

**SOCIETY
FOR
THE
STUDY
OF**



MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

Newsletter
Volume Nine
Number Two
Summer, 1979

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF
MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

Volume IX

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The Tenth Annual Conference

The Society's Tenth Annual Conference will be held at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, on May 15, 16, 17, 1980. The theme will again be "The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest," and because this is the tenth conference, we invite and hope for wide membership participation. An invitation to participate is enclosed with this issue.

#

A Glimpse at the Past

Opening Remarks: The Ninth Annual Conference of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature:
The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest:
A Symposium, May 3, 1979

For nearly ten years--since November, 1969 at the meeting of the Midwest Modern Language Association in St. Louis, to be exact--I've found myself in a somewhat confused or ambiguous role. After nearly two decades of considering myself a teacher-scholar, I suddenly realized that I had become a teacher-scholar-missionary-promoter, and frankly, I not only do not feel uncomfortable in the roles, but I find them increasingly compatible--although at any given moment I'm not sure which role dominates.

Two things happened at that meeting. I became aware of something, and I became convinced that something should be done (two ingredients that are guaranteed to turn a harmless drudge into a missionary-promoter). In the modern American literature section of that meeting--American literature from 1870 to present--there were three papers: my own on Sherwood Anderson, which for no particular reason came first; Alexander Kern's paper on Theodore Dreiser and F. Scott Fitzgerald, second; and Sanford Marovitz's paper on Sinclair Lewis, third.

As I listened to the other papers it occurred to me that we were, in

discussing the works of modern American writers, also discussing writers whose lives and works were firmly rooted in the Midwest. It struck me, too, that each of us was talking about a peculiar similarity that we neither recognized nor defined, and, fatally, I thought it would be fun to pursue it.

A suggestion to the then-Executive Secretary of the Midwest MLA that it would be interesting to schedule a section devoted to exploring this undefined quality in Midwestern writers was rejected, rather arbitrarily, I thought, with the comment that nobody would come. So in my annoyance I wrote to a half-dozen friends, suggesting that we get together ourselves and talk about Midwestern writers and writing and whatever it was that made them what they were.

The response was enthusiastic and the result is scholarly and literary history of a sort. The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature came into existence in 1971, and, while sparing you the commercial, I do want to comment that both the Society and the subject have become obsessions with me--and that we hold regularly scheduled sessions at the Midwest MLA as well as here at MSU, at the mother organization MLA, and PCA, and people do come.

All this is prefatory to what all of us are going to talk about during the next three days: some of the things we've learned about the Midwest and its literature, which, however accidentally or incidentally, is responsible for our gathering here to talk about the cultural heritage of the Midwest.

David D. Anderson

#

Presentation of the MidAmerica Award to
Walter Havighurst, May 3, 1979

A few months ago, immediately after finishing my new critical biography of William Jennings Bryan, I wrote a brief essay called "Another Biography? For God's Sake, Why?" In it I tried to go beyond the traditional answers of "Because" or "Because it's there," or, more usual for me, "Because it's not there" in the attempt to define the relationship that inevitably grows between biographer and subject as he attempts to come to know and to recreate the essence of another human being.

The man we are honoring tonight has been much too busy to write such an essay, although two generations of students as well as colleagues and countless friends and admirers have heard him talk about his lifelong task of creation and recreation. For his task has not been the recreation of a human life or two or ten; his task has been the recreation of the American heartland--the Midwest--and its people and their dedication to the ideal of progress and perfectability that they brought across the mountains and down--and up--the rivers nearly two centuries ago and which their descendants and those who have joined them accept even yet.

We are honoring Walter Havighurst because, more than anyone else, he has recreated our region, and people, and our peculiar Midwestern society with clarity, with precision, and with understanding. Not only has he become, as he has often been called, the outstanding interpreter of the American Midwest, but his works (many of which are on display here tonight) merge past and present into a meaningful whole. Those of us who know Walter and his work have each been touched deeply with his sense of past and present, his insight into human creation, and his reverence for human life.

My first meeting with Walter's work is, I think, typical of the way he has touched so many of us. It was at the end of the war, in a military hospital near Boston. As the ward reader--the man in the next bed was a handicapper in the original sense--I had first call on the twice-weekly book cart, and one day I chose a novel by an author of whom I'd never

heard. The novel was The Quiet Shore, and the author was Walter Havighurst. The Quiet Shore, published in 1937, was Walter Havighurst's second novel; it is set in Ohio, on the South Shore of Lake Erie; and it deals with three generations of an Ohio family as they create a tradition, a way of life, and a modern society out of a post-Civil War wilderness.

Harlan Hatcher had, at about the same time, although I was unaware of it then, described the novel in an essay in the Saturday Review of Literature as "one of the few novels . . . which gives any sense of the richness and the tradition of life along Lake Erie." Having lived all my life--until June, 1942--along Lake Erie, I knew the richness of that tradition. I knew the novel's people--metaphorically--in my own family, and I knew the house--which still stands, now being beautifully restored, in which the novel is set. I later learned that others, including Mr. Hatcher, at heart still an Ohioan in spite of his unfortunate association with that institution down the road, felt the same sense of identification and discovery in reading the novel. I read it half-a-dozen times in the hospital, I stole it when I was discharged, and I have it yet.

It gives me great pleasure to present, with my own thanks, and the thanks of all of us here, the MidAmerica Award to Dr. Walter Havighurst of Miami University in the American Midwest.

David D. Anderson

#

The MidAmerica Address--The Midwest as
Hearthstone

In accepting this award I share your belief that the Midwest has a rich cultural tradition, and I'll briefly suggest two dimensions of that heritage that to me seem inexhaustible.

Ever since John Smith wrote his True Relation in Virginia there have been books by Englishmen about America. Among the best is a fairly recent one, a book by Graham Hutton entitled Midwest At Noon. It begins: "In the middle of the journey of my life and by the accident of war, I came to live in the Middle West. It was

the region of America that I had always liked best, where I had felt most at home. . . . The longer I lived there the more I became convinced that the Midwest and its people were largely unknown, widely misinterpreted, and greatly misunderstood."

One of the misunderstandings is that midwesterners are a uniform and monotonous people. They have never seemed so to Midwestern writers--to Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis. For them the Midwestern background contained all the varieties of human nature.

Let me recall one other statement by Graham Green. "It surprised me when I first became fascinated by the Midwest that there were few books by Americans, or anyone else, that told about the region, its history and its way of life." Mr. Hutton would find some such books now, though the record has only begun. And there are difficulties in writing about this region.

Because of its open terrain and its generally happy history, the Midwest may seem devoid of character. Except for its great lakes and great rivers its landscape is undistinguished. Though immensely productive it appears monotonous--no barriers, nothing hidden, few contrasts, no difficult or dangerous places. The level land casts no shadows. All its horizons look alike.

Yet I remember from my youth Vachel Lindsay reading a poem in an Illinois high school, a poem about Springfield and the prairie grass.

In this the city of my discontent
Sometimes I hear a whisper from the
grass
Romance, romance is here
No Hindu town was quite so strange
No citadel of brass by Sinbad found
Held half such love and hate.

While he chanted those lines I listened closely, because Springfield was, secretly, the city of my discontent; and it surprised me that this poet, pacing the platform and tossing his head like a Shetland pony, should feel that way. Still more it puzzled me that he found it romantic. I remember looking out the window at the familiar dome of the Illinois capitol and hearing the clangor

of a train on the Chicago and Alton railroad. Where was the romance?

The Midwest has no ready identity. It has no seacoast, no lift of mountains, no dramatic features, no feeling except spaciousness and restless energy. It has no memorable images or symbols. From the upper Ohio to the Missouri River the land rolls on unchanged. Farms, towns and cities repeat the same tempo and impression. People use the same idioms and intonations. They share common attitudes and instincts.

For these reasons the Midwest puts its writers at a disadvantage; it seems to offer little for them to work with. But there have been writers anyway. Of course the material is always in the writer rather than around him. There are many towns like Clyde, Ohio and Petersburg, Illinois, but we do not have a Winesburg or a Spoon River until a writer with startling awareness has wondered about the familiar scene. The literary imagination sees meaning where it was unexpected: in Main Street, in Raintree County, in a ragged boy and a runaway slave drifting down the Mississippi. The imagination rests on place but not in it. In the particular it sees the universal.

Yet locality is important to the writer. It provides the air he breathes, the currents of life he feels, the traditions he discovers. From it he draws impressions, attitudes, even the language he uses. So it is pertinent to ask, as some of our students do, where should a writer live? There is no single answer. James Joyce lived in an old military tower on the Irish coast within sight of the roofs of Dublin, the weathered city whose life he was passionately recording. Robert Louis Stevenson lived in a sequence of romantic places--the Alps, the Adirondacks, the coast of California, the islands of Samoa; he said "The countries ill health sends one to are nearly always beautiful." Stephen Crane, escaping comfort and convention, went to live in a New York slum where people knew the cutting edge of life. A few years later at a garden party in London an English matron asked where he had received his artistic education. Crane answered: "In the Boverly." "Oh, really," she remarked, "I did not suppose

there was an academy of the fine arts there." "Yes," said Crane, "the only one in America."

But these are special instances, and for most writers the best place is not exotic or extreme; it is the place they belong to, the background they best understand. In France and England every writer feels the pull of Paris and London; but continental America has various concentrations of culture, and writers should feel at home in many places between New York and Hollywood. Said Robert Frost, "I always suspect a writer who disowns his background." That background need not make him provincial any more than Thomas Hardy was provincial in Wessex or Frost in Vermont. It should not limit him so much as set him free. Mark Twain was a Missourian who wrote about Joan of Arc, The Prince and the Pauper, and Captain Stormfield's visit to Heaven. On a hill above Hannibal stands the Mark Twain memorial, his life-size figure forever looking off toward Jackson's Island in the curve of the river. But he looked farther than that. From Missouri his imagination went to the ends of the earth.

If the Midwest deprives a writer, it also gives him something. Having no ready symbols it has no stereotypes--no Southern mansion decaying amid the magnolias, no lone cowboy riding over the sand hills, no oil-rich Texas farmers, no beach colony simmering with pseudo-philosophy beside the Pacific. Midwestern fiction has the greatest variety of characters: Jennie Gerhardt, Carol Kennicott, Thea Kronborg, Studs Lonigan, Bigger Thomas, Jay Gatsby, Augie March, Windy McPherson. See the ethnic backgrounds there: German, English, Swedish, Irish, Negro, Danish, Yiddish, Scotch. On a summer day in 1832 a young Maine Yankee traveling down the Ohio River reflected on the fortuitous invention of the steamboat at the very point in history when multitudes were migrating to new lands. Then he made a sharper observation. Standing at the rail he heard the mingled tongues around him. He counted the nations represented there: English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, French, Dutch, German, Swiss, and off to one side a group of seven black-robed priests from Austria.

A second gift of the Midwest to its writers is a past that reaches back to the

beginnings. In Kilkenny County, Ireland, the famous old Kilkenny School has recently added a new building named for an 18th century philosopher who was one of its graduates. Berkeley Hall replaced an abandoned almshouse, which rested upon the floor of a ruined courtroom, which occupied the site of a former monastery, which is said to have replaced an ancient market house. In that sequence--college, almshouse, courtroom, barracks, monastery, market house--the past fades back till it is lost to recollection. In an older world we think of our own country; at Kilkenny I thought of an Ohio college that is built on the site of an Indian burial ground.

But if our past is brief, none of it is lost. We can look back to the beginnings--to the first landfall, the first river passage, the first ax thudding in the woods. Who discovered the Rhine River and the Danube? Who knows? The literature of Europe has no "landlookers," no search for a Northwest Passage, no trail-breakers in the wilderness. But in America we know how DeSoto discovered the Mississippi below present Memphis, and Marquette discovered it at Prairie du Chien, and Schoolcraft found its source in Itasca Lake; and we know what each of them did and said at the moment of discovery. We can recall the first blacksmith in a township, the first circuit rider in the forest, the first pedlar on the road. Our past is all recoverable.

A Peace Corps teacher in Africa writes that in Nigeria, America means two things: skyscrapers and wagon trains. In the mass media the old America persists alongside the new. A few years ago a handsome new restaurant was opened on the shore of one of the Italian Lakes. For an international clientele an Italian baritone sang "Old Man River." Outside the moonlight glimmered on Lake Como and the snows of the Swiss Alps gleamed in the distance. But in that room people from five countries saw the legend-haunted Mississippi rolling through the heart of America.

Old Man River. . . . The land was old but the human enterprise was new. In 1818 when Illinois became a state, when the Cumberland Road reached over the mountains to the Ohio River, when the first steamboat churned the waters of

Lake Erie, when George Rogers Clark died beside the Ohio River in Kentucky and 9-year-old Abe Lincoln whittled pegs for his mother's coffin, a land treaty was signed by three Indian chiefs at St. Mary's, Ohio. The treaty surrendered a big tract of central Indiana, and at the same time a village site of the Munsey tribe was sold to a land speculator by the halfbreed daughter of William Wells who had been killed in the massacre of Fort Dearborn at the mouth of the Chicago River. The next year that site was plotted as the town of Muncie, Indiana, which a century later was described by two famous sociologists as Middletown, the typical American community. They could tell its whole story.

While history is a writer's resource, it is not his subject. History is the record of people; literature is the life of persons. Literature is always individual; it cares nothing for data and statistics; it looks only at one at a time. "Arms and the man, I sing" Vergil began his epic poem of ancient Aeneas. Centuries later Walt Whitman wrote. "One's self I sing, a single, separate person."

Robert Frost told how a census-taker came upon an empty lumber camp in a New Hampshire valley. In a half-sad humor he began picturing the vanished woodsmen. He counted nine of them in his dreamy unofficial census before he got back to business and declared the place deserted. There are four billion people in the world census, and also some others, more lasting, who don't get counted. These are the people of fiction: Martin Arrowsmith, Nick Adams, Sayward Luckett, Alwyn Tower, Walter Mitty, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. They never lived except in the imagination, and they never died. They become the heartbeat of our cultural heritage.

Walter Havighurst

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MIDWEST PLAYWRIGHTS LABORATORY ANNOUNCES FELLOWSHIPS

MADISON, WI: The Midwest Playwrights Laboratory has awarded fellowships to ten midwestern writers for its 1979 activities. Laboratory artistic director Dale Wasserman and executive director Edward Kamarck announced that the playwrights were selected from scripts submitted and on the basis of their potential as professional playwrights.

The writers chosen for the fellowships covering room and board for the Laboratory's 1979 activities are Kathy Bolan, Wilmette, IL ("Egg"); Lance Belville, Minneapolis, MN ("Pope John The-No-Number"); Robert Breuler, Minneapolis, MN ("Kali's Children"); George Freek, Belvidere, IL ("For Left-Handed Piano with Obligato"); Joanne Koch, Evanston, IL ("Teeth"); Paul Stephen Lim, Lawrence, KS ("Chambers"); Janice Penkalski, Hales Corners, WI ("The Sacristy"); Bernard Sabath, Chicago, IL ("The Trolley Goes Up the Street"); Suzanne Stephens, Houghton, MI ("I Never Said Goodbye") and Craig Volk, Sioux Falls, SD ("Sundancers").

The ten playwrights will attend a spring weekend conference in Madison, WI and return there for an intensive two-week workshop July 29-August 12. Laboratory activities provide analytical and exploratory work with each playwright and script with the guidance of artistic director Dale Wasserman, himself a multi-talented internationally known dramatist.

Each play will be presented as a 'script-in-hand' staged reading under the direction of producing director Richard E. Hughes and a cast of Equity actors onstage at the Vilas Hall Experimental Theatre, UW-Madison, during the summer workshop.

The Midwest Playwrights Laboratory is a project of the University of Wisconsin-Extension Arts Development Unit and the UW-Madison Department of Theatre and Drama. The objective of the Laboratory is to find, nurture and to give playwrights professional guidance and a place within their own region--the midwest--to prove themselves.

The Laboratory serves a twelve-state midwestern region: the Dakota, Illinois,

Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.

#

MIDWESTERN ARCHITECTURE

As an architect, retired, I call your attention to an important part of our midwestern culture, our architecture. Just as the culture of our region is embodied in midwestern literature, so too is it in midwestern architecture. This is a field of abundant resources needing critical study and interpretation.

Americans have what I call an architecture blindspot. Though architecture surrounds us from cradle to grave, we live mostly without seeing it. Perhaps we are too close to it. Certainly it is not part of our formal education.

A well rounded person is expected to know something about the other arts: painting, sculpture, music, drama, literature. Yet strangely there is no social stigma whatsoever attached to being completely ignorant of architecture. Usually when architecture is mentioned, people say, "Oh, yes, Frank Lloyd Wright," thereby hoping to show they are cultured and architecturally knowledgeable.

Architecture as a field of study today is mostly in the category of "birdwatching." With one of the fast proliferating handbooks of architectural styles, the architecture buff looks at a building and identifies it as "Italianate" or "Miesian" or "Brutalist." Having thus mastered it with a name, he goes on to conquer his next specimen, a sadly superficial treatment of a vital subject.

Serious study of midwestern architecture is much needed. We seem to uncritically take it as a natural order of things. This is far from true. Our architecture is distinctly American and distinctly midwestern. To see this, try the perspective of distance. Walk down a street of an English industrial town, a rural French village, a dusty road through a town along the Nile, the ruins of Pompeii. You sense that the architecture surrounding you is the product of local cultural development.

Then look back at our midwestern towns
and you see that they are too.

Our midwestern architecture is an important manifestation of our midwestern culture, and worthy of study. Style is indeed one element, but equally important are the many other aspects of a building's creation. Among these are: building materials, methods of construction, the planners, the masons and carpenters, the economics of building, the pace of building, effects of the Industrial Revolution, regional characteristics, the language and vocabulary of building, architectural design, ornament. These many facets of our architecture, revealing many facets of midwestern culture, stand here before us, waiting to be appreciated and understood.

Thaddeus B. Hurd
144 West Forest St.
Clyde, OH 43410

#

Central Standard Time by Dave Etter. BkMk Press (5725 Wyandotte, Kansas City, Mo. 64113), 1978. 83 pp. \$3.95 paper.

Alliance, Illinois by Dave Etter. Kylix Press (1485 Maywood, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103), 1978. \$5.95 cloth; \$3.95 paper.

A few years ago I taught a course in contemporary poetry and listed Dave Etter's books from the University of Nebraska (Go Read the River and The Last Train to Prophetstown) as texts--only to find they were out of print. Now Central Standard Time, an appropriate title for what may well be the best collection of poems about the midwest since Carl Sandburg's Collected Poems, reprints many pieces from Etter's first two volumes, along with several from the small press books (Strawberries, Crabtree's Woman, Well You Needn't, Bright Mississippi) that have kept his name before a limited public.

Etter himself is central to his work, a Midwestern Everyman, loving the women, the language, and the soul of his section of the country. Time and again he invokes place names like the names of saints in a litany.

"I can never see you again.
Not in Akron, not in Canton,
and not never in Youngstown."
(from "An Ohio Goodbye")

O, it's Quincy, Alton, Cairo,
down the long river road, O.
(from "Folk Song for a Moonlit
Banjo")

Below Lock and Dam No. 11
they are dragging the Mississippi
River
for the body of a deckhand from
Epworth.
(from "December on the River")

As I have suggested elsewhere (Late Harvest, BkMk, 1977) the women and the places may be interchangeable.

Sophisticated sound patterns reinforce the straightforward sense of his poems. "Warm," for instance, a poem of sexual awakening, begins"

A still breeze plays among the
corn tassels.
Milky juice thickens in the corn
ears.

The poet has fallen in love with Ann Rutledge, with the earth.

Half-awake, I realize with a start
that it is really Ann Rutledge I
love.

Here in Illinois the fat earth is
breathing deeply
and I know nothing but lazy
lustfulness.

Slim Ann Rutledge of lost New Salem
had blue eyes and long auburn hair.

As the ghost of Lincoln enters the poem, the eerie sense is supported by the long e's in cornfield, see, leaves, and grieves, against the whispering counterpoint of dusk, rustle, and there.

You can walk through a cornfield at
dusk and see Lincoln.
The leaves rustle there and a tall
man grieves.

The poem ends with the poet lost in the past, becoming one with the land (the

husk-brown coat certainly suggests the ear of corn), perhaps even dying.

Ann Rutledge is a spun dream of
purple cornsilk
drifting over this hammock of summer
sighs.

When the prairie moon returns I shall
sleep again,
wrapped in the rags of a husk-brown
coat.

Such poetry, I suggest, is among the finest work of our time.

One wishes that instead of selections from the early Etter volumes BkMk had reprinted the books in their entirety. But we should be grateful that much of Dave Etter's best work is once again available.

Dan Jaffe writes a sensible introduction.

The poems in Alliance, Illinois have been appearing separately over the years in a wide variety of periodicals. Here Etter presents them as his own Spoon River Anthology. The geography and people of the book are products of Etter's imagination. Alliance is the capital of Sunflower County, through which flows the Ausagaunaskee River. The people who live there are softer, less bitter, less hard around the edges than the characters in Masters' book. They have a strange, wooden life, like the people in Grant Wood's "American Gothic."

Kermit Olmsted: Roots

"We're staying right here the rest
of our lives," I said.

"In Illinois?" she said.

"That's where we are, isn't it?"
I said.

But the society fits together in its independent, disjointed way, from Pop Gains who buys a white china doorknob at a farm auction to Isaiah Roodhouse putting off an encyclopedia salesman to Garth Light lifting weights in a barn to Susan Cobb who does not like her name. One of my favorites is young Prudence Archer.

Prudence Arther: Thirteen

There are girl dreams I can make out
of snow,

always using this house in snowfall
December,

a wedding cake house with pretty
me in a snow-white
dress

ready to descend the staircase and
disappear in snow,
off to the snowy Episcopal Church
and my wedding day.

These snow-cloud dreams of marriage
vows and bridal cakes
have been going on for many snowball
winters,
although I'm just thirteen and my
snow-hating sisters
were married not in snow but in
May, June, and
September.

I'm Prudence Archer and I believe
in snow.

Yet much as I like these poems, I find them a notch below the poet's best work. They lack really strong drama. In striving for characterization Etter may lose some of his natural lyricism. I prefer him when he speaks in his own voice.

Victor Contoski
Lawrence, Kansas

#

AMERICA BETWEEN THE WARS: 1918-1941
AN AMERICAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

October 26-27, 1979

Toledo, Ohio

The Ohio-Indiana American Studies Association will hold its Fall meeting at the Toledo Museum of Art and The University of Toledo. Taking as its theme American Culture and Experience in the 1920s and 1930s, the program will include these sessions:

Friday afternoon at the Toledo Museum of Art:

Art and Documentary Photography
Arts in the 1920s and 1930s
Women in the 1920s and 1930s
"John Ford's 1939" and "1939 on Film"
Tours of the Toledo Museum of Art's
American Collections

Saturday morning at The University of Toledo, Division of Continuing Education:

American Intellectuals' Responses to the Crises of the 1930s
Nativism, Isolationism, and Anti-Zionism
Popular Culture of the 1930s
Literature and Politics
The Autolite Strike: A Local History Workshop

Special Event--Friday evening at the Toledo Museum of Art

The University of Toledo Department of Theater Production of: WAITING FOR LEFTY

A complete program, with titles of papers and names of readers and moderators, will be mailed in August--Registration blank will be included, with directions to the Museum and the University.

Inquiries: Guy Szuberla
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#

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sherwood Anderson Birthday Party

The annual Sherwood Anderson Birthday Party will be held in Clyde, Ohio, on September 13, 1979. The program includes a guided tour to Sherwood Anderson sites in Clyde in the afternoon, conducted by Thad Hurd and a slide show in the evening, both open and free. A country-style dinner (reservations required) will be served at noon in the Masonic Temple. Reservations and further information may be had from The Clyde Public Library, 222 West Buckeye St., Clyde, Ohio 43410.

#

A Call for Papers Dealing with Rites of Passage

To be presented at the Tenth National Convention, Popular Culture Association, Detroit, Michigan, April 16-20, 1980. Papers may be interdisciplinary in approach or may focus on some particular aspect of popular culture. This is only one of the areas to be examined. All participants

must be (or become) members of the Popular Culture Association. Send proposals to Mary Jean DeMarr, PCA Area Chairperson for Rites of Passage, Department of English and Journalism, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana 47809.

#

Uzzano Press 1979 announces:

"Poems for the Hours" by John Knoepfle.
New poems by the author of "Rivers into Islands" and "Thinking of Offerings."

"Open to the Wind" by Dave Etter.
A new collection of vintage Etter, the voice of the midwest.

"Waiting for the Angel" by Thomas McGrath.
McGrath's latest book contains the "Christmas Section" from Part III of "Letter to an Imaginary Friend," the finest long poem of our time.

#

Hemingway notes, a small journal published from 1971-74, is being revived.

Manuscripts should conform to the latest edition of the MLA Style Sheet and must be accompanied by a return envelope and postage. Particular interest is being paid to those new ideas posited by the new generation of Hemingway teachers and scholars. Subscriptions are \$3 for one year, \$5 for two years (two issues each year), beginning this fall.

Charles M. Oliver
Editor, Hemingway notes
English Department
Ohio Northern University
Ada, Ohio 45810

#

highland haven

by William B. Thomas
(continued)

X

I packed my things, wrote a note to my department manager and one to my mother, thankful that the day before had been payday, and I had some money. Via Frederick and Hagerstown, I could reach Cumberland or Frostburg that night. It was dusk when I set out on Connecticut Avenue.

Route 40, which I went onto at Frederick, was a good road, and I'd been over it all, one time and another, between Baltimore and Kansas City. Between those cities are three big ones to slow you down. There was no way of avoiding Columbus and Indianapolis; Columbus, where traffic was fast, was easy. Indianapolis was a nuisance. At every downtown intersection three slow traffic lanes were crowded into two; and there was more rough pavement in Indianapolis than in any other two cities on the route. Still, you couldn't do better than to go through it.

You could avoid St. Louis. Route 36 was a hundred and fifty miles of good straight road to Decatur, which in Illinois skirted the towns. Via Springfield and Jacksonville you reached a town called Pittsfield, and beyond Pittsfield the northern end of Route 54 ran into Route 36. Crossing the Mississippi at Louisiana, Route 54 crossed Route 40 twenty miles east of Columbia; Boonville was the only sizable place between that junction and Kansas City.

To reach the village where Ellen's parents lived, I had to go to Boonville and ten miles south to Bellair; it was then three miles west, a place called Pretty Bluff.

In the tourist house where I stayed at Frostburg I awakened at four thirty, rose, shaved, dressed, and started before daylight. I had breakfast in Uniontown, and a couple of hours later was crossing the bridge at Wheeling.

There was little traffic early on Sunday, a crisp October day, purple and gold in the Pennsylvania hills, and in Ohio the gold and red maples and red and russet oaks were lovely in the sunshine. But I could think only of the girl whose life was running out faster than that of the leaves.

The Ford handled as nicely as ever, and I had bought two more tires in Washington. But for no specific reason I had a quasi fear of motor trouble. The motor was still in good shape, but it had run sixty thousand miles, and hadn't needed repair for a long time. I was fearful because my luck had been so good so long.

That day I did better than I had calculated. I slept in Rockville, and had breakfast in Montezuma, on the Wabash. The morning was cloudy, and as I went through Decatur at mid-forenoon it began to rain. I reached Springfield in a downpour. By the time I had driven through, the rain had stopped. I needed to buy gasoline.

Where Route 36 turned west at the south end of West Grand Avenue there was an area of tourist cabins, taverns, and gasoline stations. I drove into a place where there was also a lunch room, and while the attendant was at my car walked toward it intending to buy cigarets. As I neared the door, Florence Laing stepped out of it, and, behind her, Hubert Marsh.

They looked pretty seedy, and as astonished to see me as I was to see them. Their clothing had been, and still was, wet. Florence wore a red flannel jacket, a blue sweater, and gray slacks, and had a red bandana over her hair, which had been cut short. Hubert was in brown corduroy trousers and leather zipper jacket, and it was the first time I ever saw him wear a hat. He had shaved his mustache.

Florence spoke first. "Well, of all--" She recovered from surprise in mid-sentence, and went on in a tone that was almost savage: "Lewis Elliot, what are you doing here?" Hubert regarded me soberly, and did not speak.

"I'm on my way to see Ellen," I said. Then, looking at Hubert: "She's dying."

Did you know?"

"I didn't know," he answered.

"Now," I said to Florence, "what are you doing here?"

"We're going to Denver. I mean--anyway, to Kansas City. Will you take us as far as you go?"

I knew I wouldn't do that, but, forgetting the cigarets, I paid for the gasoline, and we all got into the car, Hubert in the back seat and Florence in front with me. They had one traveling bag.

On the highway I asked Florence: "How long have you been together?"

"Two months."

"Traveling?"

"Yes. Traveling." Her voice was sullen.

"See here," I said, "I'll take you to Jacksonville, and no farther."

"Why won't you take us farther?"

"Maybe you don't know it, but there's a law. It's called the Mann Act. It may be one of the most fiendish pieces of legislation ever devised, but it's a Federal law. Maybe I don't respect that law, but I'm not helping anybody violate it. I won't take the two of you across the Mississippi River."

"Will you take me with you to Ellen?" Hubert asked.

"Yes."

"There's a good hotel in Jacksonville," Hubert told Florence. "With a nice coffee shop. The Dunlap. You can try for a job there."

"All right," she responded with what seemed easy compliance. "If you'll come there for me."

"In a few days."

There was public park near the Dunlap, and there Florence got out of the car.

"Give me my things," she said.

"Do you want the bag?" Hubert asked.

"No." She took out of it a dress, stockings, shoes, undergarments, and a cosmetic case. "If I don't get on at the Dunlap, I'll leave word there how to find me."

"How much money have you?"

She counted it. "A dollar and ninety-four cents."

"It isn't much," Hubert said.

"Lew, will you lend me some money?"

I took out the paper money I carried loose in my trousers pocket and handed her a five-dollar bill.

"Thanks. You'll get it back."

They kissed. The kiss was a gesture only. She walked away, and Hubert got into the front seat with me. It was half past eleven o'clock.

We didn't talk until we were well on the way to Pittsfield. Then I said: "You've had a bad time, Hubert?"

"Yes. I've had a bad time." He went on to tell me that he'd gone to Florida because--he frankly put it--he couldn't give Florence up. Then he went to Mobile, and she joined him there about the middle of August. They came to Memphis, and both worked in restaurants a month; Hubert thought he could do better in Louisville or Cincinnati, but things didn't work out in either of those places, and Florence wanted to go to Denver. They hadn't enough money for that, but she was determined to go anyway. They had poor luck hitch-hiking; three days out of Cincinnati, they were only in Springfield, and had been sleeping in abandoned schoolhouses along the road. Fortunately, the nights had been only chilly.

"Maybe you could stay a while in Jacksonville."

"Maybe."

I turned onto Route 54. I knew as well as if he had told me that Hubert had had nothing to eat that day but coffee and a roll where I had picked them up in Springfield. So we had lunch in Louisiana, and I was hungry, too, for it was one o'clock. Five miles beyond Mexico the motor began overheating. I stopped and looked to see if the fan belt were broken. It was not. So I knew the trouble was real. What I feared would happen had happened at last.

The car would still run, but to overheat it might mean a blown head gasket, cracked valve ports, or something equally bad. I didn't want to risk ruining my most valuable property five hundred miles from home, in the state of Missouri. But to go back to Mexico meant to hunt a garage there, and I knew there was one no more than six miles farther, in a village called Auxvasse. I decided to go on, and drove those six miles at twenty miles an hour, feeling as if my stomach were bumping my throat.

The garage man said the trouble was with the water pump, that he had parts and could make the repair, but it was a long job, and he was on another that had to be finished that day. If I would leave the car, he ended, he would have it repaired by tomorrow noon. I said I would leave the car, and it would probably be the day after that before I got back.

I opened my bag, took my shaving things, comb, toothbrush, and toothpaste out of their kit, rolled them in a towel with some socks and shorts inside a couple of shirts, and wrapped the bundle with newspaper and string the garage man gave me. He said the bag and boxes would be all right in the car. Hubert had a harness of straps to carry his bag on his back. We set out to hitch-hike the rest of the way.

We had to walk the six miles from Auxvasse to the junction of Route 54 and Route 40. There wasn't much traffic on 54. We felt pretty sure of getting a ride on 40, and we did, all the way to Boonville, with a man going to Kansas City. We got there after dark, at a

quarter to seven. Hubert intimated we had better have something to eat. The Cavanaughs didn't set much of a table, he implied.

They had moved to Pretty Bluff from Indiana after he and Ellen were married, and he'd been there only once before his visit of last spring. He knew nobody in either Boonville or Bellair. It looked as if we might have to walk the last thirteen miles. I hadn't thought to take a road map out of the car, but got one at a gasoline station, and we started out of Boonville on State Route 5. Once again we were lucky. We waved down a farmer in a truck, and learned he was going to Pretty Bluff. He took us to the Cavanaughs' door.

Mrs. Cavanaugh opened it to us, and I heard her unctuous voice. I had nearly lost the memory of our previous meeting, when she asked me if I had made peace with God. She was expecting me but not Hubert. Yet she didn't seem surprised that he had come or that we arrived together. "We couldn't locate you, Hubert," she said. "We didn't know where you were."

Ellen was in bed in the front room, given over to her illness. She was propped on pillows, her eyes glittering in the light from a table lamp as we entered together. It was Ellen, but not my Ellen I saw there. She moved her hand and turned her head slightly. Hubert kissed her, gravely, and I kissed her. "I thought maybe you couldn't come," she murmured. Somebody put a chair behind me, and I sat long by her bedside, her frail hand between the two of mine.

They had a nurse, of sorts, for Ellen, a neighbor who was competent in her way, and kind. Hubert explained that there was no room in the house for us to sleep in. There was, however, a barn, and, as Mr. Cavanaugh was a truck gardener and kept a horse, hay in the mow. Mrs. Cavanaugh gave us a couple of blankets apiece, and an electric lantern. It was a long time since I'd last slept in a barn, but I was so tired that nothing could have kept me awake.

Ellen died three hours after midnight. Mrs. Cavanaugh came and wakened me but not Hubert. I asked if I should tell him.

"No," she said scornfully. "Let him sleep."

I dressed and went into the house, but there was nothing I could do. There was nothing anybody could do anymore for Ellen. I walked out of the house onto the road and into the dark. "I'll love you, Lewis," I heard her saying. "I'll love you from my grave."

Mrs. Cavanaugh made breakfast for Hubert and me, oatmeal and fried eggs and plain bread. I took a pan of hot water and a mirror to the barn and shaved. The undertaker from Boonville came. I stayed at the barn until he was gone with Ellen and then went to the house and sat with Mr. Cavanaugh on the back porch. He was a mild, ineffectual-looking man, and there wasn't much we could say to each other. I didn't know where Hubert was.

The Cavanaughs decided to have the funeral next day, and I couldn't blame them for wishing to get it over. Had it been later I think I couldn't have made myself stay. I went into the room and saw the things I'd given and sent Ellen, the bed cushion, the radio on a stand, the books that filled one shelf of a case, and knickknacks I'd forgotten. They'd already taken down the bed. The nurse came in with a carpet sweeper and began puttering about. I went out of the house and walked toward the main street.

There wasn't much to the town, a strip of surfaced roadway with business buildings along it and houses along the graveled side streets. I bought cigarets at the drug store and decided they would have to do me until I knew the cost of repair on the car.

Mrs. Cavanaugh served lunch to Mr. Cavanaugh and Hubert and me, fried ham and fried potatoes and bread. Afterward I went out and walked again, and when I came back Hubert was in the barn sitting on a bale of straw with a board over a nail keg in front of him, playing solitaire. The horse was making

a stink. In one stall were several bundles of newspapers and magazines, and I opened a bundle of Popular Mechanics.

The undertaker brought Ellen back next morning and made a bier on the spot where her bed had been. Mrs. Cavanaugh asked me to come in and look at her. I didn't want to, but I did. I didn't feel anything any more. Some furniture had to be taken out of the room.

"Mr. Elliot," Mrs. Cavanaugh addressed me, "Ellen said you are to have this radio."

I didn't know whether I wanted it or not, but couldn't refuse it. I found a cardboard box about the right size in the barn, packed it with newspapers, and made a harness out of wrapping twine and some pieces of canvas so that I could carry it on my back. There was room in the top for my clothing.

At one o'clock people began coming, and soon all the undertaker's chairs were filled, and they crowded the room until there was no more space to stand in. I stayed in the kitchen. The minister intoned a prayer, a woman sang "Rock of Ages" falteringly, without accompaniment, and then the minister's voice came forth again. It was a short service.

The undertaker had a car for the Cavanaughs, and Mrs. Cavanaugh made it clear that they expected me, as well as Hubert, to ride to the cemetery with them. There was really a bluff at Pretty Bluff, and the cemetery was on it. It was nearly inclosed by trees, and my thought was that living residents of Pretty Bluff had all its ugliness about them and its only attractive surroundings were occupied by the dead. I saw two men who I was sure had not been at the service in the house. Each was a big man, well-dressed in a tasteless way, one wearing brown trousers, brown topcoat, a brown hat with snap brim, and black shoes. Apart they would have been unremarkable; together they were conspicuous. They stood aside from the group about the grave, and every time I looked at them they seemed to be looking at me.

The air of aggressiveness about them

took me back a year to the courthouse in Moorton and the county jail. I was sure they were a county sheriff and his deputy. As the service at the graveside ended, they approached us and the man in brown said quietly: "We'd like to talk to you two fellows." I got Mr. Cavanaugh's attention and told him they were to go back without us, and walked away before Mrs. Cavanaugh could interfere. We walked four abreast out of the gate and along the road in the opposite direction from town. A hundred yards away their car was parked in a lane. It was a big black sedan with lettering on the side reading "Cooper County Sheriff."

"Which of you is Hubert Marsh?"

Hubert answered.

The man in brown showed his badge. "I'm the Sheriff of Cooper County. Hubert Marsh, I arrest you for the murder of Christian Laing in Fort Lauderdale, Florida."

"You've made a mistake," said Hubert.

"It could be that somebody has, but not us. We're holding you for the Fort Lauderdale Chief of Police. We're taking you to Boonville now. Get in."

"I'm Lewis Elliot," I said.

"We don't want you. You can ride to town with us, though." I got into the front seat with the deputy.

"I want my bag out of the barn," Hubert said.

"Get it for him, will you?" the sheriff asked me.

I told the deputy where to stop the car so that it would not be seen from the house, went into the barn, got Hubert's bag, and took it to the car. "Look," I said, "I want to go to Boonville too. May I ride with you?"

"Sure."

"Give me five minutes, will you?"

"Hell, take as long as you want. We've got all the time there is."

I went into the house through the back door. Mrs. Cavanaugh was in the front room talking to some women, and the undertaker's assistant was folding up the chairs. I asked a woman in the dining room to tell Mrs. Cavanaugh I would like to see her, and she came into the kitchen.

"Mrs. Cavanaugh," I said, "I have a chance to ride to Boonville, and I hate to rush off like this, but I know you'll understand. Thanks for all you've done for me, and--"

"Oh, that's all right. You were so good to Ellen. Sure, you have a chance to ride. Where's Hubert? Is he going too?"

"He's uptown." I wasn't going to tell that story. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye." We shook hands.

I was out of the house, and into and out of the barn with my box as fast as I would walk, hoping fervently that Mr. Cavanaugh was not about and I could get away without seeing him, no matter how rude it may have seemed. I could, and did.

When we got to Boonville, it was a quarter after three. I wanted to make it to Auxvasse, get the car, drive to Mexico, find a tourist house, and have a bath. After those two nights in the hay, I wanted a bath. I shook hands with Hubert, looked straight into his eyes, and nodded. I was telling him I would stop in Jacksonville and talk to Florence. "Good luck," I said.

I got a ride with a driver going to St. Louis, who let me out at the junction of Route 54, but had to walk three miles before I got a ride into Auxvasse. It was then six o'clock, and dark, and the garage was closed. It took a while to find out where the proprietor lived, and I had to wait for him to finish eating supper. I was hungry too, but there was no place in Auxvasse to eat at, and I sat in his living room while he finished.

"We'll go and get your car now," he said. I picked up my box and carried it with my fingers under the wrapping cord. "Looks pretty heavy," he

remarked.

"Not very."

"You didn't have that when you left the car."

"No."

"What have you got in it?"

It wasn't any of his business, but you don't say that in those words to a man you owe money to.

"A radio." As soon as I had said it, I wished I had lied. I was never good at thinking up quick lies, but wished I had told him books, or something else.

He unlocked the office door of the garage, turned on the lights, went to the cash register, and handed me the bill. The amount was nearly as much a money as I had. He stood looking at me as if what I had to tell him was exactly what he expected to hear.

"I didn't expect it to be so much," I said.

"That water pump was completely shot. I had to put in all new parts. And of course your hose connections had to be replaced. It was a long job, too. The radiator had to come off, you know."

"See here, Mister, if I pay you this in cash, I won't have enough left to get me where I'm going. But that Gladstone bag in the car is good as new. How about taking it for the bill?"

"Don't need a bag. Never go away from here."

I thought of paying the cash and sending a telegram from Mexico to my mother or somebody else to wire money to me in Springfield or Jacksonville, but that would have meant delay, maybe days. Besides, I didn't want to ask that of my mother, and didn't know anyone else I could certainly depend on.

"Take it as security, then. I'll send the money, and you can send me the bag." I didn't want to offer my watch, because it was worth more than the bag.

"Nope. Can't do that. Let's see that radio."

"How about my watch? It's a 21-jewel Hamilton." I took it out of my pocket and held it in front of him.

"Don't want a pocket watch."

"I meant as security."

"Nope. Let's see that radio." He lifted the box onto the counter by the cash register, opened a pocketknife with his black-edged thumbnail, cut the cords, laid out my bundle of soiled clothing and some of the packing, lifted out the radio, plugged it into a current outlet, and turned the knob. "I'd like a nice little table model like this for here in the shop. You pay me for the parts and I'll take the radio for the labor. Okay?"

"Okay," I said. "You win."

I ate in Mexico, but thought it too early to stop for the night, and I felt too low to endure myself as company at anything but driving, and went on to Louisiana. There I decided to keep going as far as Pittsfield, where there was a good tourist house I had stayed at once before. As I remembered, it had fine soft water, and I was still looking forward to a bath.

The next morning I went to the Dunlap Hotel Coffee Shop for breakfast, but Florence was not there. I thought she might be on noon or evening duty, or, more likely, had failed to get a job at the Dunlap and was working somewhere else. When I paid my check I asked the cashier.

"Florence Laing? Never heard of her."

"A big woman with dark skin, wide-set eyes, and short, dark hair."

"You her husband?"

"No. A friend."

"Well, you look all right. I'll tell you all I know. There was a woman like you describe went to work here Tuesday morning. Called herself Grace Sinclair.

Yesterday afternoon the police came and got her. You'll probably find her in jail."

I didn't try to find Florence. I didn't think she would have my five dollars, and didn't think I owed her anything.

XI

That night I was home on the farm once more, to sleep in my own bed again and wake up in the morning to wonder whether to keep trying to do something with my life or just let it do what it would with me. It was the 18th of October 1935, and in a couple of months it would be winter, and in a couple more months I would be thirty years old, and I felt like a bum. I had some explanations to make, for in the note to my mother I hadn't told why I was leaving Washington or why I was going to Missouri.

The arrest of Hubert puzzled me, for I couldn't believe he had murdered Christian Laing. I'd taken for granted that Florence had left her husband, and when Hubert was arrested in the Pretty Bluff cemetery I supposed Laing's death had occurred immediately before. I set about to learn what I could. The Moorton Library had no Florida newspaper, but it had Ayers' Directory, and I determined I wanted the Fort Lauderdale News. I sent for six months' back issues and entered a mail subscription. I now reasoned that if Florence and Hubert had told me the truth, that is, if she had joined Hubert the middle of August in Mobile, Christian Laing might then have been dead.

The published account was: On the night of June 12th Christian Laing was found dead of a bullet wound in the temple in the living room of his isolated house by his wife and small son upon their returning from a movie. Laing's revolver, a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson, lay on the rug, and its handle showed Laing's fingerprints clearly and no others. Mrs. Laing said he had been despondent ever since they moved to Florida and chronically worried about the state of his health. A Fort Lauderdale physician affirmed that he suffered from a heart ailment which made his life precarious.

The coroner returned a verdict of suicide.

On or about August 16th, Florence Laing, who was appointed administratrix of her husband's estate, disappeared from Fort Lauderdale, leaving her son in the care of a young couple in exchange for the privilege of occupying the fully furnished house. They knew nothing of her whereabouts. She became the object of search by the Broward County Juvenile Court, a development which moved the Police Department to investigate further the circumstances of Laing's death. To an astute criminologist the apparent suicide looked entirely too pat; and the little boy told a story which did not coincide with the presumed facts. The investigator recovered and reconstructed the history of Florence and Christian Laing, to and including her dalliance with Hubert Marsh in Moorton. He compiled a dossier on Hubert Marsh from his student days to his acquittal on the Gorenflo manslaughter charge and his leaving Moorton. He established the fact of Hubert Marsh's presence in Fort Lauderdale on June 6th 1935 and from June 14th to August 20th in Mobile. On September 30th warrants were issued for the arrest of Hubert Marsh and Florence Laing.

Christian Laing's estate consisted solely of personal possessions and the Fort Lauderdale real estate. At the time of his death he had no savings and no income other than his pension, which terminated with his death. Florence had nothing to live on, and could not sell the property until nine months had elapsed and she had effected final settlement of the estate. How she could abandon her legal responsibilities and her child and jeopardize her future by flight would be incomprehensible to many people, but I thought her action entirely in character. She could never bear responsibility of any sort, at all.

There was a lot more I didn't know until I received later issues of the Fort Lauderdale News. Up to this point there was still no evidence that Hubert Marsh had killed Laing. But when he was returned to Fort Lauderdale and confronted with the information the police had about him, and the fact that

they had extracted the truth from Florence, Hubert confessed to the murder.

Florence and the boy had gone to a movie. Hubert waited in the shrubbery to meet her after Christian and their son were in bed. Christian found them on the porch. He had the revolver in his pocket. Hubert knocked him out with a blow, dragged him to the living room floor, extracted the revolver with his hand in a towel, put it into Christian's hand, and, with his own hand over Christian's, fired it with Christian's finger. The boy, asleep at the rear of the house, was not wakened by the shot. The police hadn't questioned him then at all.

They gave it to Hubert this time. The jury was a tough one, and sentenced him to death in the electric chair. Florence, as accessory, was sentenced to imprisonment for fifteen years.

It was soon another New Year's day, that of 1936, and I put in most of it reading Boswell's Life of Johnson and thinking about what I was going to do. People were saying the Depression was over, and it was going to be a fine, big, wonderful world again, and I didn't believe it. I didn't want any more ventures into salesmanship, and didn't want to teach English. I decided to write letters to all the New York publishers.

Of us five who were together so much during a few months of 1934--Ellen, Florence, Ralph, Hubert, and me--two were dead, one was awaiting death, and another was to endure a kind of living death for fifteen years. I was the one whom those months' events affected least. But that year was between the close of one phase of my life and the opening of another, and it's no use ever trying to go back. Much as you want sometimes to think you can do it, you know things will never be the same.

The End