contact* magazine (discussed later in this essay). "Foreign Born" currently exists in typed manuscript form with holograph corrections in three folders totaling 207 pages in the John Herrmann Collection at the University of Texas at Austin's Harry Ransom Center.[4] In an unidentified reader's report dated September 25, 1926, still attached to that manuscript (a reader merely identified as a "well known newspaper man, editorial writer, and dramatic critic"), the reader's comments, while affirming the difficulty of publication, strike a balance between the opinions of Perkins and the Simon & Schuster reader: "The emotional values of the concluding situation are unfortunately out of their time, which was that of the 'Friendly Enemies'—the duration of the war. The half cynical and wholly artistic restraint with which these values are defined and qualified is perhaps equally ahead of its time—certainly above and beyond current popular taste" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 3 of 3], 206). Despite the mixed opinions of readers during the late 1920s, "Foreign Born" still contains much of value for a contemporary reader in its nuanced depiction of a difficult period in American history and culture.

The novel begins as "old man Weiman" brings his wife and son, Ernst, from Germany to the United States in 1880 (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 1 of 3], 1).[5] Upon arrival, the father sets up a shoe store in the small city of Fairbanks, Michigan, and the store prospers in subsequent years along with the surrounding city. Ernst eventually takes over the family business. Herrmann makes a clear distinction early in the novel between the father's old German immigrant mentality and the son's new American way of thinking. For example, Ernst waits on customers in the store as his English is better and, after his father's death, when his mother mentions returning to Germany, Ernst reflects, "who would ever think they wanted to live in Germany mama?" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 1 of 3], 5). While Ernst never entirely loses his German accent and appreciates the nickname the locals bestow on him of "Dutch," believing it marks him as a "son of Germany," he prefers the company of more

modern American men than the old German settlers who knew his father so well (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 1 of 3], 5). Ernst is also well respected by the local businessmen and they note his German heritage with pride. Charles Ross, a cashier from the First National Bank in town, approaches Ernst with the idea of a potential investment in an automobile company, and upon Ernst's agreement to buy into the company, Ross reflects, "This young fellow Ernst is sure a hummer. He'll be one of the richest men in town. These Germans never seem to fail. They come out with nothing. Look at his father. And then they just make more money than anyone else can make" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 1 of 3], 29). Everything about the early chapters of the novel establishes Ernst Weiman as a figure who is acclimating cleanly to American life and who is well respected for his views and talent. In fact, instead of courting and marrying Freida Schwietzer, the daughter of a German immigrant family in town (whom his mother would prefer), Ernst pursues Helen Ross, daughter of his business partner, Charles Ross. Helen is not entirely convinced that Ernst is the love of her life, as she remembers his earlier lower-class social status prior to making money and views his immigrant mother with distaste, but Ernst's acclimation to the local social circles and the respect he receives from other businessmen make her fall further in love with him, and they eventually marry and have a son together.

Ernst's troubles begin to surface at the start of World War I, and his German sympathies and loyalties awaken from their dormancy. Initially, similar to the slow shift reported by historians, Ernst's life changes slowly upon the arrival of the war: "The regular even course that life took as it carried Ernst along was not interrupted until 1914 when the war started between Germany and the allied nations. And even then this course was not abruptly interrupted" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 2 of 3], $76^{1/2}$). While Ernst begins to argue a bit with his fellow businessmen and finds greater camaraderie with his fellow German immigrant neighbors, his life continues on largely as it always has. Among the prominent citizens Ernst associates with at the business club, "the men all talked about the war and about remaining neutral and some of them liked to talk with Ernst in favor of Germany and others kidded him goodnaturedly [sic] and none of them held it against him that he was so decidedly proGerman [sic] except one or two who were just as decidedly proBritish [sic]" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 2 of 3], 79). Keeping up with the

German angle on current events becomes increasingly important to Ernst, and he reads “the Fatherland and the Nation and some German papers that he had sent to him from Milwaukee” (Herrmann, “Foreign Born” [Part 2 of 3], 82).

The increasing fervor Ernst shows for his homeland begins to strain his relations with his wife and son before he fully reaches an antagonistic point with the community. For example, when Ernst’s son, Charley, returns from a night out with his high school friends, he confronts his father:

> Say father why you are all wrong about the French starting the war. I heard the Germans did it and they went through Belgium. And they did a lot of destroying of the things there and that is why England went in it. It was Germany’s fault. You always talked about it being the other way. Dick Miles argued with me about it and I finally had to say that he is right. He said the reason you said that was because you were born in Germany. (Herrmann, “Foreign Born” [Part 2 of 3], 87)

The alienation from his own family on this issue draws Ernst closer to the German community in Fairbanks and those sympathetic to his views. Ernst reflects while at the Liederkranz hall:

> He began to wish he could bring his son to the hall and have him learn to know these people. He would like to have his son grow up knowing the influence of these fine German people. But he knew that his son would not mix with them and he knew that it was better not to take him to the hall. He didn’t think about bringing Helen to meet these people, he knew that that was out of the question (Herrmann, “Foreign Born” [Part 2 of 3], 98)

Ernst feels torn between his childhood heritage and the community in which he lives and has prospered. In his defenses of Germany, his appeals to the decency of the German people show a focus on a shared humanity, albeit one that meets the deaf ears of a surrounding community increasingly biased by stories of the atrocities of war.

The community backlash toward Ernst begins in earnest when the United States’s entry into World War I seems inevitable. With the sinking of the Lusitania, Ernst faces more criticism from his fellow businessmen about his pro-German perspective than at any point before, and circumstances in Fairbanks increasingly turn anti-German as a group of high school boys, for example, including Ernst’s son, “got hold of Karl Wagner’s son and gave him a good hazing and yelled at him Dutchy, German, Raper, Kaiser, Half Assed

Crown Prince, and he went home all bruises and with clothes torn badly" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 2 of 3], 131). The full entry of the United States into the war exacerbates antagonism toward Germans and Germany. Charley Weiman wants to enlist in the American army, and Ernst makes every effort to talk him out of it. As German American businessmen acquiesce to increasing patriotic scrutiny and fly American flags in front of their businesses, Ernst stands strong in his beliefs despite the drop off in customer traffic. He holds to his beliefs in the face of warnings about the local Vigilance Committee and threats to purchase Liberty Bonds or else face negative consequences. His confidence is shaken, however, when Ernst hears of what happened to another German American businessman in town, Wilhelm Meisel:

> Meisel had been tarred and feathered because he had desecrated the American flag in front of some men calling on him to sell him Liberty Bonds. He had poured excrement on the flag, the paper said. This had gotten out and a group of people who were unknown had called him from his store and rushed him into a high powered automobile and rushed him out of the city to the golf links and just as dusk was falling tarred and feathered him. (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 3 of 3], 158)[6]

Ernst is shocked by such an act of violence and inhumanity within his community, particularly as he had been good friends with several of the individuals involved in the attack (while they were listed as "unknown" in the paper, there were clues that several of the participants were clearly community members, although they were never held accountable for their actions). Shortly after this event, Charley runs away to join the army, and in the face of such deliberate acts, Ernst feels the need to placate the larger patriotic climate in light of such pressures despite the fact that he still internally stays loyal to his German heritage and the German people.

Ernst's conversion to the "100% Americanism" demanded by his community members is filled with hypocrisy, but Herrmann is clear to show that the whole situation is filled with irony on both sides. Charley runs off to join the army with another local teen, Dick Miles. Dick's father, Henry, had been one of the most outspoken boosters for Liberty Bonds and patriotism, but when his own son joins the war effort, Henry feels that is too much of a sacrifice: "Now Ernst you know very well he's too young and there are plenty of men to go to

war and beside with all the work I've been doing here there wasn't any need for my son to go away. You are talking nonsense Ernst" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 3 of 3], 171). Henry represents those who are willing to defend the country as long as it doesn't really affect their own lives, but when the war becomes personal they are less dedicated in their convictions. With his son in the army, Ernst begins to play the role of a patriotic American, hanging flags and propaganda posters, all of which get him back into the town's good graces. Ernst notes the hypocrisy of the effort the whole time. After a visit from his former friend, now turned friend again, Harry Johnson, Ernst reflects, "he could fool them all and make them think that he was very patriotic and he was glad that little Charley had gone away to war and it did not make him feel so bad to remember that Charley had never showed much sense when it came to the question of the war" (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 3 of 3], 184). Henry Miles and Harry Johnson revise their opinions of Ernst as a result of his new attitude. Earlier they had no qualms about participating in threats toward Ernst as a result of his pro-German views; now they are now just as quick to believe in his revised behavior:

> You know Harry, Miles said, the way Ernst took [the news about his son joining the army] made me feel sure that these fellows who come over here the way he did make better Americans than a lot of other fellows. . . . I thought he would take it hard because I thought he was proGerman [sic] but you know I don't think he was very proGerman after his son left. I think that he is probably as good an American as you will find in this town. (Herrmann, "Foreign Born" [Part 3 of 3], 186)

The novel ends (at least in this draft version) with Ernst regaining his high standing in the community despite internally maintaining his pro-German beliefs.

This ending of the novel makes "Foreign Born" a strong and interesting critique of the patriotism and the hysteria that can surround moments of national and global conflict, one that can resonate even today in our twenty-first century incarnations of nationalism. Popular thinking often regards concepts like patriotism, nationalism, and loyalty in simplistic ways, and yet these concepts are often fraught with complexity. This emphasis, indeed, makes the novel, as the one unnamed reviewer noted in a readerís report for the book, "ahead of its time."

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that Herrmann may have added a different ending to the novel, one that significantly weakens some of the novel's critical appeal. The final page of the manuscript in the third folder at the Harry Ransom Center contains a handwritten "End" at the bottom, but that word, at some point, was later scribbled out. In the early 1930s, when William Carlos Williams was editor for a revived *Contact* magazine, he appealed to his friend, John Herrmann, for a contribution. In correspondence between the two, Williams mentions having a copy of "Foreign Born" and explains in a letter dated December 8, 1931, that he excerpted a section of it for the first issue of *Contact* and then cut the entry at the last minute due to the issue's excessive length.

Eventually, a story titled "Charley Weiman" appeared in the October 1932 issue of *Contact*. While only incomplete additional manuscript fragments at the Harry Ransom Center suggest that this story might be an alternate ending of "Foreign Born," the content of "Charley Weiman" parallels some of the summarized plot at the end of the Simon & Schuster's reader report (C.P.F.). Therefore, it is unclear whether the two sections were always attached or if what became "Charley Weiman" was a later addition (particularly as the original draft of the book was written in 1925 and the Simon & Schuster's reader's report did not occur until 1928). "Charley Weiman" picks up with Charley's army experiences, his epistolary romance with a Detroit girl, his eventual orders to France, and the end of his military career in Germany, where he discharges from the military, makes an attempt to attend the University of Munich, and becomes engaged to a young German woman. Ernst and his wife visit Germany after receiving a letter from their son about his engagement, and it is during the trip to Germany that Ernst changes significantly. As he witnesses the severe poverty among the postwar German population, he becomes increasingly disillusioned with the proud greatness of the Germany that he remembers and the "low down beggars" he now sees before him (Herrmann, "Charley Weiman," 128).

As his memories of Germany are replaced with a new reality, Ernst's love of the United States and his belief in the country's superiority achieve true sincerity. The story ends with Ernst's declaration, "I am glad I'm an American. My father was the wisest man in the world to come to America when he did" (Herrmann, "Charley Weiman," 130). This ending is much weaker than the original, as Ernst experiences the same radical conversion of belief that he earlier

criticized in people in Fairbanks, thus leading a reader to question how sincere his love for Germany was in the first place.

My preference is for the first ending, but in either case Herrmann's unpublished novel is interesting and significant as one of the few fictional representations of the German American experience during World War I and as a critique of concepts like patriotism and nationalism. While the material is obviously a bit difficult to access as the novel is still unpublished and exists solely in manuscript form, Herrmann's novel should encourage readers and scholars to continue seeking out texts, both known and unknown, that help us to better understand and contextualize an important time in national and Midwestern history.

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NOTES

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[2]These letters can be found in the Josephine Herbst Papers (YCAL MSS 474) at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, in Box 102, Folder "Herrmann, John (Herbst Papers 'Relative to House')." Two letters in particular prove this continued Herrmann family connection, both from John's father, Henry, to Josephine Herbst. One is dated 26 Dec. 1935, and the other is dated 31 Mar. 1936. There are also additional letters referencing family connections to Germany within the Herbst Papers at Yale as well.

[3]There is evidence of further disruption for the Lansing Liederkranz Club just after the war as well, as an article in the 8 Dec. 1924, *Lansing State Journal* notes that the group was about to put on their first musical performance after a three-year hiatus. While there is no evidence that anti-German sentiment was the direct cause of that gap in programming, it does seem to be at least one possible factor.

[4]There are an additional twenty-one pages of manuscript fragments related to "Foreign Born" in Container 2.3 of the John Herrmann Collection at the University of Texas at Austin's Harry Ransom Center, although those pages appear to primarily be retyped pages of material in the other folders or scattered pages from the section of the novel published in the October 1932 *Contact* magazine.

[5]The sectioning of the "Foreign Born" manuscript into three folders seems largely an archival effort due to the quantity of pages rather than any dedicated organizational effort by Herrmann. The typed pagination is erratic throughout, likely due to editing and changes made to the manuscript during composition, so I have chosen to go with the sequential penciled numbers at the top of the manuscript pages in my in-text citations in this essay for the purposes of clarity. It is unclear if those penciled numbers were inserted by Herrmann or by another person.

[6]The reference to "golf links" in this passage may be another evocation of Herrmann's own memories of anti-German actions around Lansing when he was a teen, as the April 28, 1955, *Lansing State Journal* article noted that "Persons known as 'pro-German' often were

seized in their own homes and carried to the vicinity of the country club. There they were given 'the treatment.'"

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“AT LAST EVERYONE HAD SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT”: GLORIA’S WAR IN FITZGERALD’S *THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED*

ROSS TANGEDAL

“—and now the three sat like over-oiled machines, without conflict, without fear, without elation, heavily enamelled figures secure beyond enjoyment in a world where death and war, dull emotion and noble savagery were covering a continent with the smoke of terror.”
—F. Scott Fitzgerald[1]

Published on 4 March 1922, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and Damned* is generally considered the author’s least artistically successful work, which Fitzgerald himself called “a wretched novel, excellent in detail” (*Correspondence* 99).[2] Partly an extension of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, the story of Anthony and Gloria Patch can be read as part naturalist examination of wealth and a failing marriage, part satire of the Jazz Age, and part treatise on youth in America. In short, the novel attempts to accomplish many goals at once. Given this public perception, it is nonetheless clear that Fitzgerald’s second novel showed an evolution in his literary self-esteem. He told editor Max Perkins prior to publication that “I do not expect in any event that I am to have the same person for person public this time that *Paradise* had. My one hope is to be endorsed by the intellectually élite & thus be *forced* on to people as Conrad has. (Of course I’m assuming that my work grows in sincerity and proficiency from year to year as it has so far)” (*Dear Scott/Dear Max* 47).[3] Perkins told Fitzgerald two days later that “a writer of any account must speak solely for himself” (47),[4] which echoed his call to Ernest Hemingway some years later that “all you have to do is follow your own judgment, or instinct, + disregard what is said […] the utterly real thing in writing is the only thing that counts, + the whole racket melts down before it” (*Only Thing* 224).[5] Fitzgerald hoped that his

second novel would show his reading public an amplified voice, a talented chronicler willing to show the Jazz Age its own underlying corruption. However, at the core of the novel is World War I, the conflict that would define a generation of literary figures. Though Fitzgerald had dealt with the war in an abbreviated fashion in his first novel,[6] the conflict is much more ominous in his second. The United States declares war on Germany nearly two-thirds of the way through the book, upon which Fitzgerald writes: "At last everyone had something to talk about—and almost everyone fully enjoyed it, as though they had been cast for parts in a somber and romantic play" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 256). War is foreshadowed prior to its actual declaration—for instance Maury Noble states that rather than struggle for ideals in war, "people want excitement every so often" (223), and early on Anthony smokes a cigarette as "he fancied that Washington Square had declared war on Central Park and that this was a north-bound menace loaded with battle and sudden death" (29). When it does come, war warrants an interesting reaction from Gloria Patch, a Midwestern-born wife dealing with the past, her disjointed present, and her husband's eventual deployment to training camp. Though Anthony never leaves the United States—the war ends before his unit is deployed overseas—Gloria's notion of war mixes Old and New World notions of duty, deterioration, and eventual destruction against the backdrop of Fitzgerald's subtle examination of war within the Lost Generation.

A multitude of interpretations fuel critical response due to the several narrative delineations in the book, the size of the novel (at 422 pages, the book is Fitzgerald's longest), and the status of the novel as the precursor to *The Great Gatsby*. James L. W. West III believes vocation to be the overarching key to the book, as Fitzgerald satirizes his characters' failed attempts to find "a calling that will give purpose to one's hours and days" (xiii).[7] Matthew J. Bruccoli notes the novel is one of "character deterioration" and "an improvement on the looseness of *This Side of Paradise*," though he takes issue with Fitzgerald's "indulgent narrative manner" (152). Further, Kirk Curnutt argues that the novel "depicts wasted youth as a lifestyle adopted by dilettantes and bacchantes as well as romantic egotists," and "elaborates upon Fitzgerald's belief that, given the temporal fixity of youth, its only practical value is the brief pleasure offered by its consumption" (92-3). However, Scott Donaldson considers Fitzgerald's first two novels showcases for the author's burgeoning

political consciousness and his satire of political absurdity, for "though plenty of things needed reform, it would do no good to try to reform them. If war had proved nothing else, it had proved that" (317). Craig Monk extends Donaldson's examination and argues that "the war is the root of the social disillusion in [*The Beautiful and Damned*]" (66). Monk's catalogue of war references in the novel is ample, and he concludes that "the disillusioning realization that there are limits to human accomplishment was the lesson learned by all liberals as the lasting realities of the postwar period became manifest" (70). Noticeably absent from much of the criticism on the novel is a full examination of Gloria Patch and her role in Fitzgerald's treatment of war. Building on the above-stated criticism, I propose that Fitzgerald offers a fascinating and timely portrait of a young wife dealing with war and remembrance from multiple perspectives, from her Midwestern roots to her ascendency within the nouveau riche of New York. Gloria Patch represents a complex identity indicative of World War I, since war at this scale had never occurred before, and those at home were greatly scarred as a result of the madness. Fitzgerald uses Gloria as a conduit for domestic fears, anxieties, and exasperations, all results of the war that changed the world forever.

Early in the novel Fitzgerald makes clear the difference between the Eastern elite and the Midwesterner. Anthony Patch "thinks himself rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment, and somewhat more significant than anyone else he knows" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 11); being the grandson of Adam Patch (modeled on moralist Anthony Comstock), Anthony grows up privileged and coddled due to his parents' death early in his youth. Conversely, the first description of Gloria Gilbert comes from her cousin Richard Caramel, as he tells Anthony, "'[h]er name's Gloria. She's from home—Kansas City. Her mother's a practicing Bilphist, and her father's quite dull but a perfect gentleman'" (35). Fitzgerald describes Gloria's father as a man past his prime: "[h]is ideas were the popular delusions of twenty years before; his mind steered a wabbly and anaemic course in the wake of the daily newspaper editorials," and he had graduated "from a small but terrifying Western university" (40). Gloria's mother practices Bilphism, an invention of Fitzgerald's concerned with reincarnation and pejoratively treated throughout the novel. Barry Gross contends that "the Midwest Fitzgerald knew was . . . a boy's world and a boy's game, without novelty or danger, change or adventure, a diamond of occa-

sionally glittering surfaces but only a carat or two in weight" (114). He concludes, "as such, the Midwest was *another* country for Fitzgerald, the past, not a place but a time" (126). In his introductions of Anthony and Gloria, Fitzgerald sets the two in regional opposition, though when we first see Gloria the descriptors belie her supposedly simplistic origins: "She was dazzling—alight; it was agony to comprehend her beauty in a glance. Her hair, full of a heavenly glamour, was gay against the winter color of the room" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 54). The dichotomous upbringing seemingly vanishes once the two meet, as Gloria succeeds in entering a new category of social importance.

However, Fitzgerald hints at her Midwestern identity in various ways, which colors our understanding of her war experience later on. Joseph Bloeckman, a movie man Gloria takes a liking to (in order to advance her hoped-for film career later on), is described as having an expression combining "that of a Middle-Western farmer appraising his wheat crop and that of an actor wondering whether he is observed—the public manner of all good Americans" (84). Again, Fitzgerald's likening of Midwesterners to simple-minded folk in regards to their "American" quality stands in opposition to Gloria's identity, which leads to his description of "the growth of intimacy":

> First one gives off his best picture, the bright and finished product mended with bluff and falsehood and humor. Then more details are required and one paints a second portrait, and a third—before long the best lines cancel out—and the secret is exposed at last; the planes of the pictures have intermingled and given us away, and though we paint and paint we can no longer sell a picture. We must be satisfied with hoping that such fatuous accounts of ourselves as we make to our wives and children and business associates are accepted as true. (98)

The creation of selfhood for both Gloria and Anthony is the key to determining the effect of war on each character once it occurs. Prior to the conflict Anthony and Gloria feel the illusion of love—at the end of Book One Anthony "had told her gently, almost in the middle of a kiss, that he loved her, and she had smiled and held him closer and murmured, 'I'm glad,' looking into his eyes" (111)—and they continue to live a privileged life after their wedding. Though the Midwest is presented in the negative, the use of the region as a place of simplicity against the complexity of the city only heightens Fitzgerald's critique of the modern moment. If culture and sophisti-

cation belong solely to New York City and the East Coast, then the destruction of that illusion as a result of war and aggression places a premium on the way things used to be, on the nostalgic past which the Midwest partly comes to represent for Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* and stories like "Winter Dreams." Seen here in its infancy, Fitzgerald's depiction of the Midwest, though pejorative, provides a layer of complexity to Gloria Patch's reaction to war.

Gloria's desire to create a new self in the manner of the nouveau riche (rather than that of her Midwestern upbringing), bridges the prewar and war periods in the novel. Once married, the Patches embark upon a cross-country honeymoon, eventually visiting Washington, DC, with its "atmosphere of repellant light, of distance without freedom, of pomp without splendor—it seemed a pasty-pale and self-conscious city" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 142). Having earlier lambasted Congress as "that incredible pigsty" whose members had "the narrow and porcine brows he saw pictured sometimes in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday newspapers" (52), Fitzgerald is quick to label the center of American politics "pasty-pale" and "self-conscious." Craig Monk notes that "while it is true that one cannot readily arrange Fitzgerald's political views in any coherent, ideologically consistent fashion in his writings at this time, neither can one divorce his texts from their social context, a society disjointed and undergoing a dramatic political change" (69). This change is felt when the Patches visit General Robert E. Lee's home in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington. Gloria considers the idea of tourists visiting the site "'perfectly terrible,'" as she exclaims "'the idea of letting these people come here! And of encouraging them by making these houses show-places'" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 143). Once Anthony reminds his wife that "'if they weren't kept up they'd go to pieces,'" Gloria reprimands him: "'Do you think they've left a breath of 1860 here? This has become a thing of 1914'" (143). Gloria's reaction to changing the past to fit the present marks a turning point in both her development and the direction of the novel. The war is looming overseas and the memorializing of a defeated American foe (General Lee) so near to the nation's capital puts Gloria in a disjointed position.

She appears to express what Monk deems "the necessity of social decay" (67), though that necessity comes from an inborn feeling of self-creation and achieving happiness deep within Gloria's identity. Updating the past only leads to greater desperation and spiritual

destruction, but living only within the present destroys our notion of the past. When Anthony asks if she wants to "'preserve old things,'" Gloria responds:

> "But you *can't,* Anthony. Beautiful things grow to a certain height and then they fail and fade off, breathing out memories as they decay. And just as any period decays in our minds, the things of that period should decay too, and in that way they're preserved for a while in the few hearts like mine that react to them. That graveyard at Tarrytown, for instance. The asses who give money to preserve things have spoiled that too. Sleepy Hollow's gone; Washington Irving's dead and his books are rotting in our estimation year by year—then let the graveyard rot too, as it should, as all things should. Trying to preserve a century by keeping its relics up to date is like keeping dying men alive by stimulants." (*The Beautiful and Damned* 143)

Unlike Jay Gatsby's desire to repeat the past, Gloria does not wish to repeat the past at all. Instead she wants the past to remain realistic, to decay as people decay, and to change naturally as times change. Intervening with polish and preservation tarnishes, rather than memorializes, what was, and Gloria wants Lee's home "'to look back on its glamorous moment of youth and beauty,'" and "'to smell of magnolias instead of peanuts and I want my shoes to crunch on the same gravel that Lee's boots crunched on. There's no beauty without poignancy and there's no poignancy without feeling that it's going, men, names, books, houses—bound for dust—mortal—'" (143-44). The residual effect of time must be felt in order for Gloria to reconcile her present moment. Further, to Gloria "the effort to reconstruct and preserve the past violates the natural tragedy of mutability" (Curnutt 95), a concern that threatens to curtail Gloria's concept of the past. That a child throws "a handful of banana-peels" into the Potomac River only strengthens Fitzgerald's irony (*The Beautiful and Damned* 144). Gloria's love for the "dying man" of time only makes sense if the man in question actually dies. That the majority of an entire generation was utterly obliterated from the earth in the coming years, in the fields of the Somme and Passchendaele and Flanders, weighs heavily on Fitzgerald, and he uses Gloria to express the volatility and impermanence of things against a backdrop of preservation, something impossible once war begins.

Interestingly, immediately following Gloria's monologue Fitzgerald notes the fall of Liège (144), the first battle of the war, and

he has Gloria deliver a more subtle sentiment to her husband in flashback. To echo the somber and terrifying occasion of war and destruction, Fitzgerald creates in Gloria a sadness rather than a rage as she and Anthony prepare to leave their hotel in Coronado. "'We're going away,'" she sobbed. "'Oh, Anthony, it's sort of the first place we've lived together. Our two little beds here—side by side—they'll be always waiting for us, and we're never coming back to 'em anymore'" (145). Once Anthony assures her that they will be together forever she replies, "'But it won't be—like our two beds—ever again. Everywhere we go and move on and change, something's lost—something's left behind. You can't ever quite repeat anything, and I've been so yours, here—'" (145). Now, like Nick Carraway, Gloria realizes that memory and the past are irrevocable in the present, for change comes and takes away what is certain and apparently permanent. It is no coincidence that Fitzgerald places this flashback immediately after the fall of Liège, for the war inevitably informs the remainder of the Patches' lives. James Meredith notes that Fitzgerald's fiction aligns with other narratives of war, his "pervasive sense of loss" triggered by war and its effect on culture (142). But for Meredith, Fitzgerald embeds in his fiction "an abiding hope and faith that the idyllic old world could once again be possible if only the modern times, brought on by a terrible modern war, could somehow cease to cast a deep and darkening shadow upon the everlasting light of the modern day" (142). Gloria partially represents this hope; she wishes for things to be as they were, colored by experience rather than nostalgia. Though she wishes to stay with Anthony in the two beds in Coronado, she knows that moments fade and times change, just as war rages and alters past, present, and future. Incidentally, as America's impending entrance into the war and Anthony's eventual deployment for training camp near, Gloria embodies a full range of emotions and perceptions as she comes to grips with what the world has become.

Two incidents prior to April 1917 mark Gloria's continuing anxiety regarding her societal significance, at once obsessed with money, parties, and vanity, but certainly wary of the coming pressures of brutal conflict. At one of the Patches' many parties Gloria slaps the ribald Joe Hull and falls to the floor as the men sing "'The—pan-ic—has—come—over us, So *ha-a-as*—the moral *decline*!'" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 202). In her bedroom after, apart from the revelry downstairs, Gloria regards the storm outside as "inter-

minable, letting down thick drips of thunder like pig iron from the heart of a white-hot furnace" (203). Two hours later, "she was conscious, even aware, after a long while that the noise downstairs had lessened, and that the storm was moving off westward, throwing back lingering showers of sound that fell, heavy and lifeless as her soul, into the soggy fields" (204). Halfway between sleep and consciousness, Gloria's state is one of confusion, but by comparing "the soggy fields" surrounding the Patch home with her own despondency, Fitzgerald makes clear the connection between brutal, uncontrollable chaos (the storm) and the inability to escape the fray (Gloria is somewhat comatose). Gloria feels "a weight pressing down upon her breast" (204) as she sees a menacing figure in the doorway, in which "the minute or succession of minutes, and a swimming blur began to form before her eyes, which tried with childish persistence to pierce the gloom in the direction of the door. In another instant it seemed that some unimaginable force would shatter her out of existence" (204-05). The weight pressing down upon Gloria is a mixture of personal anguish concerning her and her husband, her position as a young wife of an inheritor rather than a creator, and the untold comparisons she has made between the forces of war and the inevitability of conflict. Sober during this episode, Gloria offers a much clearer perspective than do her drunken husband, Joe Hull, Maury Noble, and Richard Caramel. Gloria escapes her room and runs out to the countryside to a bridge, which Fitzgerald characterizes as a renewal, not only an escape from the shallow revelry of her husband and home but a return to the peacefulness of the past:

> She was at the top now and could see the lands about her as successive sweeps of open country, cold under the moon, coarsely patched and seamed with thin rows and heavy clumps of trees . . . The oppression was lifted now—the tree-tops below her were rocking in the young starlight to a haunted doze. She stretched out her arms with a gesture of freedom. This was what she had wanted, to stand alone where it was high and cool. (207-08)

Gloria's worry comes from the men singing, the loud thunder and rain along the soggy fields, the oppressive figure haunting her doorway, the threat of extinction, and the inability to reconcile her own vanity with the coming chaos. She tells Anthony that she "'had to go out and get away from it'" in order to feel alive again (208). There is no escaping war, certainly not a war that decimated countries, vil-

lages, and a generation. However, in her quest for a respite from the weight pressing upon her, Gloria discovers a freedom lacking in her marriage and relationships with others. Though short lived, Gloria feels a similar renewal again, only after war has been declared on Germany.

Prior to leaving for training camp Anthony considers how he and Gloria would spend his inheritance; they "talked of the things they were to do when the money was theirs, and of the places they were to go to after the war, when they would 'agree on things again,' for both of them looked forward to a time when love, springing like the phoenix from its own ashes, should be born again in its mysterious and unfathomable haunts" (257). The war has finally arrived and caused a fissure in their relationship, but they treat it initially as a therapeutic enterprise, something to assist them in agreeing "on things" once it ends (257). Similar fissures have already formed and separated the two. Fitzgerald has the couple quarrel over Gloria's wish to have a film career immediately prior to introducing the war—when Anthony asks if he is to live on her money from films she responds, "'then make some yourself'" (256)—and the decision to position a young couple's slow decline into purposelessness alongside World War I only magnifies the disjointed perspectives of both Gloria and Anthony.

These perspectives are honed earlier in the novel when Anthony, in a bid to impress his ailing grandfather, considers joining the war effort, with Gloria, as a journalist and a nurse respectively. Anthony's vainglorious notions of seeing himself "in khaki, leaning, as all war correspondents lean, upon a heavy stick, portfolio at shoulder" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 175) are countered by Gloria, who "embraced his suggestion with luxurious intensity, holding it aloft like a sun of her own making and basking in its beams" (178). The illusions of grandeur vacate when Anthony leaves for Camp Hooker, initially longs for his wife, then enters into an illicit affair with Dorothy "Dot" Raycroft within weeks. He urges Gloria *not* to come south and moves from camp to camp, eventually telling Dot that life "'hurts people and hurts people, until finally it hurts them so that they can't be hurt ever anymore. That's the last and worst thing it does'" (283). Anthony's sentiment matches Gloria's earlier notion that life is meant not for truth, but happiness in the face of aging and decline (254). Though the therapy of separation for the couple rings true here, in subtle contrast to Anthony's debauches are Gloria's experiences back home.

Early on Gloria weeps not for her husband, but for their shared "mutually vivid memory" of their youth (298). Curnutt makes clear Fitzgerald's intention to depict the fall of the Patches as a "moral failure" and the inevitable result of "planned obsolescence" (98), and here Gloria reminds readers of that failure. She only truly wants Anthony again after he leaves her. She writes a long letter of "confused sentiment" in which she defines spring as "a lean old plough-horse with its ribs showing—it's a pile of refuse in a field, parched by the sun and the rain to an ominous cleanliness" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 299). Youth is lost in all seasons as a result of the war, and rather than maintain the notion of spring as a young girl, Gloria chooses to visualize a more modernized and brutal spring. This is matched with Gloria's reflections on the men in her life, many now in the army, and whether or not they still thought of her, "and how often. And in what respect" (301). She has two "dates," one ending in disgust after Gloria declares her army companion "*utterly* common" (305), and the other ending in gallantry. However, Fitzgerald builds up her second companion, an old beau and airman who "would have done anything in his power to please her" and represented "a relic of a vanishing generation which lived a priggish and graceful illusion and was being replaced by less gallant fools" (306). This buildup leads to tragedy as the beau, representing past chivalry and grace, is killed when "a piece of a gasoline engine smashed through his heart" in a plane crash (306). That he and his chivalry are swept away by a mechanized force only magnifies Gloria's anxieties, and her despondency and subsequent actions seem reasonable given the circumstances of the war around her.

She watches the officers' casualty list, "taking a sort of melancholy pleasure in hearing of the death of someone with whom she had once danced a german [sic] and in identifying by name the younger brothers of former suitors—thinking, as the drive toward Paris progressed, that here at length went the world to inevitable and well-merited destruction" (307). Daydreaming about dead dance partners and basking in the "well-merited" destruction of the world around her, Gloria begins to feel strangely free, for "recently, without [Anthony's] continual drain upon her moral strength she found herself wonderfully revived. Before he left she had been inclined through sheer association to brood on her wasted opportunities—now she returned to her normal state of mind, strong, disdainful, existing each day for each day's worth" (307-08). Though she feels

this revival for only a short while, Gloria achieves independence free from Anthony's lethargy. Together, the two are "wrecked on the shoals of dissipation" (*Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* 145),[8] but alone Gloria ranges from sad and guilt-ridden to strangely independent and free. Even when Anthony returns to Gloria, Fitzgerald describes their encounter with pointed criticism: "Like a figure in a dream he came back into her life across the ballroom on that November evening—and all through long hours that held familiar gladness she took him close to her breast, nursing an illusion of happiness and security she had not thought that she would know again" (*The Beautiful and Damned* 308). Rather than embrace her husband, she embraces the illusion of happiness, something she has always held onto despite Anthony's inability to actually provide for her. Knowing what we do about Anthony's affair, and Gloria's own anxieties concerning men in her life, we are left with the hollowness of a relationship doomed to fail. Though war separated the two, it also seemed, for a brief moment, to recreate in each of them a sense of youth and promise (Anthony with Dot; Gloria with past suitors and the illusion of freedom). These feelings are indicative of the confusing effect that war had on culture, both at home and abroad, as Gloria accepts the "dream" of her husband and Anthony deems Gloria "reborn and wonderfully alive" (309) once their war experience has been fulfilled.

In the short time the war directly impacts the couple, Gloria manages to exhibit a lifetime of emotions and reactions. However, shortly after Anthony's return the couple descends even deeper into the destruction of their own making. In many ways, Fitzgerald uses the war as both aggressor and antidote to the Patches' volatile relationship. Gloria, crying and finally conscious of her age after a disastrous audition with Joseph Bloeckman, "wondered if they were tears of self-pity, and tried resolutely not to cry, but this existence without hope, without happiness, oppressed her, and she kept shaking her head from side to side, her mouth drawn down tremulously in the corners, as though she were denying an assertion made by someone, somewhere" (341). Fitzgerald recognized that the war affected much more than the men on the ground in Europe, the Americans in training camp, and the politicians in Washington. Gloria Patch, engulfed in a relentless haze of denied needs, excessive vanity, self-conscious destruction, and lingering depression, frets over turning twenty-nine and wonders "whether after all she had not wasted her faintly tired beauty, where there was such a thing as use for any quality bounded

by a harsh and inevitable mortality" (324). At twenty-nine, Gloria acts as if her life is coming to an end, her beauty on the same course as General Lee's home in Arlington. She longs not for children of her own, but for "ghostly children only—the early, the perfect symbols of her early and perfect love for Anthony" (324). In an influenza-induced tirade she screams:

> Millions of people…swarming like rats, chattering like apes, smelling like all hell…monkeys! Or lice, I suppose. For one really exquisite palace…on Long Island, say—or even in Greenwich…for one palace full of pictures from the Old World and exquisite things—with avenues of trees and green lawns and a view of the blue sea, and lovely people about in slick dresses…I'd sacrifice a hundred thousand of them, a million of them." (326, first ellipsis mine)

Driven to declare, though certainly as result of illness, that the Old World with its "exquisite things" and "slick dresses" is worth decimating human life, Gloria embodies the elevated anxieties present in the postwar culture. In stark contrast to her earlier revelation at Lee's mansion, Gloria wishes to return to the past, when things were good and right, young and slick. These vacillations are all part of Gloria's inability to reconcile the concrete destruction of her marriage and the world in such a short period. She expresses a gesture "of denial, of protest, of bewilderment" (341) once Anthony resigns from his last club. With a crumbling marriage and a crumbling societal position, Gloria is victim to "a truth set at the heart of tragedy that this force never explains, never answers—this force intangible as air, more definite than death"(341). The inevitability of decline, narrowing prospects, an alcoholic husband, rising postwar prices, a small apartment, and no money are all forces in Gloria's despondency. The force of unstoppable decline appears more frightening to Gloria than death itself.

Though it is clear that the major force behind Gloria's depression is their wish to wait for and live off of Anthony's grandfather's money (which ironically happens in the last three pages of the novel), the secondary force is the ever-corroding effects of the First World War on her psyche. Though her Midwestern roots are quickly forgotten, Gloria's longing in the end for the past to somehow strip away the present brings her full circle. War frees her and shackles her, leads her to independent thought and deepens her depression, ostracizes her and connects her to people at home and abroad. In short, World War I affects Gloria Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned*, and the many emotions and reactions she exhibits shows F. Scott Fitzgerald's

ever-deepening understanding of war and its consumptive mental and physical damage.

Mercyhurst University

NOTES

[1]*The Beautiful and Damned*. 1922. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 181.

[2]FSF to George Kuyper: 13 Mar. 1922.

[3]FSF to MP: 10 Dec. 1921.

[4]MP to FSF: 12 Dec. 1921.

[5]MP to EH: 30 Aug. 1935.

[6]Fitzgerald includes a short "Interlude: May 1917-February 1919" in *This Side of Paradise* (147-155), which represents Amory's war service. It consists of two letters. Fitzgerald hints at the war prior to this section while Amory attends Princeton and features descriptions of his generationís involvement. For example: "In Princeton everyone bantered in public and told themselves privately that their deaths at least would be heroic. The literary students read Rupert Brooke passionately; the lounge-lizards worried over whether the government would permit the English-cut uniform for officers; a few of the hopelessly lazy wrote to the obscure branches of the War Department, seeking an easy commission and a soft berth" (*This Side of Paradise* 139). However, *The Beautiful and Damned* treats the war more extensively, though the conflict still remains confined stateside, since Fitzgerald himself was never deployed to Europe.

[7]For West's original article regarding vocation and the novel see: West, James L.W., III. "The Question of Vocation in *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*." *The Cambridge Companion* to F. Scott Fitzgerald. Ed. Ruth Prigozy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 48-56.

[8]FSF to MP: 12 Aug. 1920.

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