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Being Essays on Various Topics
For Various Occasions by Members
of the Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature

Edited by

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PREFACE

The sixth appearance of Midwestern Miscellany is truly that: essays and a transcribed diary, a reassessment and a memoir, all of which reflect the depth of the Midwestern experience as they combine to suggest its diversity or perhaps the miscellaneous nature of the Midwestern heritage. This Miscellany reflects, too, the varied interests of the Society's members as their work combines to suggest the breadth and depth of what is, in the broadest sense, Midwestern literature. In future issues we hope that further dimensions of that diversity will become increasingly evident.

David D. Anderson

June, 1978

Contents

Preface

Ray Stannard Baker and Daryl F. Zanuck's Wilson

Eugene Huddleston 1

Cows, Real and Imaginary

Frank L. Ryan 7

The Diary of Joseph Benjamin Fuson

Arnella K. Turner, transcriber 13

Poetry of the Early Midwest

Bernard F. Engel 21

Ignatius Donnelly in Retrospect

David D. Anderson 30

RAY STANNARD BAKER AND DARYL F. ZANUCK'S WILSON

Whatever else the causes of the failure of the film Wilson, strongly contributing are the prejudices Ray Stannard Baker brought with him in his role as consultant. On the surface Baker was more qualified than anyone else to work with producer Daryl Zanuck, director Henry King, and scriptwriter Lamar Trotti on the two hour and thirty-four minute technicolor film biography of Woodrow Wilson, covering the years from his Presidency of Princeton to the tragic close of his public life. Wilson himself had picked Baker as his authorized biographer, writing: "My dear Baker, Everytime you disclose your mind to me you increase my admiration and affection for you." And upon completion of the eight-volume work in 1940, Baker was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Baker found working on the film in Hollywood for a half year a "new and exhilarating experience," and he believed the finished product might further the high principles that Wilson stood for.

But Wilson, released in 1944 with Alexander Knox as Wilson and costing \$5,200,000 to produce, was according to James Agee's perceptive review in The Nation a failure, even though the New York Times named it as one of the ten best films of the year and Agee himself acknowledged that it undertook "more crucial and specific political responsibilities more boldly than any other American film to date."¹ However, its serious ideas are handled in "primer fashion." And despite an effort "to give it all that money can buy and all that honest research can edge it with," the film's makers "were unable to learn anything whatever of primary value from their study of 160,000 feet of relevant newsreel."

The reason for Baker's failure as a consultant is subtle. The methodology of his consultantship is not the concern of this paper; rather it is the mental frame Baker brought with him to the set. If one examines closely specific interpretations of men and events in Baker's biography, he sees that what seems to be his carefully maintained objectivity is actually conditioned by his prejudices, growing mainly out of his Midwestern education. His tastes were formed around the moralistic and sentimental literature of nineteenth-century New England culture transplanted to the Midwest by the move of New Englanders westward. His prejudices additionally grew out of his unresolved conflict between the realistic, muckraking side of his intellect and the idealistic side manifested in the David Grayson essays, extolling country living, which gained a wide readership after they first appeared in 1909. In short, Baker kept his interpretation of Wilson in his biography within the confines of his Populist and genteel Midwestern intellectual milieu, and this biased vision was the one he commended to the film's makers, to whom he was the acknowledged authority, as the valid one.

An overview of Baker's eight volumes discloses immediately his prejudices. Although Mrs. Wilson had placed no reservations on the use of Presidential papers, Baker's gentility laid down its own restrictions. For example, explaining how Wilson developed his "character," Baker decides that Wilson "came to himself in perfectly orchestrated situations where moral rectitude achieved its just reward: religiously, it was joining the Presbyterian Church in 1873; intellectually, it was his second year as an undergraduate at Princeton; emotionally, it was his engagement to Ellen Axon in 1883; and politically, it was the Pittsburgh alumni speech of 1908 sounding the battle call with Dean West over academic democracy at Princeton. One is reminded in this progression of the onward and upward spirit of the Alpine climber in Longfellow's poem "Excelsior."

Baker's moralizing is sometimes of the pulpit variety; an exemplum of how virtue needs testing was Baker's summary of Wilson's years as a professor at Wesleyan University: "Good years they had been. . . years of thought and work, crucial years of achieved maturity. . . hardening of purpose. He was now to step onto a larger field; he was ready to meet some of the opposition that he had not had at Wesleyan, and that being the man he was he somehow needed."^{1A} Perhaps a

greater obstacle to objectivity than his blindness to moralizing was his deep bond of sympathy with his subject. If Wilson had become the spiritual father of Baker, it was difficult for him to see that whatever he says about Wilson he is really saying about himself. Whenever in the biography, particularly in the first volume on Wilson's youth, he generalizes on Wilson's character, one recognizes immediately the applicability of the statement to Baker himself from Baker's expression of the same thought in other contexts:

Like all earnest, passionate, thoughtful men, Woodrow Wilson was plagued and harried, throughout his life by the contrast between the truth as he saw it, the ideal, and the things that existed in the world about him. How to reconcile the spiritual with the material, the ideal with the real! All vigorous thought concerns itself primarily with this paradox, seeking harmony, struggling for a way of life that cannot be utterly destroyed by the surrounding chaos. No soul not so harried can ever be great. 2

In organizing the biography, Baker divides Wilson's life into well ordered segments, which are mounted one on top of the other ladder-like and which illustrate how sensitive and struggling young man of high moral purpose fulfills himself. Subtitles to chapters in Volume I on Wilson's first thirty-four years indicate the extent to which Wilson's Horatio Alger morality, as perceived by Baker, triumphed over doubts and temptations: "He Comes to Himself," "Friendships and First Love Affairs," "The Lonely Student," "Discouragement," "Wilson Seeks His Fortune," "Discouragement and Self-Discovery," "Aspirations and Opportunities."

In Volume II, which begins with Wilson's appointment as professor at Princeton, Baker's detailed handling of the Graduate School Controversy recognizes the importance of the affair in Wilson's rise to power, and all subsequent biographies of Wilson have thoroughly rehashed this affair that on the surface seems absurdly unimportant--where to locate Princeton's new graduate school building. This affair created so much controversy that it catapulted Wilson into the national limelight. While Baker tries to give a balanced account of the controversy, he cannot help making Wilson the ideological innovator who always encounters narrow-minded opposition. The account of the "flaming" address to the Pittsburgh Alumni group in 1910 exemplifies Baker's tendency to see Wilson as an unsullied knight in shining armour. William C. Proctor, the P&G soap king, had just withdrawn his offer of \$500,000 for construction of the new graduate college building on the advice of Dean West of the Graduate School, who opposed the centralized location Wilson maintained was necessary to carry forward his democratic reforms in higher education at Princeton. Wilson fueled the controversy through appeals to the alumni in a series of speeches in which he sought to identify an "integrated" graduate school with democracy and a "separated" one with aristocracy. Both Baker and Arthur Link, his successor as expert on Wilson, see the Pittsburgh speech as throwing down the gauntlet to his enemies (the image is Link's). Baker's account of the speech (for which there is no verbatim copy) stressed democracy as the "real issue." Wilson was revolting against the "money dominated" American society and the "ideals of exclusiveness and privilege fostered by money."³ Link, in his five-volume definitive study of Wilson, tends to underplay the class warfare angle. The struggle, as Link somewhat ironically interprets it, was one in which "the forces of righteousness" (Wilson) were opposed to "the force of snobbery, reaction, and darkness" (Dean West and his supporters).

Link, unlike Baker, applies psychology to unravel complex biographical problems. Wilson lost his head in the Pittsburgh speech, according to Link: "there are strong indications that all the bitterness resulting from the controversy, and the repressed words he had wanted to utter and had not, created a peculiar psychological disturbance. The result was that he lost his balance and his temper completely."⁴ Link believed Wilson was psychologically intoxicated: Baker saw the

speech as a "passionate revolt against money-dominated American society." Link, realistically, brings up a possible political motive for Wilson's audacity: "It is unthinkable that Wilson deliberately used the graduate college controversy . . . simply to augment his popularity with the people. Yet . . . considerable demand for his entrance into politics had already begun, and it is not unlikely that Wilson found himself being forced to take a radical position . . ."4A Although Baker acknowledges that "some of Wilson's critics later charged that the speech was a direct bid for political favor," Baker believed that Wilson, a man of principle, would never bow to political expediency: Wilson was speaking "out of the depth of his soul." It was the action of the Board of Trustees two days before the speech in supporting two anti-Wilson motions "that had stirred his wrath." It was not "duplicity," for "what he said was aimed to save Princeton University, which he had served faithfully for twenty years and loved deeply, from the dangers he saw threatening her."⁵ Baker believed Wilson could have the best of both worlds, for he adds:

All his life long politics had been his primary interest: but he now wanted, before he considered active participation, to win the battle of Princeton. He considered it a duty to Princeton not only, but a notable victory would serve as a distinguished introduction to public life, should he care to make the change. On the other hand, if he could not make his ideals prevail . . . he could still step into the larger political field . . ."⁶

Wilson, of course, lost his battle over the location of the graduate school, but he won national prominence in the process. And Baker, in volume three of the biography, recounts the ensuing struggle--his acceptance of political favor at the hands of New Jersey's political bosses, his subsequent repudiation of them, his triumphant term as governor of New Jersey, and his nomination for President in the face of sizeable obstacles. Baker sees the conflict of men, ideas, and movements as epic warfare, and his journalistic flair for dramatizing conflict, coupled with his moralistic tendencies, works toward a narrative of a man with a mission. Wilson's rapid advance in national politics is not a response to ambition but to a Christian "call" to service. ("Call to Leadership" is the title of the first chapter.) Appropriate, if trite, images of warfare label the steps which the University President took to the White House. The "battle" with Boss Smith, referred to mostly as "the Big Boss," becomes "open war" ending in "Victory." As Governor of New Jersey Wilson is a "Crusading Reformer." At the 1911 National Convention "The Generals Marshall Their Forces" and as President-elect he faces "The Challenge to Battle." That Wilson's favorite poems were Wordsworth's "The Happy Warrior" and Kipling's "If" must have given Baker confidence that his imagery and version of Wilson's victories were valid.

Baker's interpretation of Wilson's rise as a Crusade oversimplifies the complex process whereby the President of Princeton seemingly overnight changes from "the Presbyterian priest" to "a political genius of the first order." In the chapter entitled "The Office Seeks the Man" Baker claims that Wilson was "forced" into politics by "two powerful influences": first were his "principles or ideals," which he was attempting to bring to birth at Princeton but which had been aborted. Second was his discovery that "the same forces of money and privilege he had fought at Princeton were rampant throughout the country."⁷ If Wilson's ideals could not be realized on one level, they would have to be transferred to a higher level.

Once Wilson was elected governor he did exactly what he had promised the reformers in the state he would do--renounce the bosses. But this was easier said than done because of the debt he had incurred for the backing of James Smith, the party leader. Baker makes Wilson's path through this maze an easy one by

explaining that two codes of conduct were in conflict. Smith's code was "immediate advantage;" Wilson's was "principles." Baker elaborates:

It is easy to see the point of view of the clan-loyal bosses. They had nominated Wilson, they were helping to conduct his campaign, they were contributing some of their own money, and relying on their friends . . . for still more, to elect him. According to their code he must repay them, not only with favors but with submission . . . According to Wilson's code, on the other hand, politics was intensely impersonal. The idea, the principle, the service of the people generally was what counted. The individual and his interests mattered little.⁸

Link's account, however, of Wilson's actions after the election leaves an impression as much of "immediate advantage" as the bosses' actions. Link emphasizes that in the final months of the campaign Wilson realized that he could not be elected without renouncing the Democratic machine, which he did. Yet Link quotes a letter in Baker's collection of Wilson papers (which Baker did not use in his own biography) in which Wilson had earlier assured Smith "that he would not, if elected governor, set about fighting and breaking down the existing Democratic organization and replaced it with one of . . . (his) own."⁹ Publicly, Wilson's pledge in the last stages of the campaign to regenerate the Democratic party meant, says Link, that he had either "already forgotten his earlier promises to Smith or, more likely, he had felt compelled by the necessities of political expediency to strike out on an independent course, the pursuance of which would violate the spirit of the pre-nomination understanding and lead to an inevitable conflict with the Smith Organization."¹⁰

Through all these mazes Baker was trying his best to be objective, and as a credit to his attempt, his organization of the material and the emphasis he gave it have never been overthrown. No doubt, in being consulted on the film Wilson, Baker thought he was being equally objective but was in fact offering interpretations colored by subtle prejudices.

The prejudices affect every phase of the biography, including Baker's posture toward two key figures of Wilson's administration, Colonel House and William Jennings Bryan. In what has been called "the strangest friendship in history," Baker sees no ideals of friendship being realized; rather he sees a Mephistopheles urging Wilson to abandon principle for political expediency. In evaluating House's role, Baker faced a dilemma; he could not overlook House's importance, but he could not give him too much credit for any major achievements in Wilson's administration. He thus tried to downplay House's influence, a difficult feat. Baker wrote: "While House's service to Wilson as a political reporter and adjuster was important, as this biography will abundantly show, an examination of the immense correspondence, a minute study of many cases, shows that Wilson, though eager for House's information, and warm in his thanks for it, went contrary to his advice about as often as he followed it."¹¹ Baker suggests that House performed missions abroad which Wilson tolerated only because they were such close friends. For example, his trip to Europe in May 1914 to ease world tensions Link called the "boldest stroke of New Freedom diplomacy." Link conceded that House's efforts were negated by the guns of August, but he speculates that "if the mission had come a year earlier, it might conceivably have saved the peace of the world." Baker, however, sees the mission as "wholly unrealistic" and accuses House of directing foreign affairs without the specific authorization of his chief.¹²

Kinder to Bryan, Baker is nevertheless critical of the Great Commoner's "ill-informed idealism" and his "political mindedness," but never comes to terms with the contradiction implicit in this appraisal. Where he can, he offers praise,

as in noting Bryan's principled stand in helping Wilson in the Congressional crisis over the Federal Reserve legislation, possibly the most important domestic achievement in Wilson's administration.¹³ Also, he held back embarrassing material. Baker's enormous file of Wilson papers contained evidence contrasting the petulance of Bryan with the stern self-control of the President. For example, Link cites from the Baker collection a statement by a former Cabinet member made in an interview with Baker about one encounter: "'You people are not neutral. You are taking sides!'" said Bryan; to which the President is said to have replied in a voice that was sharp and cold: "Mr. Secretary, you have no right to make that statement."¹⁴

Throughout The Life and Letters the reader uncomfortably feels that something is being withheld from the account of Wilson's personal life. If Sigmund Freud could proclaim that Wilson had a Messiah complex, then there are depths of his personality that Baker doesn't even begin to plumb in his eight-volume study. John Garraty, the biographer, has used Wilson as an example of the difficulty biographers have in appraising character. He notes that Josephus Daniels, Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, thought the President was "utterly frank"; Secretary of War Garrison called him "a man of high ideals but no principles."¹⁵

Baker could have easily drawn on three areas of Wilson's life that would have enabled him to penetrate beneath the surface of this brilliant scholar and astute politician: they are his health, his relationship with his two wives, and his friendship with Mary Ellen Hulbert (earlier Mrs. Peck). But Baker tended to skim over these subjects, probably because he subscribed to the code that prevailed among reputable journalists until the popularization of psychoanalysis that a man's private life was to remain so unless it shed some direct light on his public acts. And Baker was a gentleman. In addition, he had no sympathy with the cultural innovations of the 1920's that eventually opened personal lives of public figures to scrutiny. He even disapproved of realism in fiction. In his journal of 1922 he called Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt "dismal and disagreeable" and likened it and Main Street to "photographs of city alleys full of rubbish barrels." With such an attitude, Baker could not be expected to pursue the implications of Wilson's confession to his fiancee Ellen Axon: "I have an uncomfortable feeling that I am carrying a volcano about within me."

Most recent biographers of Wilson agree that his health affected his personality. His arteriosclerosis and his first stroke, when he was fifty, contributed to the "rigorous, inflexible, unforgiving qualities of Wilson's mind." But Baker fails to derive from Wilson's early breakdowns in health anything more than "Invictus"-type object lessons in how Stoically Wilson reacted to learning from his doctors the certainty of his physical impairment. No biographer, one can add, has adequately measured the effect of the early vascular occlusions on Wilson's well known intransigence.

Wilson's relationship with his first wife, who died in 1914, and his remarriage to Edith Bolling Galt sixteen months later are areas of Wilson's personal life having important bearing on his complexities of character. Also, that Wilson could never get enough stroking through correspondence with female friends seems certain from his close friendship with Mrs. Hulbert, about whom in the 1916 campaign there was so much whispering that Col. House had to come forth with the defense that "We Southerners like to write mush notes."¹⁶ In one volume alone of his five-volume biography Arthur Link cites Wilson's letters to the widow over seventy times, yet does not follow up on the significance of the relationship. So it is little wonder that Baker, writing when he did, fails to scrutinize the relationship closely. But had Harold Laswell's Power and Personality (1948) been available to Baker as it was later to the Georges in their much admired Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House (1956), one doubts that Wilson would have benefited much from it. Because of his inability to believe that noble conduct can derive from other than noble motives, he could never have accepted as a hypothesis that

Wilson's relationship with House and his close lady acquaintances rested upon "an intense and ungratified craving for deference" manifested in the political type. Enough controversies over interpreting Wilson have been surveyed to demonstrate that Baker, regarded the outstanding authority on Wilson by the film-makers, was a contributor to the immature film that Agee found despite its two hour and thirty-four minute massing of concrete and accurate detail--so accurate that Agee says, "They copied the cracks in the paint in the original portraits of Presidents in the White House." It is obvious that Baker could and did advise well on technical details that would give a veneer of realism to the film, but it is equally obvious that because of a blindness induced by his idealism Baker would fail at helping the filmmakers get at the truth about the man and his times. Knowing of Baker's prejudices, one recognizes in part why Bosley Crowther would write in a review otherwise praising the film: "One must not expect in this picture a keen analysis of the World War President, of his rare and complex disposition, nor of the historic battles that he fought." Daryl Zanuck promised never again to make a picture without Betty Grable if Wilson failed. One wonders whether he kept his promise.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 James Agee, review from The Nation, August 19, 1944, in Agee on Film. Beacon Press, 1964, pp. 110-13.
- 1A Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters. Garden-City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1927, I, 324.
- 2 Baker, I, 64
- 3 Baker, II, 341.
- 4 Arthur Link, Wilson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, I, 83.
- 4A Link, I, 85
- 5 Baker, II, 341-42.
- 6 Baker, II, 344.
- 7 Baker, III, 38.
- 8 Baker, III, 95.
- 9 Link, I, 143.
- 10 Link, I, 199.
- 11 Baker, III, 305.
- 12 Baker, V, 43-50.
- 13 Baker, IV, 175.
- 14 Link, III, 411.
- 15 John Garraty, The Nature of Biography, p. 217.
- 16 Arthur Walworth, Woodrow Wilson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965, I, 248.

COWS, REAL AND IMAGINARY

Life Among the Humanities at Michigan State
in the Early 40's

Frank L. Ryan

Sometime back in the early 40's, I think that it was 1942, Franklin P. Adams came to Michigan State to deliver in person the kind of wit and erudition which made his column, 'The Conning Tower,' an essential part of a New York newspaper and a vivid element of a famous radio program called 'Information, Please.' We had hardly settled into our seats and begun to listen with that air of passive expectancy which colleges and universities accord both famous and infamous visitors when Mr. Adams admitted that he was surprised that there had been no cows to be pushed out of his path on the way to the forum.

Though that remark did not have the sharpness which characterized most of Mr. Adams' barbs, it reflected as much as any single utterance could the cultural-educational dilemma which was a prominent part of Michigan State's atmosphere in the early 40's. Of course, the dilemma has been part of State's conscious, and by now its subconscious, existence for some time and I realize that there is something trite in my reference to it.

However, my remarks may have value in their reflection of a personal involvement in that dilemma at a particularly significant period in the school's history and my life. That's important. The documentation of a university's history will have an irrelevant appearance unless accompanied by the responses of the lives which formed, and were to some extent formed by, the university. But before I begin to sound sententious, I'd better get back to Mr. Adams and his remark.

Though Adams was a memorable figure it is the cow which he did not find which sticks in my mind, the cow and the philosophical pastures into which it could have been released by the implications of the remark. One pasture is Voltairean and the other Berkelean by way of Samuel Johnson, and visitors to Michigan State in the early 40's could have chosen either. Like Voltaire, who solemnly pronounced that if there were no God man would have invented one, the visitors could have invented a cow over which to stumble. If the visitors had been assured by a humanist that cows were not the solid realities they had once been on the campus, they could easily have found one on the periphery of the college, kicked it as Samuel Johnson did the stone in disproving Berkeley's denial of substance, and thus refuted the humanist.

But if these choices were solutions for the visitors who wanted to win friends by being folksy and were guided in that effort by Michigan State's past, they were intensifications of the problem for some who remained on campus, even for so short a span as four years. They had to live with the cow, whether real or imaginery, and its existence provided an obstacle to the projection of their vision. To alter somewhat a nineteenth-century critic's comment on England's spiritual problems (and to abandon, probably to everyone's relief, the image of the cow), Michigan State was between two worlds, one alive and flourishing and the other born but struggling to mature. On the one hand there were agriculture and the "applied arts," whose stability found an expression in the rather squat rectangularity of the Agriculture Building. On the other hand, there were the humanities, which not only lacked an architectural expression, except perhaps for the red-brick inelegance of Morrill Hall where so many of the classes were held, but had not articulated their role in the scheme of things beyond some gestures which were not unlike those of a schoolboy undergoing the agony of poetic recitations.

Everybody owned the dilemma but, to revive for a moment the image of the cow,

the humanists were most vulnerable to its horns. The vulnerability, however, was due to a position in time and not to the nature of the humanists. The English Department, into whose care I entrusted my own particular naivete and crudeness, impressed me then, as it does now after years of highbrow pretensions, as a group of fine literary minds which only occasionally gave the impression of feeling alien. In the early 40's structural analysis had not yet established itself as a religion, and Marxist and Freudian literary criticism were positions to be read, wondered about, but rarely practiced. Literary studies at Michigan State were still largely determined by nineteenth-century practices which established literature as an intelligent and leisurely way in which to round off the jagged edges of one's humanness.

In those moments when you were indifferent to the absurdity of being immersed in literary studies at a "college of agriculture and applied science" you were grateful for the unhurried and intelligent atmosphere created by the English Department. No professor in the department contributed more to that atmosphere than John Abbott Clarke. I took his course in literary criticism and if my association with him had ended there I would have little to say about him. He was a tall, angular man who moved as though he had nowhere to go. He seemed to find speaking a burden and this, combined with traces of a Missouri dialect, could make the finest literature sound like a grocery order. Often in class he gave the impression that he had come upon literature by accident and was at a loss as to its purpose. But he was the first professor with whom I became friends, and it is regrettable that his classes could not have met with him as I often did, in the coffee shops. He had a gentle but sharp wit, an amiable manner, and a perspective on American literature which unerringly separated the fakes from the solid literary minds. He not only introduced me to the works of Henry Adams but gave me a copy of the Education and guided me through all of that marvelous man's writings with a perception from which I am still reaping a harvest. I regret not having thanked him in the past. There always should be time for such a word.

Russel Nye handled courses in American literature, and I remember him as a quiet, courteous teacher who listened to students as though they had a better grasp on matters than he, though at that time he had been awarded a literary prize for his work on George Bancroft, the American historian. I knew A.J.M. Smith through his courses in World literature. He was a poet himself and about this time had edited a collection of Canadian verse which contained some of his poems. He read literature with great spirit, made everything sound magnificent, and sent us off to read works from Homer to Hemingway. Occasionally, he read for the entire period, and I recall that on one occasion he read from Robinson Jeffers' Roan Stallion, kept right on into the next period until he had finished, and he did not lose a student.

My experiences with Herbert Weisinger were invariably unhappy, though challenging. He was a learned man but rather irascible, perhaps because we could not keep pace with his scholarly references, perhaps because he was offering courses in Victorian literature when his first love seemed to be the Renaissance. I always left his classes in a nasty mood from rarely having the right answers to his questions. I dreamed of flattening him some day with an erudite answer from an obscure source, and this noble aim sent me prowling around in the library looking up titles to which he had referred in his "You mean you haven't read this book" tone. He began a course in Victorian literature by stating that the course was to be based on the assumption that there was no God. Most of us were quite orthodox and therefore a bit frightened by the remark. One student, possibly attempting to restore balance to our universe, replied, "That's OK because we've just come from Professor Price's class which is based on the knowledge that there is a God." Weisinger was not impressed.

I have forgotten what course I had with Price but remember him as a very tough marker who had ironclad notions of what constituted first rate scholarship. I once wrote a paper on the French Enlightenment and relied heavily on the historical views of the American historian, Will Durant. Price gave it an "F" and wrote beneath the mark, "Share this with Durant." Shortly after this I met him on campus and he handed me a volume of the works of Lord Acton, the British historian, which was to serve as an antidote to Durant.

Arnold Williams was another tough marker. There was an instructor at State at that time whose name, I believe, was Fleishauer. Fleishauer announced at the opening of a course in composition that his name meant "butcher" in German and assured us that if we had any doubts about the appropriateness of the name we need only wait for the first paper to be returned. But the real butcher was Arnold Williams, whose red pencil served both a knife to our papers and a bludgeon to our sensibilities. His courses in writing and in literature were the worst of experiences for those who were convinced that they were turning out delicately rounded prose and the best of lessons to those who wanted to learn of the difficulties of composition. Though I was in several of his courses, I apparently never penetrated his consciousness for when he signed me up for a fourth course in literature during registration he expressed surprise, having thought that I was majoring in agriculture.

Claude Newlin taught both American literature and Shakespeare, a diversity which has probably been discouraged at Michigan State by the emphasis on specialization. Newlin had a rambling manner in his American literature classes which made everyone heavy and dull. The classes always seemed to meet at a hazardous time, just after lunch in the third semester with springtime calling our attention to the warm sun and the blooming forsythia outside Morrill Hall. The Shakespeare classes were better, much better. When you finished a play with Newlin you had a wealth of marginal notes which were summaries of his sharp insights and those of major scholars. That he seemed to be talking to himself much of the time should have become an irrelevancy to anyone intent on Shakespeare for Newlin had that rare trait in pedagogy of establishing an equilibrium between the integrity of the literary work, his own analysis and evaluation, and the most valuable scholarship. It is no small tribute to him that I still own, cherish, and often use the Neilson edition of Shakespeare which I marked so richly in his classes.

The rest of my professors of English occupy less clearly defined positions in my recall. To Townsend Rich, who also taught Shakespeare, I owe a particular debt. After a year's absence from State, I returned in the fall of '44 with most of my old convictions about becoming a solid, prosperous citizen tottering. I was ripe for a conversion to uselessness, and it was brought about by a lovely blond coed, for whom I was conceiving a pure passion, and Townsend Rich. The coed was a fellow student in a geology class which performed strange rituals with rocks, rituals to which I became increasingly alien. She was an English major and convinced that my furtive interest in her extended to literature she invited me to her class in Shakespeare conducted by Professor Rich. Rich was a dark, dapper man, the type which Hollywood used in college movies as Professor of English. On the day of my visit he was discussing Shakespeare's 'Othello' in a manner so leisurely and yet so elegantly incisive that I abandoned respectability on the spot and became a literature major. In turn, I was abandoned by the coed who wanted to be identified with something more heady than aesthetics. Art extracted a large sacrifice from its followers in those days.

The rest of my courses and professors drift into my recall rather vaguely, probably because I suffered through most of them. Students in the humanities had to satisfy science requirements of an extraordinary nature when measured by today's demands,

and I brought to the science courses a density which was almost unconquerable. However, the courses themselves were not always enlightened. They had a purity of design which enriched science majors but robbed me of much of whatever confidence I gained from the humanities. I found mathematics a grim, unrelenting horror though I saved myself from the cruel and barbarous exposure to physics by electing courses in entomology and botany, two of the happiest and most whimsical choices I made in college.

On the lighter side, entomology sent me out to the woods and fields around the campus armed with a net, a bottle of some kind of deadly compound, and a mind and a soul temporarily liberated from the rigors of a scientism which I could not understand. On the serious side I acquired in entomology a still-alive interest in classification by spending long hours looking at butterflies and beetles and carefully mounting and arranging them in cardboard boxes.

Toward botany I have mixed feelings. The subject matter was designed for the type of student who would cherish Luther Burbank as a hero. But the teacher was memorable. Professor Woodcock was as tough and gnarled as one of the roots which hung from strings in his laboratory, and he brought to his course the zeal which characterized nineteenth-century botanists like Asa Gray and Charles Sprague Sargent, men who would leave hearth, home, everything, to discover a rare plant in some dark, even forbidden, spot at the opposite end of the earth. He gave long, austere lectures in an amphitheatre which suggested a history of interminable, melancholy lectures by bearded professors as they hovered over cadavers. His laboratory sessions were conducted in the same spirit in which a guard would conduct an interrogation of a gate crasher at the imperial palace. A student who had received a low grade on his drawings of cells complained that it was unfair to be judged on art in a botany course and was told abruptly by Woodcock that cells did not like to be drawn poorly.

We didn't know whether to laugh grow grim at the remark but did eventually learn that was not an unusual statement - for him. He hated to be interrupted in the midst of his lectures and could become intensely irate if anyone interrupted his final sentences in lecture. Once, a student began making an exit in the middle of one of these final sentences and when halted by Woodstock's querulous tones explained that he was always late for his next class by a sentence length. It was something which we all wished we had said but it was lost on Woodstock who said seriously, "Very well, but your notes will look very bad with the last sentences unfinished." He either had the dryest sense of humor since Mark Twain's or actually believed that we set down every word that proceeded from his mouth. Yet, his assumption that all students burned with a passion for science was not exceptional.

To the scientists, pure and applied, humanists were like everyone else, and though in theory perhaps they should be, in practice they are not. That I came into chemistry or botany with my head full of literature or philosophy was of no more concern to the scientists than if I had been full of melancholy or far gone in love. On learning that I was majoring in literature, a veterinary student from Traverse City remarked with a coarse mixture of bewilderment and scorn, "You major in poetry and that stuff? I just don't get it. I don't see anything in it." Since he had just come from the college farms whose existence, and perhaps essence, became sharply defined when the wind was right, I had a strange notion of what he expected "to see."

However, what he didn't get, of course, was much more than why another young man should study literature. He was actually going back much further and wondering why men, young or old, should bother to create literature. I had the impression that if I had admitted to studying history he would have wondered why history had to be made.

Or, if I had confessed to an interest in psychology he might have wondered why men had to have anguish, or even souls. There was in his remark signs of an atmospheric condition that recommended that if you made an aesthetic statement you had better make it with a smile, pardner.

Much of the time I had feelings which I then thought of as proper to a Puritan in Gomorrah but have since more accurately identified as those proper to Oscar Wilde among the English Philistines. After we had witnessed the Monte Carlo ballet perform on campus, the reaction of many in the dormitory (Abbott Hall) was one of embarrassment, as though we had been caught in an act which suggested unnatural appetites. Those of us who enjoyed poetry "and that stuff" were sometimes hesitant to admit it in public, and if you hesitate even for a moment in the declaration of excitement over art you can take the first giant step toward moving the whole venture back in time, probably close to the dark ages. A student in Professor Clarke's class was prompted to ask about the logic of reading sonnets and novels in a world which seemed dedicated to violence. In a response which revealed the confidence, not arrogance, of the complete humanist, Professor Clarke remarked that if the whole world were to read sonnets there would be no time for a war which made one feel guilty about reading sonnets. When an American soldier came upon the aging American philosopher, George Santayana, sitting on a park bench in Rome, he asked him what he thought about the war. "What war?" asked Santayana. "I live for eternity."

To read sonnets while a war is going on, to meditate in a park while a military liberation is being accomplished, must be severe tests for the humanist, almost as courageous as declaring a passion for ballet in an age which is almost convinced that the pseudo violence of professional football is the ultimate in masculinity. But the chief virtue may not be courage so much as a capacity for loss of self consciousness, the diminution or even destruction of self in the pursuit of something which in its entirety and its very uselessness is a rebuke to the fragmentation of self and the craving for useful things. To be humanistic is to be that at least.

However, Michigan State in my years had not yet come to a complete understanding of that lesson, perhaps could not have understood it because its history had been in the service of a utilitarianism that had been a tough, and valuable, master. Someone at State once told me that I was something of an anomaly in going to the college to study literature. I left Massachusetts, a state whose streets are supposedly lined with colleges and cultural diamonds, to attend Michigan State, a college whose academic terrain was determined principally by the practicality of the Morrill Act. As an anomaly I might have been overly sensitive and therefore inaccurate.

That may be true. I'm not convinced that it is, but I am convinced that it was good for me to have been at Michigan State in those years. The awkwardness I sometimes felt was probably a small price to pay for being part of the emergence of the humanistic spirit. The atmosphere was honest, if to be honest is to be free from pretensions. I recall an event on an Ivy League campus when magnolia trees were in bloom, the grass was bright green, and over everything hung the easiness of spring. All this had not gone unnoticed by the student body or by the administration. Or unhonored. It was "spring weekend" on the campus, and rites which were old twenty-five hundred years ago were receiving the Ivy League touch. A pagan Greek might well have felt at home. He would have recognized spring even on an Ivy League campus and would have endorsed the recognition of it by a university.

However, what would have struck him as remarkable, once the identity of the men in blue uniforms had been established, was the presence of the police. The pagan could not have reconciled two such polaric elements as the spontaneous joy of humans at the arrival of spring and the presence of men whose principal function was to

moderate that joy. If he had been a bookish Greek he would not have found matters improved inside. Though he would have applauded the coming together of minds, he would have been stunned at what passed for wisdom in what was claimed to be a humanistic setting. A man spoke at length of having prowled in pantries, trunks, closets, attics, and people's lives for letters to and from one man. Love letters written in tender moments of passion, letters of advice to young men, letters of reprimand to old men, letters of acknowledgment for gifts received, letters of explanation for gifts sent, letters of fury to critics, letters of gentleness to children. Letters of all kinds to and from people of all kinds, people who evidently had been intent upon retaining the letters until they had rendered them the last full measure of devotion before being crushed by the persistence and money of the man who wanted to own them.

When the last letter had been learned of, pursued, and captured, I went outside and saw that the police maintained their stolid vigil, the students their moderate paganism, and the magnolia trees their loveliness. As I left the campus two strayed revelers, a young woman and a young man, were ahead of me, leaning on each other for support and, I hoped, for affection. Whether straying was allowed or whether these two had eluded the eye of the police I could not determine. They seemed bent on some errand, as though to terminate in their own way the rites which had been left behind but I sensed for one brief, un-policed moment that their spirit was to be at one with their practice, whatever that turned out to be.

The humanities were like that at Michigan State in the early 40's. If, on the one hand, they had no tradition to dignify them, they had, on the other hand, no empty rituals to distract them. They were blessed with that splendid possession, a practice almost wholly determined by its spirit.

Stonehill College

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The Diary of Joseph Benjamin Fuson

A geneological study of the Fuson family, entitled The Virginia-Ohio Fusons, A Geneological History of the Virginia-Ohio Branch of the Fuson Family in America, was compiled by Sylvia C. Fuson Ferguson and published by The Oxford Press, Oxford, Ohio, in 1939. The original of the diary of Joseph Benjamin Fuson is the property of Virginia Judy Sower (Mrs. Christopher Sower) of Okemos, Michigan, daughter of Ida Estelle Rairdon Judy, whose mother was Sarah Jane Fuson Rairdon, daughter of Joseph Benjamin Fuson, author of the diary.

The diary was transcribed by Arnella K. Turner, Assistant Professor, American Thought and Language, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, in April, 1977.

* * * * *

The glorious victories and the tragic defeats of any war generate their own public attention and interest by virtue of their inherent drama. Bull Run, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Atlanta--the men who took part in these engagements, whether they lived or died, were assured of a place in history.

For numberless thousands, however, both Union and Confederate, the war was almost entirely a matter of waiting, of hoping to see action in the service of the forces they had elected to join. Beset by boredom, plagued with illness, desperate with homesickness, they solaced themselves by speculating eagerly on every rumor that came their way, most of which proved to be pure fabrication. Countless hours were spent writing letters to loved ones or anxiously awaiting word from home, word which was often long delayed because of erratic service to the encampments. At such times, morale dwindled and men wondered if there really were a cause worth fighting for.

Joseph Benjamin Fuson, born in Spring Hills, Ohio, August 26, 1829, enlisted in the 38th Regiment of the Iowa Volunteer Infantry, on August 11, 1862. A carpenter and cabinet maker by trade, he was no mere youth who joined to escape farm chores or to find adventure. Fuson was a mature, sober, family man of thirty three, who believed strongly in the preservation of the union for which his grandfather, William Fuson, had fought in the Revolutionary War. In support of his convictions, he left his wife, Mary Carahoff Fuson, and his three young children, Sarah Jane, age eleven; Charles Albert, age 8; and Mary Francis, the baby, age 4, to fight for the Union cause. In keeping with his methodical nature, Joseph Fuson recorded the events of each day in his military service, a record which stands as a mute monument to the strengths, the weaknesses, the endurance of the men whose valor in battle went largely untested.

The first pages of the diary are missing, and the initial page of the remaining account, which is written in pencil, is too smudged to be decipherable. His record commences with an entry dated December 8, 1862, and concludes with one dated July 14 of the following summer, at which time his health, precarious throughout his military service, appears to have failed rapidly. The symptoms he describes in the diary seem to indicate malaria as the cause of his recurrent malaise. Joseph Fuson died September 4, 1863, at Keokuk, Iowa, while still in the service, denied the joy of a reunion with his beloved Mary, and was buried at the military cemetery in Keokuk.

The limited military action in which the 38th Iowa participated seems to indicate that the regiment served largely as a backup force for General Grant's

he remarks, "with thunder and lightning."

The day after Christmas Fuson received most welcome, if belated, Christmas cheer in the form of three letters from home, and, despite the excitement of orders for immediate removal to Columbus Kentucky, with "nabsack pack ready to start," he "sat at my post on guard thinking of home." The regiment eventually made its way downstream to Cairo [Illinois] on the 30th of December, where they were to entrain for Columbus, "Kentuck," but there was "trouble ahead," writes Fuson. "Can't go down much further for fear of being fired into. Lay all night on a pile of stone coal between engines." The next day they went 15 miles beyond Columbus to Union City, Tennessee, where "the boys went out on a foraging tower [tour] and came in this afternoon with 5 sheep and about thirty hens." Fuson's spirits were high as he looked about him at the countryside, "nice and level," though the water, he added, was poor. "The birds sing today like spring," he marvelled.

The brief idyl was abruptly interrupted by news of possible imminent battle action for the 38th Regiment, which was immediately detailed to New Madred, in southeastern Missouri, directly north of the tiny area of Kentucky that projects into Missouri, where "we lay on our arms all night expecting an attack." On the morning of January 3rd, Fuson says, "All appears quiet this morning, [but] the enemy is all around us and we are liable to an attack any minute. Our arms are all stacked in battle line." "Dreamed of home last night," he adds wistfully; then, with fine disregard for unity, continues in the same entry, "This is a beautiful level country. Many large farms evacuated. Country seems desolate. Health good. Weather very pleasant."

Once again the expected attack failed to materialize. Instead, the 38th found itself marking time in New Madrid for more than six months, from January 3 to the 6th of June, waiting for orders to proceed southward to join Grant's forces in the siege of Vicksburg. At first Joseph Fuson took advantage of the enforced inactivity to explore the immediately surrounding countryside. "The country here is level and low yet beautiful to behold," he writes. "Boats can be seen approaching for miles either way. Large farms are laid waste. Scarcely a rail [rail] is to be found while hundreds of achors [acres] of cultivated land is turned out to the commons, growing with burs and weeds." "This place is surrounded by a large ciprus [cypress] swamp whitch intersects the river above and below us and at this time is impassable on account of high water. This is the swamp that General Pope's gun boats went around and through." [General John Pope, with 12,000 Missouri volunteers, had effected the capture of New Madrid in March of 1862, then been reassigned to command of the Army of Virginia.] Harsh weather and worsened living conditions augmented the growing boredom and dissatisfaction of the men of the 38th Regiment and saw their health decline. On January 10-15, Fuson writes, "My health is not very good. I have taken cold and feel dull and a soreness in my back and a bad cough." The fact that "no mail has come since we left St. Louis" doubtless added to his misery, although he comments, on a surprisingly formal note, on January 14, "My health is getting better not withstanding the inclemency of the weather." In the same entry, he writes "Yesterday eve it commenced raining and rained hard and steady all night and this evening it is still raining hard without any prospect of change. Nothing is doing in camp, for we cannot even cook but live on crackers. There was a Norwegien in Company R died last night in the hospital tent. He lived on Washington Prairie, Winisheke Co., Iowa. Disease originated from measles." On a somewhat lighter note, he continues, "D.B. Welch and the doctor and H.M. Shoemaker went out to the country and left the team standing to the ambulance wagon without tying and they ran away and killed one horse. The other ran and as yet has not been found. They broke one wheel."

On January 15 the rain turned to snow. "I never saw a worse snow storm in Iowa,"

observes Fuson. "The snow is near 12 inches deep. Such a time I never saw. Many of our men are laying in snow and mud, with half fare, and half frozen [frozen] with clothing and blankets wet. I went out last night a half mile to an old house where our pickets stay and stayed overnight tolerably comfortable. This morning I went in and the whole camp appeared to be covered in snow and verry cold. I built a log heap and set it on fire and made the boys a kittle of coffee. Eat a bite myself and went back to the old house with 2 days rations. Things look very dull indeed. It is growing colder. The boys can be seen in every direction hunting places to stay and every place seems to be full."

By the next day the storm had abated, and "Welch returned today with the horse unhurt." There was time now to ponder the course of the war. "The prospects of the war are gloomy. All seems to be laying still and nothing doing. I expect great speculation is being prepared for by the officers, out of the battle of Vicksburg when it comes off. They are giving the Rebbles great time to fortify it and it will I fear cost us great loss of life to take that place." The prospect of the lives laid waste momentarily overcomes the writer as he adds a heartfelt, "O that the war was over." He takes courage briefly the following day from the rumor that "England and France are going to help us clean out the Rebbles," but his cheerful mood is short-lived. The men of the 38th have too much time on their hands. "Today is being spent in siting around the tent talking on various subjects, principlly on how soon we expect to go home," he writes. For Fuson enforced absence from his loved ones seems to have been especially difficult. Throughout the diary, "I rote a letter to send to Mary," appears at least three or four times every week, along with notations of letters written regularly to his father and brother Lemuel, all of whom wrote to Joseph with equal faithfulness. Delivery of mail to the encampment at New Madrid, however, was sporadic and irregular. For example, Fuson notes receiving a letter from Mary on January 20th that was dated the 13th, remarkably good service; but almost two weeks later, he received a letter from his wife written and sent on January 6th, close to a month in delivery.

There was ample time to examine and dissect every rumor. On January 21st, Fuson writes, "The news is that we are under marching orders and that General Grant is moveing on to Vicksburg with 75000 men and that Banks [Nathaniel Prentiss Banks, former governor of Massachusetts, appointed Major General of Volunteers in 1861] is comeing up to meet him and that we are going to get our subsistence money soon." Two days later: "News comes that Jefferson Thompson and Old Jeffree are comeing on to attack us. Our guns are put in order."

On January 24: "Last night about 12 o'clock the alarm was given by the guard, and in verry short order all were in line of battle and scouts sent out on horseback. Co. T was first in line and had the most men out and were ordered to go into the fort and hold it. We waited about 1 hour and no enemy appeared so we returned to our bunks, after puting out extra guards. All is quiet today. We heard today that 2 armies are comeing in after the sesesh [secessionists] on the other side."

With the relaxed discipline typical of inaction, there were the usual careless accidents among the men. January 20: "Edwin Thompson shot his fingers off last night on picket duty." And on February 23: "There was one of Co. B carelessly shot off two of his fingers while at the guardhouse." On April 13th: "One man that was out on scout shot himself accidentally in the leg with a revolver. It was a flesh wound." There was some innocent (and some not so innocent) horseplay that Joseph condoned. "The boys went out jahawking last night," he writes on January 31st, "and they came in with 35 chickens and turkeys and one rack koon. We live now tip top." After another snow storm on February 5th: "The orderly and others had a fine frolick snowballing." Another "frolick" proved to have rather serious con-

sequences. "Lieutenant Baldwin got badly hurt today playing ball. He and another man, in trying to catch the ball, ran together. His head came in contact with the other man's shoulder." But, in Fuson's view, "Vice seems to take the lead all the time," among both the enlisted men and the officers. "All seem to be laying around in their tents," he writes disapprovingly on February 6th, "largely indulging in card playing." He himself apparently welcomed every opportunity to attend worship services, making careful note of the text of each sermon, and he deplored the apathy of the large majority of the men of the 38th toward the condition of their souls. He writes on February 1st, for example, "I went out on the woodpile to hear Elder Webb preach from Isah [Isaiah] 21:11. There was not over forty out to hear him altho the weather was fair and distance not over one hundred yards for any of the regiment. The elder has but little encouragement for among the commissioned officers there is only three lieuts. that are professors and but few privates seem to think of futurity or care how they live."

Suspicious about the competence, the integrity, and even the loyalty of certain officers began to arise in the minds of the men. "The colonel passed out 6 barrels of salt today and some whiskey without examination. I fear he is not what he ought to be," writes Fuson on February 10th; and again on February 16th, "The provo marshall gave a rebble [prisoner] a permit to carry out five barrels of whiskey without examining it and when the teamster got to the picket line the picket swore he must have some whiskey and on examination it proved to be salt all except one barrel all of which he brought into camp." "There is but little regard paid to principale among the majority of men in the army," he concludes. When a Rebel attack was expected hourly on February 25th, Fuson comments, "We are in poor condition to engage in battle, haveing no ammunition for our gun, and our colonel does not seem to appreciate his danger. Our regiment is more benefit to the Rebbles than to anyone else. We are just protecting Rebble citizens and property. We have been here two months now and done nothing, when we might have been fortified for safety against 5000 troops had the proper effort been made." His suspicions about the integrity of some of the officers were reinforced when, on March 2nd, the transport ferry, Davenport, en route to New Madrid, "captured a Rebble and six barrels of whiskey." "There is a large smuggling business going on," he states, "and tolerable good evidence that the Government officers at Cairo and Columbus are concerned in it and assisting the Rebbles. When oh when will the Administration take steps to put down this rebellion and place men at the head of affairs that are Union men and will let us work." Later, in March, he writes, "I am becomeing more and more convinced that Col. Hines is a sesesh simpathiser. He feels himself large and important, and the major is not any behind him in self-conceit." "Captain Southerland married a rich sesesh lady," he observes in an entry dated March 4th; and, in rare display of disillusionment and pessimism, "It is said that the Rebbles have taken one of our best gunboats. It seems that the country is about being overrun with traitors, both North and South. Oh when will this war close and the people again come to their senses. I am tired of serving the country when governed entirely by copperheads." March 6th contains the laconic comment: "Lieutenant Leveridge died today of whiskey and irecipalus."

Occasionally there was a diversion to break the monotony of camp life, as when "me and Linderman went down the river bank about three miles strolling, a very pleasant walk." Or when "12 of us volunteered to go out and cut wood for the camp." Now and again expeditions were sent out from camp to round up Rebble "guirillies" suspected of lurking in the area [probably some of Jefferson Thompson's raiders]. On March 4th, "There was 10 Negroes came into camp asking a pass up the river. They are slaves, many of them children, and almost white. One woman has a likeness of her daughter, who is almost clear white and is a beautiful woman, and yet she is a slave. There is a large proportion of the slaves," suggests Fuson, "that are, if not white, are mixed with Anglo Saxon." On May 31st the diversion

was of a more sober nature. "There was a young man by the name of Sherman of Co. K got drownded this morning in the river. Evry effort was made to save him but in vain. Cannon were fired to raise him till the gunboat took the alarm and sent word up the river that we were attacked and came down to our aid. Just as she was rounding to, he was caught with a grab hook and was drawn out but was ded, being in the water some three hours." News of General Sumner's death [General Edwin Vost Sumner, commander of a division of volunteers for the Union army in the campaign at Fredericksburg, Virginia; died March 21, 1863] called for the firing of a cannon on April 13 in the encampment at New Madrid "every half hour from noon til night," and flying the flag at half mast. "The only Union citizen of New Madrid" had died the previous day, and at the same time honor was being paid to General Sumner, "he [the Union citizen] is being buried today by Union soldiers. The citizens pay no respect to him," says Fuson; "his name is Franklin."

For a while, Joseph Fuson found employment for his skills as a carpenter when, on February 17th, "We received fifty thousand feet of lumber and sash and doors to build barracks from." For the next several weeks, part of his time was spent sorting and stacking the lumber and working on construction. March 12th, after coming off guard duty at seven in the morning, he "volunteered to get rafters for the barracks. Had a good time of it," he observes. By March 29th "Barber Kirkpatrick and myself commenced shingleing our barracks, "work that went on intermittenly for several days, until, by the seventh of April, "We put glass in the windows of the barracks," completing the construction.

The health of the men during the long layover in New Madrid seemed to deteriorate, partly because of the weather, partly because of the lack of essential provisions, partly from inactivity. Many entries in the diary during this period speak of Joseph's visits to the hospital. "The health of the regiment is very poor. Verry many are coming down with lung fever principlly." On one occasion Fuson reports bitterly, "A member of Co. C named Cook died today of consumption caused by exposure on the boat comeing down from St. Louis, while the officers had their regular cabbn passage and comfortable luxuries." His friend, Linderman, became "very sick" and was hospitalized from March 15th to the 5th of April. "The boys in the hospital are comfortably situated," concedes Fuson. Yet, no fewer than a dozen entries record deaths of members of the 38th regiment during the months spent at New Madrid. Joseph Fuson's own health worsened. Toward the end of February his "rheumatism" (probably severe muscle pain resulting from recurrent attacks of malaria) caused him such discomfort that he was unable to stand guard. Along with the lameness in his legs, and now in his arms and e pecially his elbows, he began to complain of recurrent severe headaches of two or three days' duration.

Home seemed farther away than ever at these times. One post brought "a letter from Mary with Babies hair in it." In another he learned that his Mary was sick, which caused him great concern. Toward the end of March, he writes poignantly, "The woods have the appearance of Iowa at the 10th of May. The peach trees are in full bloom and the grass is starting beautifully. Farmers are preparing for corn planting. I sit about 1-1/2 miles from camp at the root of a large white oak, museing about home and thinking how I would like to be with the wife and the little ones that I love so dearly." "I am verry anxious to hear from home" He notes in May having "sent for the Children's Friend for my children" and "sent a comb for Charles [his little son] and Mary some needles" [apparently in short supply then as they were during the Revolutionary War]. Most touching, however, was the letter he sent Mary by a Mr. Phillips: "I filled it with roses," he writes simply. Unfortunately for his morale and that of the other men of the 38th, rumor had it that "no mails are to pass Cairo either way till the first of April." Fuson's spirits revived briefly, however, when "the Marine fleet from St. Louis passed down the river for the start of war. It was the most magnificent scene I ever beheld.

It consisted of 5 steamers and one Ram."

Besides homesickness, boredom and frustration were the men's most constant companions. "Nothing to do but rub up our guns and drill a little, and there are few that have any disposition to do anything. Soldiering makes men lazy," concludes Fuson. Small wonder, since the entry in the diary for April 24-25 is typical of many during the period from January 2 to June 4: "Day spent as many others in loitering around doing very little of anything." The repeated alerts for supposedly imminent battles that failed to materialize compounded the men's restlessness and dissatisfaction.

Finally, on June 4th, came the order for the 38th regiment to proceed to Vicksburg. Quickly all the sick were sent up to St. Louis; boxes were packed and sent home; the 24th Missouri arrived to relieve the 38th regiment; and on June 7th, at five o'clock, the 38th left for Vicksburg. The fates were grudging about letting the regiment reach its destination. The second day out of New Madrid, "about the middle of the afternoon the packing blew out of one of the main steam pipes and we came near being blown up, but finally landed and let her cool down and fixed it. Our landing was made just below and off a little about Ft. Wright. We passed smoothly until just dark, when the rope that managed the rudder broke just as we were making a turn. The stern swung around against the land and came nigh recking her--but we reached Memphis in safety about 11 o'clock at night." The following afternoon, "we left for Vicksburg on the same old creaky boat. Sounding for bottom, lost one rudder;" [No matter!] "sailed on pleasantly till 11 o'clock at night. Lay over on acct. of dark and storm til morning. Started at daylight. Kept in constant motion all day, constantly passing where rich plantations have been burnt out. The river very crooked and full of gunboats guarding."

Not the regiment was in sight of the besieged Vicksburg, and "booms were bursting over the city constantly." Landing on the Louisiana side of the river, the 38th packed for a march towards Grant's right, halting at the outskirts of the city at night, where, sad to say, "three soldiers forced a wench." "Booming kept up day and night" as the regiment now crossed over into Mississippi, "marched over about three miles and took position on the extreme left." At long last, the men were in the thick of things. "Battle is going on all along the front," writes Fuson. "Our batteries took position and opened on a Rebble fortification. A brisk firing kept up. The Rebble mortar silenced our batteries. A corporal of Co. D killed on picket. We were desperately shelled but no one hurt."

The fighting continued off and on for more than two weeks. The evening of June 19th, "a bomb burst and wounded 2 men in Co. K and one in Co. D." The following day, Saturday, "sharp firing kept up all forenoon, a constant shower of shots and shells flying over and falling around us," though "there was only two men wounded on our side." On the sabbath, "all was still and quiet;" too quiet, as "the rebs tried to break out in the night." Although Union forces had seized the fort at Vicksburg by June 26th, the rebels were unwilling to concede defeat and continued shelling the enemy until just two days before the final surrender of Vicksburg on July 4th.

Joseph Benjamin Fuson's diary concludes shortly after the fall of Vicksburg. On July 3rd, he writes, "Taken sick with a high fever. Returned to camp much fatigued." July 5th, "High fever again today;" July 7th, "Had a high fever most of the day." On July 8th he briefly takes heart as he writes, "Feel pretty well today. Took a physik this morning and feel weak." His optimism was short-lived, however, for by the 13th he is forced to concede, "Health poor." The final entry is very brief: "Have a dirrea. Am unfit for duty. Commenced a letter-". One suspects the letter was never finished.

NOTE

1 Jefferson Thompson was one of the most colorful persons in the forces opposing Federal control of the western area. A very vocal eccentric, he collected several thousand informally organized guerillas under his command in south-east Missouri and made it his business to harrass Union troops attempting to secure the territory for the Union. He rode about camp on a spotted stallion named Sardanopolis, in the company of his retainer, a huge Indian by the name of Ajax. His "proclamations" were legion. On the occasion of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Thompson's counter-proclamation stated that for every member of his Missouri Guard or for every Confederate soldier put to death, he would hang, draw, and quarter a minion of Abraham Lincoln. He also sent forward unsolicited advice to the Confederate commanders, one suggestion being that they could crush the Unionists at St. Louis if they would burn the breweries and declare lager beer contraband of war, which action, he contended, would result in the death of the Dutch in a week and the desertion of the Yankees.

Not the regiment was in sight of the beleaguered Vicksburg, and "booms were bursting over the city constantly." Landing on the Louisiana side of the river, the 38th packed for a march towards Grant's right, halting at the outskirts of the city at night, where, said to say, "three soldiers forced a march." "Booming kept up day and night" as the regiment now crossed over into Mississippi, "ratched over about three miles and took position on the extreme left." At long last, the men were in the thick of things. "Battles is going on all along the front," writes Fuson. "Our batteries took position and opened on a Rabble forfickation. A brisk firing kept up. The Rabble mortar silenced our batteries. A corporal of Co. B killed on picket. We were desperately shelled but no hurt."

The fighting continued off and on for more than two weeks. The evening of June 18th, "a bomb burst and wounded 2 men in Co. K and one in Co. D." The following day, Saturday, "sharp firing kept up all forenoon, a constant shower of shots and shells flying over and falling around us," though "there was only two men wounded on our side." On the sabbath, "all was still and quiet; "too quiet," the rebels tried to break out in the night. "Although Union forces had seized the fort at Vicksburg by June 18th, the rebels were unwilling to concede defeat and continued shelling the enemy until just two days before the final surrender of Vicksburg on July 4th.

Joseph Benjamin Fuson's diary concludes shortly after the fall of Vicksburg. On July 1st, he writes, "Taken sick with a high fever. Returned to camp much fatigued." July 2nd, "High fever again today;" July 3rd, "Had a high fever most of the day." On July 8th he briefly takes heart as he writes, "Feel pretty well today. Took a physic this morning and feel weak." His optimism was short-lived, however, for by the 15th he is forced to concede, "Health poor." The final entry is very brief: "Have a dinner. Am unfit for duty. Commenced a letter." One suspects the letter was never finished.

Poetry of the Early Midwest

Bernard F. Engel

The reader who ventures into the dustier shelves of the library stacks to turn the uncut pages of the works of early Midwestern poets may find no neglected works of high poetic art. But he will discover a great quantity of verse dealing with a more varied subject matter than he expects in present day poetry. In the early nineteenth century, verse was still used for purposes denied to it later in the century when the division between belles-lettres and other forms of literature became marked. Moreover, the early Midwest was both an area of exploration and settlement, and a new setting for an inherited culture. Midwestern verse writers frequently dealt with local subjects and points of view. But they were likely to find in the local an expression of national development. The mounds and the "mighty" Ohio and Mississippi rivers and the foibles of Cincinnati and St. Louis were subjects. But the poet who wrote of them more often than not found them "inspiring" him to reflections on the marvelous growth of the nation and its glittering future, the completion of the Great Circle--that supposed movement of culture from the Holy Land through Greece and Rome to the Anglo-Saxons and then to America--and the universal human experiences of love and death and despair and hope.

There was, indeed, a lively interchange between Eastern and Midwestern poets and editors. Eastern writers such as Bryant and Emerson visited the Midwest, published in its journals, and corresponded with its writers; eastern poets occasionally seem to have borrowed lines and themes from Midwesterners; and Midwestern writers of course learned from and imitated the easterners. The Midwest, moreover, came in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries to represent to British and European writers that semi-mythical America which had fascinated the western world since the voyages of Columbus. Cowley, Southey, Byron, Chateaubriand, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Hugo, Keats, and countless others wrote in verse or prose of an idealized America west of the Appalachians. At no time was the Midwest culturally isolated. One major failing of the elitism which causes us to read only a handful of poems by a handful of standard poets is that it leads us to suppose that important figures have neither peers nor a past but, like Moses, are discovered adrift in a patch of bulrushes.

Poets who experienced the earliest westering wrote accounts of what they saw in their travels, of their pride in the rapid spread of the nation, and of their aspirations for its glorious future. Some of the same poets, and a great many others, wrote of life in the new towns. These town poets generally adopted the topics and attitudes of eastern and southern writers, for after all what the poets in the older areas were doing was the thing to do; towns in those areas often still had much in common with frontier settlements; and Midwesterners necessarily competed for the attention of the same editors. Among several other types of early Midwestern verse were poems meant, like much Eastern writing, to develop a legendry, to give the nation and the poet's home region a past of romance and larger-than-life adventure.

One of the most productive Midwestern poets of the era of exploration and settlement was Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a jack of several writing trades who is best known today for his prose records of Indian culture and his retelling of Indian legendry, including, as everyone knows, the stories which Longfellow used in The Song of Hiawatha. Schoolcraft himself explored much of the northern Midwest, and wrote in prose some of the earliest accounts of its geography and its economic possibilities. Schoolcraft was too literary for the taste of modern scientific anthropologists, but not accomplished enough as an artist to win much attention from

literary critics. Whatever his standing today, he had a drive to be a poetic voice of the Midwest. He wrote page after page extolling the region in meditative, descriptive, and narrative verse. His enthusiasm for an idealized America gave vitality to writing which though often catch-as-catch-can was spirited and if sometimes quaint was also often engaging.

His interest in what was then the West shone through even in the early poem Transallegania or the Groans of Missouri (New York 1821), a set of jogtrot iambic pentameter couplets arguing the relative merits of specie and paper money. The narrative tells how Gold, the king of metals, alarmed by the tumult of settlement in the West, leaves his home in Mexico to judge for himself the importance of the movement. Gold finds, sadly, that Missouri already is "peopled with men" and, remembering the woes he has caused throughout history, calls a parliament of metals to consider what they can do now that their lives in the American earth are likely to be disturbed. Tin, Iron, Zinc, Copper, and others speak, some fearing man's probing and hammering, others confident that Americans are ignorant of their uses. The conference is interrupted by the arrival of a volentudinarian on a stretcher: "The Genius of Paper--of bank paper trash." Paper begins to tell how he became more valued than Silver, but Gold has him thrown out. The conference, however, ends in indecision, with Gold calling for a new convention in the following year,

And he fancied the dread would a season arrest,
The fame, population, and growth of the west

Apparently Schoolcraft, like others after the depression of 1819, found himself torn between dislike of paper money and the opinion that its increase would speed development of the country.

Schoolcraft's verse improved, whether because of continued practice or because of his discovery of more appealing subject matter. He showed respectable talent in such meditative and descriptive work as The Rise of the West or A Prospect of the Mississippi Valley (Detroit 1830). Here, for example, he saluted the source of the great river:

Proud swelling stream! from sources such as these,
Thou gathered force to pierce remotest seas,
Supreme example to the sons of fate,
How small effects are gathered into great.

The address to the river, the illustration of its greatness, and the use of it as a lesson for man arose from fresh appreciation of what was then still marvelous. A better poet might have found a more apt verb than "pierce" for the second line of the passage, and might also have sought a more specific term for mankind than "sons of fate"; but Schoolcraft's fourth line is deftly Popeian, not at all the rant that lesser writers often made of their heroics. He who would read Schoolcraft must of course be willing to divest himself of demand for naturalistic description, be willing to accept the Neoclassic aim of seeking to give the river epic stature. For the willing reader, the vigor of the passage, and of the poem, is contagious.

The enthusiasm arises not only from heroic perception and from appreciation of the marvels of nature but also from nationalistic pride. In the course of hailing the animals, Indians, "fountains," immigrants, and statesmen he found or predicted for the Mississippi valley, Schoolcraft's speaker reports that an English traveler had come to the river "that he, his God unshackled might adore." America, indeed, is made up of people "Cast forth from Europe" who have

Not long delayed to prove to mortal kind,
The innate vigor of the purposed mind,
And claimed the rank, assigned by heaven's decree,
To states united, virtuous, and free.

An ardent believer in the myth of the Great Circle, Schoolcraft has the speaker predict that in the Mississippi valley "the pilgrimage of man" will at last achieve its triumph.

Though enthusiastic most of the time, the Midwesterner, often a second or third generation American, admitted occasionally to nostalgia for the old home, family, and friends in the East. Schoolcraft in Iosco or the Vale of Norma (Detroit 1838) considered the relation of his own upbringing in Albany, New York, to the ways of the adult life he had known in the West. His speaker in the poem remembered, he said, the good life and the pleasant scenery around Albany; he even supposed that he might return there if he retired, for its memory still covered the "expanded scene" of his life with "A magic web of living gold and green." But he would not find fault with his adopted region. The truth which had been carried from Eden to Rome and on through the Reformation to America will let no tyrant sway in the Midwest, where Americans know a peace based on "pure and simple" lives.

Schoolcraft's Rise of the West was published together with Henry Whiting's A Retrospect: or the Ages of Michigan. Whiting had already published the long verse romances of Indian life Ontawa, the Son of the Forest (New York 1822) and Sanillac a Poem (Boston 1831). His subject in A Retrospect was not the forest but the town. Reviewing the history of Detroit in 32 stanzas of rhymed iambic pentameter, he began by remarking that though Detroit was founded at about the same time as Philadelphia it grew more slowly because it was "Doom'd in a waste of lakes and woods to hide"--a view of the American scene perhaps as representative as the enthusiasm he and Schoolcraft showed in their tales of forest adventure. They were not the first Americans to find the natural setting marvelous when on vacation, so to speak, but a nuisance when one wanted to lay out a farm or plat a village. Bringing his story to the 1800s, Whiting talked of early plans for grand avenues, discouragement following the 1805 fire which ruined much of old Detroit, and especially of the elaborate dreams of Judge August B. Woodward:

One mind there was, could greater prescience boast:
He saw the Phoenix of improvement there!

Though Territorial Governor William Hull and other civic leaders rejected Woodward's proposals, the judge was not discouraged, Whiting said admiringly, because he expected that 800 years (!) must pass before Detroit would become the Constantinople of the lakes. Perhaps the citizenry thought they could sail to Byzantium on a faster boat.

Though in his tales of Indian adventure Whiting's verse was often good, it faltered in this poem. One may suppose that problems of the city were not of much appeal to him. Discussing early settlers' ignorance of the interior of Michigan, he would in order to maintain rhyme and meter stoop to inept abbreviation:

Fit place for beaver, water-fowl and frog,
Clouds and darkness rested on This Ter. incog.

And he would let his imagery descent to the fruity:

The rind of Michigan had then alone
Been tributary to the farmer's plough:
Its vast interior pulp was all unknown,--

Town poetry, indeed, soon became more important in quantity than verse of exploration and the countryside. Since the Midwest was established as an East in embryo, rather than as a totally new culture, the settlers founded towns as soon as they leapt off the wagon or the flatboat. One amenity of town life was the print shop. Its owner produced not only signs and cards and bills of lading but also newspapers and occasionally a magazine. Living before the rise of the sophisticated corporations which later would supply "filler" copy, the printer-publisher, regarding intrusions of white space as a sign that he lacked enterprise, and also as offenses to his pocketbook, crammed his pages with everything he could get his hands on, sometimes borrowing from others without imprudent regard for copyright, and welcoming contributions from local writers. Newspapers of the period often carried verse, sometimes in a special corner or even a page, sometimes only to fill random holes. Most such work is lost, and there is little reason to suppose that its demise has reduced the body of high poetic art. Occasionally, however, ambition caused a writer or his friends to collect his work in a book, giving it some chance of survival.

One representative of the earnest though untalented local community spokesman in verse was Robert McCracken, author of Original Miscellaneous Poems (Pontiac, Mich. 1825). McCracken wrote doggerel which at best is merely amusing to the modern reader, but he had the good sense to be amused about it himself. He apologized for his inability to compete with "the learned," as his introduction put it, and in "The Poet's Appeal" asked readers not to "censure too hard" because he had not had the "advantage of good education." McCracken's naivete makes one suspect that the apology then obligatory in prefaces for once was sincere. His verse limps and wheezes as he struggles to find, or invent, rhymes for "Pontiac." His topics were those he had noticed in the work of other everyday poets, whether Eastern, Southern, or Midwestern--girls, flowers, counterfeit money, childhood, fancy, and uplifting stories, such as the tale of an editor who had taken to drink but was a better man than most because he aided the poor. McCracken's best work was in his observations of the town, as in this bit of brag, which showed pride in the town's development but also awareness that it was not a major city:

It's a place of great business--a grist and saw mill--
Two Black Smith's shops and a whiskey still,
A factory too, to make cloth for the back,--
And this is the village of Pontiac.

McCracken wrote observations, usually friendly but occasionally sharp, of the local miller, landowners, tavern keeper, hatter, and justices-- these latter being likely to "slap on your back" a warrant for arrest for almost any reason because "A h-ll of a town is Pontiac."

More polished though not necessarily more original poets appeared in most of the young Midwestern cities. Among the better of these was Thomas Peirce, who left Pennsylvania for Cincinnati in 1813, became prominent in the city's small circle of poets, and in 1821 published a set of poems on town life in issues of the journal Western Spy and Literary Cadet. Outfitted with introductory remarks and end notes, these were collected in a book in 1822 under the title The Odes of Horace in Cincinnati. Though the title nodded to Horace, and though Peirce surely had in mind Pope and Byron, the avoidance of biting satire and the slack line made light humor and whimsy his chief effects.

In an elaborate effort at cleverness, Peirce kept his own name out of the book. The opening note "To the Public," signed "The Publishers," says that the poems were published without the author's consent because his address was not known. This bit of sham prepares the reader for the following "To the Publishers" in which "Horace"

says that he had not intended permanence for the poems and would have revised them if he had known they were going to be reprinted. Although Peirce said that he intended to produce 55 odes, he gave only 31 in the book and apparently did not write more. Most of the poems make facile use of tetrameter couplets, each couplet being followed by a trimeter line.

Peirce represents himself as the laureate of the city, establishing his character as a gentle observer, usually humorous rather than biting, as in these lines of Ode 11 describing his practice:

With pen in hand I walk the town
Incog, and note correctly down
Each comic scene that passes

He writes about lawyers quibbling over cases, doctors killing patients, merchants cheating, a French dancing-master thinking only of money, and Yankee demagogues haranguing the public. Several odes remark on the city's variety of people, both white and black, and assure the reader that the poet will never give pain and will treat everyone impartially. One tongue-in-cheek piece titled "To the President of a Western Bank" says that the poet comes to the bank to deposit cash, not to get a loan to speculate in land and not to offer flattery instead of a repayment. Others give mild ridicule of the builders of a river wharf that collapsed, of the City Council for allowing taverns to spring up throughout the town, and of a Professor Brickebus, M.D., who had suggested that the original Eden was in America. The best of the poems, one that belongs in anthologies for its illustration of the times, is Ode VII, "The Dandy." This depicts the stylish young man of 1821, in fairly exact detail such as in this passage from the third stanza:

Around its neck a stiff cravat;
Another tightly drawn o'er that,
And over these a dozen:
Enormous ruffles on his breast,
And close below a tiny vest,
For gaudy colors chosen.

Ode XI reviews the first ten and re-asserts that the poet writes only to please himself. Its defensive tone causes the reader to deduce that Peirce had been criticized for some of the first odes even though their satire was of the mildest. Ode XIII, "Characters at the Hotel," gives presumably true to life pictures of a flirtatious and hard-drinking colonel, a frowning Boston clergyman, a starched dandy, a prattling doctor, a runaway debtor, a scheming investor, and other town types. Ode XX, "City Poets," satirizes Peirce's fellow writers, using such pseudonyms as "Blunderbuss Esquire" and "Bard of Locust-Grove" and "Favonius"--inventions impenetrable today, though perhaps clear to contemporaries. Of himself, Peirce says that he is not a poet, and intends when he has finished the odes to "Post away to other places"; it is not apparent whether he meant to other geographical locations, or to other kinds of poetry. Ode XXX, "Modern Schools," is quite in the tradition of lay comment on the classroom--the teachers, it avers, are incompetents, a mob of ignorant "modern pedagogues."

Only two of the poems edge over into a satire with almost as much bite as humor. Ode XIV lampoons Captain John Cleves Symmes, the chief advocate of theory of concentric spheres, which held that mankind lives on the shell of the earth, that the inside of the planet is hollow and has many inhabitants. Symmes' theories were a favorite butt of humorists and satirists in the 1820s. Ode XIII, "To C. S. Rafinesque," compares Rafinesque with Don Quixote, alleging that he has named "many plants which ne'er existed" and also has labelled nonexistent species of fish

in the Ohio river. Rafinesque was in fact a well known though pedantic botanist and ichthyologist, the author of pioneering studies of Ohio valley life forms. The last two stanzas urge Rafinesque to continue to entice the girls of Transylvania College, where he was a professor. Though this latter passage was perhaps more condemnatory in that day than it seems in ours, even this ode on the whole is more gentle than savage.

Dorothy Dondore in The Prairie and the Making of Middle America (New York 1926), one of the best known studies of nineteenth century Midwestern life, does not deal with Peirce. This was perhaps because though she mentioned Cincinnati a few times her focus was on areas farther west. Or perhaps he was one of the writers she had in mind when she spoke of "work of a rather creditable character" which "is barred for us, of course, by the nature of its subject." Ralph Rusk in his major study The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier (New York 1926) gives appreciative pages to the Odes, but, remarking on the fact that they do not appear in William Davis Gallagher's collections of early poetry, says that "the racy satires of Peirce were assuredly passed over intentionally." I find in the odes mention of neither legs nor petticoats nor pregnancy, nor of any other item or condition that might redden the cheek of the prim. But Dondore and Rusk, writing in the 1920s when "Victorian" ways were still known, if not always revered, had the advantage in sensitivity over those of us bebauched by the revolutions in taste since their day.

In Ode XXVI, "The Poet's Banquet," Peirce urged his fellows to write not as easterners but as people familiar with "Nature's great and beauteous scene," the mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, and forests of the Midwest. He took this advice himself in The Muse of Hesperia (Cincinnati 1832), a work which won the medal of the Philomathic Society of Cincinnati as the best poem of not less than 400 lines submitted "by a citizen of the western country." Twelve poems were entered in the 1821 contest. Peirce maintained here the pretense at anonymity which appeared in the Odes: the preface of Hesperia said that the author did not appear to receive the medal, having declined the opportunity of "ever making himself known to the Society." The editors commented on the difficulty of the stanza form, a seven-line pattern rhymed AABCCCB. Neither the editors nor Peirce thought of form as a controlling idea, and of course neither supposed it necessary to make any but the slightest of efforts at matching "form" to subject matter: in the early Midwest, iambs, either pentameter or, as here, tetrameter, were used whatever the matter. The poets knew, of course, that any hack could knock out a piece conforming to mechanical standards. They knew, too, that Pope and Gray and Keats and a host of others had seen the rules of rhyme and meter as esthetic challenges which by disciplining expression helped generate and shape it, not as a mere set of hurdles to be leapt over. But Midwesterners in practice were contented if verse conformed to the "rules." Coleridge had already spoken of harmonizing content and form, and Emerson and Whitman would soon be speaking for "organic" form in which content and expression would be one. But in the Midwest, as elsewhere, ideas of organic form would not become widespread until the closing decades of the century. Yet again: one may take pleasure in even limited accomplishment if he reads it for what it does, rather than with an eye only on what it fails to do.

Like the Odes, Hesperia is an imitation of eighteenth century modes, as in, for example, its frequent mentions of milkmaids, kine, the "cow-boy" (used for the male equivalent of the milkmaid, not in its more modern sense), and other inhabitants of the verse of Gray and Thomson. A fair example of Peirce's work is the opening stanza, which also shows the poet's stance and tone:

'Twas eve: the sun had sunk to rest
Beneath a hill's aspiring crest;

But still the gush
 Of changeful light illumed the skies,
 And tinged the clouds with varying dyes,
 Till faded from our eager eyes
 Its latest blush.

The observer sees the world as sublimely beautiful, and he is both appreciative of its picturesque grandeur and "eager" for what this heroic setting will bring him. The experienced reader, recognizing that the way is being prepared for a sublime message, will find that his supposition is not to be surprised by novelty. The poet, wandering along the banks of the Ohio, happens upon a "fairy ground" where, to the music of angel choirs, a muse addresses him as representative of the "Brother Poets of the West." The muse informs him that it is the poet's duty to inspire his peers, and asks whether Byron, Southey, Scott, and Moore from England, and Pierpont, Percival, and Neal from the American East, are to achieve art without being matched by spokesmen for the Midwest. The region has fit subjects, the spirit says, in Jackson, Perry, and Harrison. It has colleges and men of Genius, and it includes "bold Kentucky" where "learning's sun," it is known, "darts o'er Lexington." Other materials include the landscape, flowers and mountains of the farther West: the Great Lakes; Indian history, the mighty Ohio river; and even the "fairy band" that played in the moonlit forest before the white man came.

British models also lay behind another long poem based on the Ohio river, Frederick William Thomas' The Emigrant, or Reflections While Descending the Ohio (Cincinnati) 1833). Thomas' preface apologizes for what it says is the "sombre" tone, though in fact little in it is darkly serious. The preface also explains that Thomas borrowed his stanza from Gray's "Ode to Adversity," though he used a "heroic measure" rather than Gray's 8-syllable line. He had considered but rejected the pattern of Byron's "Don Juan" because, he says, that arrangement forced even Byron himself, "the Lord of Poets," to wrench syntax in order to achieve regularity in rhyme. The poem grew by accretion to its final length of 91 stanzas. When Thomas published early portions in a number of newspapers, he was encouraged, he says, to continue. When it was completed, he read it in its entirety from a Lyceum stage. As the method of composition suggests, the poem is a rambling collection of stanzas on topics that would pass through the head of a thoughtful man on what must have been the boring ride of a week or more down the river.

The poet tells of his departure from his home in the East to rejoin Mary, a woman who had moved to Cincinnati, and then records his reflections on the courage of the pioneer generations, the lives of the Indians, God, the American revolution, George Washington, free government and the dangers of tyranny, freedom in Poland, hopes for a glorious American future with the nation extended to the Pacific, and his own employment in Cincinnati where he is to "mingle in the wordy war, where Knavery takes in vice her sly degrees" (he will work in the courts, one deduces). Though these not especially profound musings show that Thomas was rather better educated than most poets of the place and time, the only unusual note is in the ending. If the reunion with Mary does not result in a renewal of their love, the poet says, he will "to the far off West, pass, like the past away"---a use of the West not in the common way as the realm where "Saxon" accomplishment will close the Great Circle, but in the classic manner as the land of endings and death.

Thomas also used the Midwest as the setting for the long narrative poem, The Beechen Tree (New York 1844). This is a love story set in a forest, told in a jogging tetrameter so carelessly tossed off that it can in its ending stoop to:

.....'Now, I know it--
 I always thought you were a poet.

Thomas was better known as a song writer and novelist. The Ohio river is the scene of some of the action of his novel East and West (Philadelphia 1836), a work conceived and written in the dramatic-sentimental mode. Near the end, as the characters are assembled on a steamboat moving down the river, the villain sneaks along a passageway, intent on taking revenge on the leading lady. But, like one of Cooper's Indians as seen by Mark Twain, he trips on the cloak in which he is disguising himself, stumbles off the boat, and drowns. The reader knows that if Thomas had given him a dying speech, it would have had to be "Curses! foiled again!"

The Ohio river also figured largely in Midwestern contributions to the effort to give America a legendry, a past somewhat comparable in mystery and marvel to that of Europe, a campaign supported not only by nationalism but also by New Neoclassic and Romantic belief in the superiority of the remote as material for art. The Ohio, indeed, was better known than the Mississippi in the early decades and was the setting for work by many Americans for whom the nation's interior fired the imagination. An early river poem which was also one of the best American imitations of Byron's Don Juan was the Easterner James Kirke Paulding's The Backwoodsman, a Poem (Philadelphia 1818), in which Basil, the main character, takes his family down the river to a new settlement. Though the travelers worry about Indians and find the settlements primitive, not much happens: the poem is essentially a static contemplation of the appeal of the bliss possible in a simple life remote from affairs of state, accompanied by a large dose of sentimental moralizing about Ambition and Fancy. Paulding had an amusing light touch with character and narrative, and he handled the heroic couplet well (he imitated the manner but not the metrics of Don Juan). But Paulding was relatively sophisticated.

The Ohio valley was the scene of a Midwestern writer's adventure story that no one has accused of excessive sophistication, Samuel Beach's Escalala: An American Tale (Utica, N.Y., 1824), a good narrative if one can overlook its premise that a colony of Scandinavians had survived with its culture intact through some 400 years of isolation near the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi.

A specific local setting, the "notorious" Cave-in-Rock below Shawneetown, Illinois, was the scene for a more down-to-earth attempt at furnishing legend, Charles A. Jones' "The Outlaw" (in The Outlaw, and Other Poems, Cincinnati 1835). This work, most of it in woefully amateurish tetrameter couples, tells of a band of robbers preying on river traffic. In the first canto Harwold, the leader, comes ashore from a boat to shake hands with his men, who are armed with broadswords and "massy" pistols. Having introduced the cast, the author tells a story which, he says, the repentant outlaw Ernest told when on his deathbed. The jaded perhaps cannot blame Jones for having action take place on a dark and stormy night: he had no way of knowing that this was to become almost as well known a formula as "Once upon a time . . ." On such a night, the band hears noises coming from a boat on the river. Rushing to loot it, they kill the men and capture a young woman. She begs for mercy, but they stab her and toss her into the water. Jones of course interrupts the action long enough to give her a touching pose as an Ophelia of the Ohio before he lets her drown.

Returning to the main narrative, the speaker tells how Harwold joined the band, took an active part in its crimes, including murders, and after a year became its chief. He befriended Ernest, then a man of 20 who, he said, often intervened to save victims about to be killed. One summer night Harwold tells Ernest the story of his life, saying that he hopes by telling it to ease his burden of guilt, an aim suggesting that Jones was familiar with the sentimental school of writers and perhaps also with the garrulous tales of those swaggerers who delighted camp meetings with teary accounts of conversion. Harwold says that when a young man he was about to marry a country girl, but an urbane stranger came to town, won the girl's heart,

and took her to the altar. Just as the vows were to be taken, Harwold shot the groom and escaped; the memory, he says, sears him "as ever sears the thought of crime." The girl, he reveals, was the one who was later thrown into the river.

Windy coincidence has often rescued a story about to be becalmed. As Harwold is finishing his account, he and Ernest hear sounds of combat and rush to rejoin the robber band, which is fighting a posse of "forest-rangers." Harwold soon is in the thick of it, but hesitates when he sees that a man he is about to kill is the one who had taken his girl and, he has supposed, died after he shot him. Harwold tells his rival that the girl is dead, whereupon the man shoots him. From then on, the poem says, there has been peace on the river. People on passing boats suppose the story to be "A fable, or a fairy dream." Such enduring status is what Jones wanted to give his story, of course. Notes at the end support credibility by declaring that robbers did in fact prey on boats near Shawneetown until rangers wiped them out, and that the sea gulls and mockingbirds mentioned do appear in the Ohio valley. One note acknowledges borrowing of an image from Moore.

The "Other Poems" published in the book with "The Outlaw" showed Jones writing on topics usual to the minor Romantic--the wandering Jew, Byron's body, death, ruby lips (which must die, no matter how fair), and a conflict between Moslems and Tartars. One piece of pathos, "The deserted Forge," may have been a source for Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith" (1839):

Peace to the honest Blacksmith, no cares disturb his breast,
And till the day of doom shall come, light be his lonely rest;
His ashes lie beneath the shades of yonder spreading tree

The briefest survey of early Midwestern work in verse shows that, like Pope, the admired Neoclassic genius, the region lisped in numbers. The wagon beds and flatboats that brought children, dogs, and whiskey to the frontier also brought the books of Neoclassic and Romantic poets, and the printing presses that could turn out homegrown imitations of such British models. The Midwesterners were alive to the physical world about themselves and to the accomplishments of their immediate regional ancestors, and of their own generation, in settling the immense new regions of the country. Of course the period of cultural lag was extended in those misfortunate days when the world had neither Time nor David Frost to initiate developments in the arts by prophesying them. But, allowing for that lag, the Midwesterners were alive to the cultural world of the east and of Europe. There was no Bryant or Whittier in the early Midwest in the first half of the nineteenth century; and no Emerson or Whitman appeared to steer poetic art into new lanes. But many hundreds of versifiers were at work in the worn channels their culture provided for them. The early generations expressed admiration of received culture and confidence in the glittering American future. They did not know the doubt and dissatisfaction that would be themes of such later Midwestern writers as Masters and Sandburg, men whose work helped inaugurate the rich movement we have come to look back upon as the Modernist period in poetry.

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IGNATIUS DONNELLY IN RETROSPECT

David D. Anderson

Ignatius Donnelly died just after midnight on January 1, 1901. The significance of the coincidental date of his death on the morning of the first day of the twentieth century, seemed to portend to some of his obituarists that he would remain, at best, a footnote in the history of nineteenth century American radicalism, and for much of the twentieth century intellectual historians seemed to agree. Although in his lifetime descriptions of him ranged from the visionary, as his supporters saw him, to the radical, crank, or crackpot of his opponents, it was evident as Populism merged with the American political mainstream that his proposed reforms were, in retrospect, relatively innocuous.

Nevertheless, in spite of his relative lack of personal success, particularly in partisan political warfare, it became evident by the mid-twentieth century that because he was not a typical unsuccessful politician in spite of his failures, Connelly's career and his writings could shed a great deal of light upon the political and intellectual history of his time, and because of his strong influence on political and social developments of his time, they gave a good deal of insight into the nature of the political process at it responded to his influence and ideas. This discovery led to the first major study of Donnelly as a political figure, that of Martin Ridge, published in 1962.

The re-discovery of Donnelly, the remarkably well-documented political philosopher and activist, led to another re-discovery: that of Donnelly the natural philosopher, the antiutopian novelist, and the cryptographer, or in other words, of Donnelly the writer. Donnelly's writings had long been known; indeed, both Atlantis and Caesar's Column could be considered best sellers, and his work had remained the subject of study and influence by a variety of cultists for a variety of reasons. It finally became not only possible but desirable that he be studied as a writer as well as a politician, political theorist, or reformer.

Donnelly's career as a writer parallels his career as a political figure in several ways. Both careers are unconventional; both subscribe to similar historical theories, whether natural or political history; and both reflect his concern with reform. Often, in addition, the writings were essentially extensions of his political career, based upon the same ideas that fired his political crusades, and the ideological bases for the works made them as unique in their way as his political career was in its way. In each case there is a logical progression more evident now than in the past.

Donnelly was not a great writer nor did he pretend to be; he was not a great original thinker, although there is evidence to suggest that on some occasions, at least, he was convinced that he was; and the perspective of our time recognizes that his role in political history, perhaps because of his disregard for convention, will be much greater than his place in literary history. Nevertheless, Donnelly's literary career provides a good deal of insight into a particular phase of American literary history in a way that no other similar career of his time can. At the same time it gives as much insight into the intellectual convictions that influenced and were in turn, influenced by his political career. As in his political career, his literary career as a whole is far more significant than any of its parts.

In writing as well as his political activism, Donnelly reflected his legal background and his love of language. A piece of writing -- a novel, a tract, a scientific treatise, or a political essay -- was to Donnelly an argument, to be,

like a legal brief, presented as logically, rationally, and eloquently as possible. It should have a purpose, a pragmatic point; and the task of the writer was to persuade his readers to accept it.

Thus, although Donnelly wrote easily and well, he never regarded his role as writer lightly, and he determined that each work should be as complete in detail as it was as an effective whole. Each work, it is evident, bears a logical relationship to each of the others as well as to the context of the period of Donnelly's life in which it was written.

All the works, like his political career, share the curious combinations of idealism and practicality, optimism and despair, liberalism and reaction, and romanticism and rationalism that marked much of his life and his relations with others, and each work is governed by similar concepts: regression rather than progression in change, whether evolutionary or cataclysmic; the potential for rational direction of change; the greater potential for tragedy in the human direction of affairs. Each work, too, is a curious blend of faith in a past perfection and fear of a coming cataclysm.

Donnelly's two pseudo-scientific works, those with which he began his writing career, Atlantis and Ragnarok, are based on what are essentially mutually reinforcing concepts, that of the cataclysm and that of the cyclical structure of natural as well as social change. Each, Donnelly was convinced, was a significant contribution to the literature of science, but, although the former sold well, neither of them received a serious scientific reception. Nevertheless, both are important, not merely as scientific curiosities or support for pseudo-scientific cultists. Both shed important light on Donnelly's political and social theories, particularly as they relate to his radical politics.

Both works insist that physical, natural, and historical evidence suggest the existence of a society in the past that had attained near-perfection. This, as Donnelly insisted, was Plato's Atlantis -- the prototype of the Garden of Eden. When the people of Atlantis fell from virtue, natural catastrophe, perhaps unleashed by a vengeful God, destroyed them, thus providing man with the substance of his myths, his religions, and his folklore.

This beginning is essentially the vision of the past provided by the agrarian myth or myth of the garden, which Donnelly merged with the Atlantean myth of classical Greece. For the story of the cataclysm that destroyed it, he turned to Ragnarok, the god of Norse mythology who destroyed the sinful world that it might regenerate itself and rediscover its virtue.

This relationship between the natural order and moral behavior, a nearly complete rejection of scientific views of a neutral universe governed by predictable natural laws in favor of the roles of morality and justice, is reflected in Donnelly's novels, Caesar's Column, Doctor Huguet, and The Golden Bottle. In each, Donnelly examines, in microcosm, the situation that brings about cataclysmic destruction. In the first, economic oppression brings about the revolt of the masses and a mindless assault that threatens the destruction of society; in the second, racial injustice brings about a tragic reversal of roles; and in the third, economic reform purportedly brings about a new order through war.

Interestingly, although with the single exception of his support for the Civil War, Donnelly never advocated any reform other than that to be brought about through the ballot box, an evolutionary rather than revolutionary process, in each of the novels he insists that the lot of the oppressed classes has passed beyond the point

where evolutionary solutions are possible, and in each he sees too the fact that a full solution is possible. In Caesar's Column the revolution degenerates to the point where salvation is impossible, and the few just people must flee to a primitive, remote Eden; in Doctor Huguet, only one conversion results from a willful suspension of natural law; and The Golden Bottle resolves its plot-- and abandons protest -- with the use of a dream that suspends reality temporarily.

Nevertheless, the political and social implications of the novels are clear: man has not yet exhausted the potential for reform -- significantly Caesar's Column is set a century in the future, and the situation is not quite so grim in the others -- but it is at his peril and the peril of society as a whole that he continues to delay reform. If he refuses his opportunity to use the ballot box wisely, mindless wrath, whether of an outraged people or a wrathful god, will provide the punishment that has been so richly earned.

Donnelly wrote a great deal more than these five books: letters, speeches, editorials, pamphlets, verse, and items that defy classification; but it is upon these five works that any assessment of his place in literary history must be based.

On this basis, the flaws inherent in them -- didacticism, polemics, structural and stylistic flaws, possible traces of incipient fascism and racism -- make it impossible to rank Donnelly highly among his contemporary writers, and his obvious literary shortcomings, together with his equally obvious political shortcomings, prevent any consideration of him as other than an interesting, well documented, and often fascinating figure on the political stage of the late nineteenth century.

Yet to dismiss Donnelly so casually on the basis of either aspect of his careers or both would be unjust. In microcosm, in his careers as politician, promoter, and writer, Donnelly, more than any other figure of his time, personifies and articulates the intellectual foundation of the reform impulse in his time as it sought a political base and an articulate, persuasive voice, a voice often Donnelly's own.

Donnelly's careers, like the course of political and economic reform in post-Civil War America, are compounded of idealism and practicality, of rationality and a curious irrationality, of faith in man and the future and a sense of impending doom, of a strong humanitarian impulse and a fascination with violence, of faith in evolutionary change and a preoccupation with revolution, of faith in language and ideas as the means by which change may be brought about and a concomitant intellectual snobbishness, of faith in the common man and impatience with his slowness.

Donnelly and the movement of which he was a part have much ambiguity and inconsistency in the elements that combined to produce the reform impulse and the radical movement in the last half of the nineteenth century. But equally evident in the reform movements of the period and in microcosm in Donnelly's work and his career are consistencies that absorb the inconsistencies and make them essentially inconsequential. Perhaps the most consistent elements that united and directed the radical impulse during those years were their underlying idealism and humanitarianism, their faith in justice and equality, their conviction that somehow, some way, man will one day construct a society in which virtue will triumph and evil receive its just punishment, a world in which the ideals of the past -- of eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century romanticism -- will merge in a new, perfect society, in this world.

At the heart of Donnelly's work and the reform movement is a curious romanticism that looked always to the past for its ideal image of the future that it sought to bring into being. The search for the perfect, humane society in the late nineteenth

century is an extension of that same search as it was characterized in the eighteenth century: a firm belief in natural rights, in progress and perfectability, a conviction that somewhere in the universe, rationality and law reign, that when all else fails, man has the right to become a law unto himself and to destroy his oppressors that he may be free.

But Donnelly and his contemporaries were also men of the nineteenth century, and just as they were the products of the rational optimism of the eighteenth century, they were also products of the romantic tragedy of the nineteenth, a century that saw the rebirth and affirmation of human freedom, dignity, and equality within reach, only to be withheld by the bloodiest war in history and snatched away, apparently irretrievably, by the forces against which the reformers struggled: the impersonal greed of a new industrialism; the political arrangements of a political system ostensibly based upon two competing parties that were for all practical purposes one; and the racist image of Jim Crow that had come to dominate much of the country, North as well as South.

The common national tragedy of the nineteenth century had its specific implications for the era's reformers and its personal implications for Donnelly. Just as the national tragedy of the nineteenth century was inherent in the blood-purge that Abraham Lincoln described in his second inaugural address as he defined the essence of the Civil War, it was inherent too in the human failure that followed it. To Lincoln the War had its origins and found its meaning in the divine impulse for justice that rules all things:

. . . If God wills that it [the War] continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-men's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as it was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgements of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With the purging completed Lincoln foresaw a new nation with, as he remarked at Gettysburg, a year and a half earlier, "a new birth of freedom," a nation in which the ideals of its origin in the eighteenth century would become real in the nineteenth, a nation that Donnelly and his contemporary reformers believed would become real. But neither Lincoln nor Donnelly foresaw the results of the War, as new forces were unleashed that enslaved men as firmly and hopelessly as those that had brought chattel slavery into being thousands of years earlier, to mar the ideals of the new nation that grew out of the eighteenth century search for human freedom.

The new national tragedy had its inception in Lincoln's death, perhaps foreshadowing the failure of human vision and the national will that followed it, but it was brought into being by the new economic, political, and industrial forces unleashed by the war. Those postwar reformers -- Ignatius Donnelly, Robert Ingersoll, John Peter Altgeld, and dozens of others -- whose faith in the cause of human freedom burned brightly during the war saw it threatened and nearly extinguished dozens of times by the winds of change and circumstance in the thirty-five years that followed. But each time after each threat the flame burned more brightly and each of them continued the struggle, even as it seemed more hopeless, during the decades that followed.

For Altgeld, for Ingersoll, for Donnelly, and for most of the others the personal record that followed was a record of frustration and ultimate failure, a failure inherent in personal tragedy and having within it the seeds of incipient fascism, confusion, and prejudice that marred the reform movements that they led with such dedication. Each, in turn, passed into an obscurity compounded by the historical prominence accorded the exploiters whom they opposed throughout their lives.

Nevertheless, each of them marched with confidence through failure into an undeserved historical obscurity, a final vindicating battle and victory eluding them in their lifetimes. When Donnelly died at the beginning of the new century the reform impulse had begun to enter the political mainstream, but the specific reforms that he sought were beyond the political horizon, where some of them remain even yet, and until they become reality, Donnelly's ultimate vindication eludes him.

Yet in the final sense Donnelly's life, his political ideals, and his works, a combination of reality, fantasy, and faith, are his own vindication and the ultimate victory that transcends the tragedy of his age. Throughout his life, even through failure and tragedy, he marched with confidence, his pace steady in spite of the apparent vagaries and inconsistencies that marked it, his eyes focused upon the ultimate goals of personal and national fulfillment that he sought, in his ears the echo of the other battles that marked the sometimes faltering course of human freedom toward the ultimate victory that he was confident would come about. In his view of nature and life as a cyclical flow between victory and defeat, he knew that the ultimate vision was never extinguished but passed on in one form or another from one generation to another, and in his life and works he preserved and disseminated that vision in a time that saw it under the most powerful assault in our history. In each of his works, in the face of cataclyms, whether man-made or natural, he preserved that vision, and inherent in that preservation is his ultimate vindication as well as the meaning and significance of his life and works. Perhaps Donnelly will remain no more than a footnote in the political and literary history of a complex, dangerous era, but its omission impoverishes the history of a people as it still seeks to make an elusive ideal a human and political reality.

Donnelly's vivid imagination, his highly improbable or inaccurate science, his intellectual or personal shortcomings, may combine to make him look ridiculous, as some critics continue to insist that he was, but such an attempt is not only incomplete and short-sighted; even at their weakest, his works and the ideas and motives that brought them into existence are, in the final sense, a metaphor, an extended metaphor of American life in his time and ours. More than three quarters of a century after his death that metaphor continues to unfold, and Donnelly's life, his career, and his works remain important keys to its meaning.

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