

SSML Newsletter



The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

The Center for the Study of
Midwestern Literature and Culture

Founded 1971

Volume Fifteen
Number Three
Fall 1985

Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature
Newsletter

Volume Fifteen, Number Three

Fall, 1985

Published at Michigan State University with the support of the Department of
American Thought and Language

Editorial Office:

Ernst Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1033

Editor:

David D. Anderson

Associate Editors:

Marilyn J. Atlas
Roger Bresnahan

Editorial Assistant:

Valarie J. Kelly

Copyright 1985 by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.

Published in Spring, Summer, Fall.

Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature

Officers, 1985-86

President:	Mary Jean DeMarr Indiana State University
Vice President:	Kay Rout Michigan State University
Executive Secretary/Treasurer:	David D. Anderson Michigan State University
Secretary:	Roger J. Bresnahan Michigan State University

Executive Council

Expires 1988:	Pauline Adams Michigan State University
	Paul W. Miller Wittenberg University
Expires 1987:	Marilyn J. Atlas Ohio University
	Roger Bresnahan Michigan State University
Expires 1986:	Ellen S. Uffen Michigan State University
	Gene H. Dent Lakeland Community College
Bibliographers:	Donald Pady Iowa State University
	Robert Beasecker Grand Valley State College

Society for the Study of
Midwestern Literature
Newsletter

Volume Fifteen, Number Three

Fall, 1985

Contents

An Eighteenth-Century Jewish Fur Trading Consortium in the Great Lakes Region	Marvin D. Solomon	1
American Regionalism, the Midwest, and the Study of Modern American Literature	David D. Anderson	10

An Eighteenth-Century Jewish Fur
Trading Consortium in the
Great Lakes Region

Marvin D. Solomon

There were five Jewish men who formed a fur trading consortium during the French and Indian War. They were shadowy and befogged figures, whose names appear on various documents, who participated in a number of historical events, and whose children and grandchildren were variously voyageurs, pioneers, and settlers of the early United States and Canada. Where the five came from, and what they were like as persons and personalities can be put together only from fragments of information. But these five men were important in their roles as fur traders in the early opening up of the Upper Great lakes region and portions of what is now the Midwestern United States.

Jews, as individuals, had been coming to the New World from the earliest years of its discovery. However, the first real Jewish community in what today is the United States was started by the 23 Jews who sailed into New Amsterdam harbor in the first week of September of 1654. As one eminent writer, Jacob Marcus, has said, the historian soon discovers that no Jew is ever the first one anywhere; there has been one there before. In this case it turns out that a Jacob Barsimson had been in New Amsterdam for the two weeks prior to the arrival of the famed twenty three. The new arrivals were fleeing the Portuguese who had recaptured from the Dutch certain colonies in Brasil. Barsimson, it appears, was from Holland.

From very early on the Jews were involved in the fur trade with the Indians. At first, however, in the New Amsterdam community, the 23 Jews found that there

considerable opposition to their settlement as well as to their involvement in the fur trade by both the Governor and the Council. The newcomers found it difficult to secure such rights as those which today are generally listed under citizenship: the right to own real estate, to engage in the fur trade, to serve in the militia, and so forth. These rights were all fought for and eventually won. In 1655 the Jews made application for a license to engage in the fur trade, but the Provincial Council seemed to be opposed, in principle, to all Jewish entry into that trade. But there were actually quite explicit orders from their superiors in Amsterdam that the newcomers be permitted to trade in furs, and therefore the Council granted the Jews the one time right to send two men to the Delaware to dispose of the goods which had been sent on ahead. In 1656 Governor Peter Stuyvesant gave permission to this trading by licensing one of the Jewish men to trade on the Delaware.

During the 19th century the greatest part of the immigration to North America was that of the Ashkenazi Jews from central and eastern Europe, these immigrants coming as early as 1712. As an example, one of the best known figures of the American Revolution, Haym Salomon, had been born in Lissa, Poland. Most of the English Jews were actually of central European origin. Many originated in Germany, coming from such cities as Berlin, Hamburg, Bonn, and Frankfurt. Most Jews, however, came directly from England. England's policy of mercantilism, coupled with a policy of increasing the colonial population, allowed many people, including Jews, to secure passage to England, and from there to the colonies.

The Amherst Papers, the official correspondence of Sir Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in North America, dealt with every phase of all

of the campaigns during the period 1758-1763, including victualling and generally supplying the Forces. The papers deal not only with the establishment of British supremacy in North America, but also with the Indian uprising of the 1760's--Pontiac's War. At this point, however, the concern is with the many references about Jews as purveyors to the British Forces. In an article on the subject, Frances Dublin states that these Amherst references indicate that the Jewish purveyors and sutlers were in a dominant position in this aspect of the French and Indian War. He also points, out again in terms of references made by Sir Jeffrey Amherst, that there were a surprising number of Jewish combatants, even some with officer's rank, who participated in the War.

The story of the Consortium really begins in 1759, when 250 ships carrying 8,000 troops under the leadership of General James Wolf sailed across the Atlantic to Nova Scotia. Sailing with this huge fleet were a number of Jewish sutlers, including four of the Consortium: Gershon Levy, Chapman Abram, and the cousins Ezekiel and Levi Solomon. Upon landing at Nova Scotia they reported to Commissary-General Aaron Hart, cousin to Ezekiel Solomon. That same year Aaron Hart welcomed another Jewish sutler, a New Yorker, Benjamin Lyon, who in 1758 escaped the Fort Henry massacre. There is a possibility that it was about at this point that the five men formed their partnership, but there appears to be no firm evidence in the literature to support this.

With the French and Indian War finished, and with the apparent conquest of Canada resulting in the opening of new trade possibilities, the partners made what Marcus (1970) called a "vocational shift" from Army supply to the fur trade with the Indians of the Upper Great Lakes area. The records of their activities are very scanty and, at times, seem to be quite contradictory. After the war

the Consortium formed a number of individual companies, each composed of one or more members of the group, as well as outside partners. For example, Hayman Levy is mentioned frequently. Hayman Levy is well known as a business man and financier. It appears that he probably helped finance some of the activities of the Consortium. In addition, the Consortium probably had financial aid from several English participants. There is some speculation as to exactly in what way they were bound together as partners, or even if they were actually partners. There is on record a statement made by the five men as to their partnership, when in a petition to Sir Guy Carleton concerning their indebtedness and resources they say, "That your petitioners Levy Solomon, Benjamin Lyon, Gershon Levi, Ezekiel Solomon, and Chapman Abram were for many years together merchants and copartners in trade in North America and more especially during the time of the late war with France and the subsequent Indian War in the year 1763... ."

The partners, with one exception, operated in different geographical regions, though there may have been considerable overlapping. Ezekiel Solomon came to Fort Michilimackinac in the summer of 1761, actually in advance of the British troops, in order to lay claim to a portion of the rich northern fur trade. Chapman Abram worked out of Fort Ponchartrain, later to become Detroit. Gershon Levi did his trading out of Fort Sandusky, located in what later was the state of Ohio. Benjamin Lyon was also located in Fort Michilimackinac, where he remained for many years, even after the partnership broke up, when he probably became a competitor to Ezekiel. Levi Solomon ranged far and wide, probably a portion of the time out of Albany, New York. At some time, it is reported, their activities ranged as far west and south as the region of present day St. Louis.

All of the consortium members at one time or another appear to have been at Fort Michilimackinac--that fort with that most advantageous of locations at the confluence of the waters of Lakes Michigan and Huron. All of the posts were strategically located, lying on important rivers, or commanding routes from one lake to another. It was to these points that the Indians came to trade their furs.

Between 1761 and 1763 the frontier began to show a considerable increase in the antagonism of the Indians towards the British. The British were tightening up as far as trade methods were concerned. This brought about an increased friction between the trading parties. And with increased British immigration, the Indian leaders feared that the British settlers would pour across the Alleghenies and that Indian hunting and trapping would be threatened. There was also quite a difference in the way the French had dealt with the Indians, treating them, perhaps, more as equals: living, mingling, and marrying with them. As a result the Indians remained relatively loyal to the French. The Indians seemed to feel that the British were treating them as children, that their rights were being abrogated. The Indians rebelled in a violent uprising led by the Ottawa Chief, Pontiac.

Pontiac's attack was planned as a concerted action for the Spring of 1763. The Indians hoped to drive the British out of their garrisons all the way from Fort Michilimackinac to Fort Pitt. The members of the Consortium were scattered to their various trading areas--with Ezekiel Solomon and Benjamin Lyon at Fort Michilimackinac. By a clever ruse the Indians were able to take the Fort Michilimackinac garrison unawares, killed some, and took the rest as prisoners. Ezekiel and Benjamin were among the few civilian and military persons to remain

alive. Ezekiel was taken to Montreal by the Ottawas and ransomed. Gershon Levy was captured by the Wyandotte while on the trail but was able, eventually, to get away. Chapman Abram was rather blissfully canoeing up the Detroit River towards his trading post when the Chippewa captured him and his trade goods, including a goodly quantity of illegal rum. He was tortured, tied to a post to be burned, but was subsequently released.

The fur trade, as can be seen, was a hazardous business. Most of the trade goods had to be transported all the way from London to Montreal. In Montreal the goods had to be stored, and then repacked and carried by canoe, with all of the dangers attendant on pioneer travel: rivers, rapids, the difficult portages. Very often the Indians had to be given financial credit by the trader in advance of receiving the furs. The skins, once received, had to go on the reverse journey to the European market. The English merchant, and the other financiers, such as Hayman Levy, who put up the money in the first place, must have had to wait several years for the bales of furs to arrive before they could look to a return on their investment--and even at the last, there was the question as to the state of the fur market at that particular moment! The Pontiac War of 1763 led to very great losses because of the considerable looting and destruction that occurred, as well as the loss of life on all sides. Not only did the Consortium lose much financially, but the fear and the harrowing experience of being a captive of the Indians must have taken its toll of these men. In one way or another the Pontiac War continued for over a year, and it was not until July of 1766 that a peace treaty was actually signed between the Indians and the British.

The aftermath of the Pontiac War was a time of great confusion, but was

also one of economic upsurge in certain ways as far as Canada was concerned. Ships were arriving constantly, bringing large numbers of immigrants. There was a considerable influx of Jewish merchants and traders into Montreal. And there were ships carrying goods leaving Quebec and Montreal for European ports. Yet, despite all of this activity, this was also a time for a large number of business failures. By the end of the Pontiac Uprising there was a business collapse that apparently continued into the 1770's. A good deal of this collapse was felt by the fur traders. All but three of the major trading posts had undergone looting and destruction during the War, and the losses to the fur traders of their businesses and goods were extremely large. However, the end of the war did not bring an end to their problems.

With the Pontiac War curtailed, and with the British government deeply troubled financially, an attempt was made to appease the Indians. By the Declaration of 1763 the western lands were reserved for the Indians. Or put in another way, Europeans could not settle on these lands. Of course this move was, at the least, highly controversial and led to considerable unrest. The Consortium began to have great financial difficulties. Cash was very scarce, and debts could be neither paid nor collected. Taxes were imposed on the Canadians amounting to a 3% tariff on imports, and a 3% tax on furs being exported. These taxes were not levied on the Pennsylvanians or the New Yorkers. The partners never really recovered from the Pontiac War. They found it impossible to regain their cash advances to the Indians; they lost a good deal of their goods; and their various trading posts had been, to a large extent, destroyed. In 1768 the partners publicly stated that they were unable to meet their obligations.

During the four years of 1763 to 1766 the merchants of Montreal were hard pressed to meet their obligations. Up and down the credit-line threats of law-suit and debtors prison began to be heard. The partners were not rich men, and their main concern appeared to be to stay out of debtor's prison. They offered up all of their property in settlement, but this would have satisfied about one-third of their eighteen thousand pound debt. The five men offered a petition to Sir Guy Carleton, Lt. Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Province of Quebec. In their petition they mention their work with the British forces, their work as fur traders, their hardships, their capture by the Indians, their loss of goods on the frontier, the money owed to them, and their willingness to give up all that they did possess. They asked for a settlement to be arrived at, a commission to be appointed to do that job. As there is nothing in the literature to indicate that they had to go to prison, or of any other form of punishment, it appears that their appeal to Sir Guy Carleton was effective.

It is significant, perhaps, that in their petition they refer to themselves as the "late merchants and copartners." One could interpret this statement to mean that they were no longer partners. However, individually, they were merchants and traders for many years. Ezekiel Solomon died somewhere between 1805 and 1808. His cousin Levy lived to 1792. Chapman Abram lived until 1783. Benjamin Lyon signed a petition in 1778 and there appears to be no trace of him beyond that. In a letter dated September 27, 1763, Hayman Levy writes of the "late Geshon Levy." However, the records show Gershon Levy selling provisions to the garrison at Fort Michilimackinac, then under the command of Major Robert Rogers, in 1767. He was also a signatory to the petition of Sir Guy Carleton after the Consortium declared its inability to pay its debts in

1768.

A survey of the available documents indicates that the developmental role played by the very small Jewish population of the 14 colonies was a factor of considerable importance in the pre-Revolutionary period. In many ways, as Frances Dublin has said, their participation was more widespread and far more complex than heretofore suspected. For example, it is not often thought probable that Jews were deeply and directly involved in the highly dangerous and not always profitable Indian fur trade. The Consortium presented here is only one group of Jewish men that were on a frontier that contained the Upper Great Lakes and much of what today is the Midwestern United States.

Michigan State University Emeritus

(Note: Several sources have slightly differing spellings for the names of the partners. In various documents the partners themselves use different spellings. This paper has assumed the liberty of simply choosing one of the variations of use.)

American Regionalism, the Midwest, and
the Study of Modern American Literature*

by

David D. Anderson

The contemporary study of modern American literature is marked by a curious paradox that simultaneously recognizes the regional or ethnic origins and subject matter of the works by modern writers and yet insists that the term "regional" applied to specific works or the canon of some authors suggests that those works are at best second rate, that to be regional precludes the national or the universal. Thus, contemporary American critics and reviewers recognize, for example, that William Faulkner's origins and most of his works are firmly rooted in the experiences of the American South, that his characters, settings, and plot structures reflect the nature of the experience of Mississippians in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, yet he is never referred to as a Southern regional writer; to do so would somehow denigrate his accomplishment and his literary reputation.

Such an attitude toward a useful critical term is, I think, unfortunate. Not only is the history of the United States to a great extent the history of its regions--New England, Mid-Atlantic, South, Southwest, Midwest, West, and sub-regions, Appalachia, Rocky Mountain, Upper Great Lakes, and much of its culture identifiably regional--but the national culture and identity is to a great extent an amalgamation or amplification of regional characteristics. And

* A longer version of this paper was presented at the 16th Congress of the International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures, Budapest, Hungary, August 26, 1984.

even yet it is impossible to confuse the speech of a New Englander with that of an Alabaman or Mississippian. During the Presidency of Jimmy Carter, many Southerners were fond of commenting, not entirely facetiously, that he was the first President in this century without an accent.

In this paper I shall examine the nature of American regionalism as it has related to and affected the development of the nation, and then, by examining the works of three American winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature whose works are firmly rooted in the American Midwestern experience, I shall suggest the means by which our understanding of these writers--Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Saul Bellows--may be enhanced by exploring the identifiable regional dimensions of their works. In doing so, I acknowledge, as the basis of my discussion, the definition of American regional writing suggested by the late John T. Frederick in 1944:

A good regional writer is a good writer who uses regional materials. His regionalism is an incident and condition, not a purpose or motive. It means simply that he uses the literary substance which he knows best....the material about which he is most likely to be able to write with meaning. His work has literary importance only in so far as it meets the standards of good writing....Yet in a country so vast and varied as ours the regional writer gives special service to the nation as a whole by revealing and interpreting the people of his own region to those of other regions. He serves most significantly if he can reveal and interpret the people of his region to themselves.

When the United States of America became a political reality with the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the thirteen diverse colonies of which it consisted were spread less than a hundred miles wide along the central North American coast. The scant population of those colonies, suddenly transformed into sovereign states, the independence of which was to be disputed for nearly another decade, was as diverse as the climate and geography of the long coast. United by a common language and to a lesser extent by

common blood, culturally European, their spokesmen directed philosophically by the Enlightenment, the new states were not only torn by a war that was civil as well as revolutionary, but their people were perhaps the most culturally varied in the Western world: English homogeneity was indelibly marked by the increasing influx of Germans in the middle colonies, Scotch-Irish everywhere, but particularly in the middle and southern colonies, Dutch in New York, French Huguenots particularly in South Carolina, fewer numbers of southern Irish, Welsh, Spanish and Portuguese Jews, and, casting a long shadow into the future, the African blacks, whose involuntary immigration had begun in 1619.

By 1831, however, when Alexis de Tocqueville made the observations that resulted in his classic Democracy in America, published in 1835, the vision of a monolithic America peopled by homogeneous beings called Americans had become, for him and for most of his European contemporaries, the American reality. American nationhood and an American cultural, social, and political identity were rapidly fulfilling their continental destiny, threatened only by the lengthening shadow of Negro slavery, an anachronism in a nation avowedly democratic. But de Tocqueville's views were not uniquely European; they were shared by many Americans.

But, as de Tocqueville intuitively recognized in his comments on slavery, the United States was identified as clearly if less perceptively by its regions--North and South, free and slave--in 1831 as it had been from the beginning, that regional diversity was as much a part of the American reality as the political unity imposed by the constitution in 1788, a unity made possible only by regional compromises and that, by 1860, was on the verge of dissolution through secession and civil war.

Political unity prevailed by force of Federal arms and the destruction of the institution of slavery, but the United States remained, as it had been from

the beginning and remains today, a political unit composed of regional parts, more numerous and more complex if less divisive than they had been in 1860 or in 1776. Understanding this regional diversity, the product of origins, of time and circumstances, of geography and a shared history, is, I am convinced, vital not only to understanding the American past and the writers who emerged to shape an identifiable American literature--Emerson and Hawthorne in New England, Washington Irving in New York, Poe in the South, Mark Twain in what was then the West--but equally vital to understanding the American present and modern American writers: Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and Walker Percy of the South, John Cheever of New England, John Updike and Philip Roth of the East, Wright Morris of the Plains, Herbert Gold now of San Francisco.

Regional writing is indelibly part of American literature just as the regions out of which it comes are indelibly part of the American past and present; yet too often American writers and critics, forgetful of Emerson's insistence that the local is the only universal, resist regional identification, interpreting the designation as limiting, as second rate, as somehow pejorative. Yet as the American past--historical, cultural, literary--makes clear, the regions of the United States are the United States, not only reflective of the national diversity but reflective, too, of the unity that lies beyond and of the movements--East to West, country to city, West to East and beyond, and more recently from frost belt to sun belt--that have forged the ties of American identity, marked the path of American destiny, and provided the subject matter of much of its literature.

capital of the United States. These were the years, too, in which Midwestern literature and the mainstream of American literature became, as they remain, synonymous.

This new relationship between the emergence of Midwestern values as American values and of Midwestern literature as American literature in the early decades of this century, had been predicted by an anonymous visitor to Chicago in 1867 as he viewed the city of 300,000 that had been a village of 300 thirty years before. That visitor wrote,

In good time, the western bottom lands will spontaneously grow poets. The American mind will be brought to maturity along the chain of Great Lakes, the banks of the Mississippi, the Missouri and their tributaries....There, on the rolling plains, which, not governed like that on our seaboard by the great literary powers of Europe, shall be free indeed....The winds sweep unhindered from the Lakes to the Gulf and from the Alleghenies to the Rocky Mountains; and so do the thoughts of the Lord of the Prairie....Someday will make his own books as well as his own laws....He will remain on his prairie and all the arts of the world will come and make obeisance to him like the sheaves in his fields. He will be the American man and beside him there will be none else.

Not quite fifty years later H.L. Mencken observed the fulfillment of that promise. In the English Nation he wrote that

In Chicago there is that mysterious something that makes for individuality, personality and charm. In Chicago a spirit broods upon the face of the waters. Find a writer who is indubitably an American in every pulse-beat, snort and adenoid, an American who has something new and peculiarly American to say and says it in an unmistakable American way and nine times out of ten you will find that he has some sort of connection with the gargantuan and inordinate abbatoir by Lake Michigan--that he was bred there, or got his start there or passed through there in days when he was young and tender...

There, he concluded, at the commercial and cultural fulcrum of the Midwest, young writers found "...free play for prairie energy..." and "some imaginative equivalent for the stupendous activity they were bred to."

Sixty-three years after that anonymous visitor to Chicago had made his prediction and fourteen years after H.L. Mencken had recognized the Midwestern idiom as the American idiom, on November 5, 1930, the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy announced that the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature for that year was Sinclair Lewis, the first American to be so honored, the committee having previously overlooked such writers as Mark Twain, Henry James, and William Dean Howells in the early years of the award since its inception in 1911.

Lewis's selection was the result of the Nobel Committee's consensus that American literature had come of age, and earlier that year the Stockholm Dagens Nyheter had published three articles on the new American literature, a general introduction, and specific articles on Lewis, of Sauk Center, Minnesota, and on Theodore Dreiser of Terre Haute, Indiana, the two Americans being considered for the prize.

Significantly, both writers had been born and had grown up in small Midwestern towns in the last decades of the nineteenth century, both had found subject matter and inspiration for their early works in Chicago, and in the first quarter of the twentieth century they had, each in his own way, made their marks on American literature with novels based on the lives of commonplace Midwestern people as they search for an elusive fulfillment. Lewis's best work was in sharp, affectionate satire in Main Street (1920), Babbitt (1922), Arrowsmith, (1925), and others, and Dreiser's in the pessimistic determinism in Sister Carrie (1900, 1907), Jennie Gernardt (1911), The Financier (1912), and others, including An American Tragedy (1925).

By a vote of two to one in the subcommittee, Lewis was selected the recipient, a decision that was controversial in the United States, and on December 10, 1930, Professor Erik Axel Karlfeldt, permanent secretary of the

Swedish Academy, in an unprecedented address, spoke to the Academy on the topic, "Why Sinclair Lewis Got the Nobel Prize."

His address might have been written by a successor to that anonymous visitor to Chicago sixty-seven years earlier. After discussing Lewis's origins in "Sauk Centre, a place of a about two or three thousand inhabitants in the great wheat and barley land of Minnesota," he went on:

It is the great prairie, an undulating land with lakes and oak groves, that has produced that little city and many others exactly like it. The pioneers have had need of places to sell their grain, stores for their supplies, banks for their mortgage loans, physicians for their bodies and clergymen for their souls. There is cooperation between the country and the city and at the same time conflict. Does the city exist for the sake of the country or the country for the city?

The prairie makes its power felt....But the city, of course, feels its superiority....lives in its self-confidence and its belief in true democracy....its faith in a sound business morality, and the blessings of being motorized; for there are many Fords on Main Street....

After discussing each of the works that had come out of Lewis's experience in the small Midwestern town, the countryside, and the metropolis, Professor Karlfeldt concluded:

Yes, Sinclair Lewis is an American. He writes the new language--American--as one of the representatives of 120,000,000 souls. He asks us to consider that this nation is not yet finished or melted down; that it is still in the turbulent years of adolescence.

The new great American literature has started with national self-criticism. It is a sign of health. Sinclair Lewis has the blessed gift of wielding his land-clearing implement, not only with a firm hand, but with a smile on his lips and youth in his heart. He has the manners of a pioneer. He is a new builder.

When two other Midwestern writers were awarded the Nobel Prize, Ernest Hemingway in 1954 and Saul Bellow in 1976, there was no need for such

Justification, either of the status of American literature or of the literary worth of the recipients. Hemingway was the fifth American to receive the award following Lewis, Eugene O'Neill Pearl Buck, T.S. Eliot, and William Faulkner; Bellow was the seventh. Nor did the citations recognize their strong regional roots: Hemingway was praised for his "powerful, style-making mastery of the art of modern narration." His earlier works, contrary to the Nobel requirement of "ideal tendencies," were seen as "brutal, cynical, and callous," but he was praised for the "heroic pathos" of his "awareness of life," his "manly love of danger and adventure," and his "natural admiration of every individual who fights the good fight in a world of reality overshadowed by violence and death."

Bellow, conversely, was praised for having emancipated the American novel from the hard-boiled school that had dominated the 1930s and for focusing attention upon "that familiar, dangling, universal man, the anti-hero" who continued to survive in a threatened and threatening world. He was praised, too, for his ability to portray the inner joys and agonies of modern life. His major strength, the citation concluded, was his power of characterization.

Although citations are necessarily general, only Hemingway publicly expressed displeasure with his, referring to it as "that Swedish thing," and, like Lewis, he was grateful for the cash prize, according to his initial public reaction to the announcement. But none of the citations, including Lewis's, talked about the regional origins or substance of their work, rather seeing each as representative of as well as a unique contributor to a monolithic American and world literature.

Nevertheless, each of three is, in John T. Frederick's definition, a regional writer whose people carry the values and experiences of their origins with them into the larger world beyond. Lewis took his people from the small town into the modern Midwestern commercial centers, from his Gopher Prairie to to his Zenith; Hemingway, who commented several times that he had a wonderful novel to write about Oak Park, Illinois, the Chicago suburb in which he grew up, that he would never write, took Nick Adams, his youthful alter ego from the woods and streams and small towns of the northern Michigan of his youthful summers to war, to Paris and Spain, to Africa and again to war, emerging as Jake Barnes, as Frederick Henry, as Robert Jordon and Richard Cantwell, and finally as Thomas Hudson in the posthumous Islands in the Stream. Bellow, as Robert M. Adams has recently commented, maintains, in almost all his work, a love-hate relationship with Chicago. "That gritty city," Adams points out, "has a hammerlock on Saul Bellow's imagination....Even when he takes his fictional characters elsewhere, they carry Chicago with them, and come back to Chicago for final authentication."

None of the three deals with the Midwest as a whole, nor with all the values and character of that complex, changing region, but a rough chronology of development emerges in their works and in the character and values of their people. This chronology, I am convinced, is the key to understanding the regional foundations of their works as well as the region itself. Hemingway's work is rooted geographically in the wilds of Upper Michigan frontier, when civilization began to impose a rough order on a wilderness, when the aboriginal Indians had been reduced to impoverished servitude and yet violence remained an omnipresent reality in the shadows, a reality with which a young Nick Adams must come to terms, as he does in "Indian Camp," in "The Battler," in "The Killers," and "The Big Two-Hearted River," and ultimately in various guises in

A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Across the River and Into the Trees. Nick Adams and his successors are the last of the American individualists, authentic sons of those who had crossed the Appalachians into the unknown, and the last of those who had come out of an orderly society to face and endure and defy life reduced to its primitive reality, and who had learned to triumph in the very fact of destruction and to find meaning and purpose and identity in the process. The veneer of civilization for Hemingway's people is just that: love is an illusion as are the values of modern civilization, as Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry, and Robert Jordan recognize clearly and eloquently in the arms of Brett Ashley, in a Swiss rain, on a Spanish hillside.

Lewis's Midwest is that of maturity, and its values, the values of a deadly commonplace, are those rooted in the exploitation of nature that had made maturity possible, values that Lewis simultaneously condemns and identifies with, as Hemingway and identified with the values of more primitive society. If Hemingway's values are those of the individual's search for meaning and identity, Lewis portrays those of collective acceptance, of the triumph of the superficial and the material, of the submergence of the individual in the mass, of the reward of a materially successful life at the cost of individual identity and personal freedom. His Midwest is that of a commercial Puritanism, of God's reward for conformity and greed, and of a society defined explicitly in "Main Street" and "Babbitt," terms that have become generic in the American language.

Bellow's Midwest is that of Chicago, simultaneously the bright, shining symbol of success for generations of Midwestern farm boys and immigrants and the nightmare of reality in which Bellow's people, from Joseph in Darling Man to Albert Corde in The Dean's December, attempt to find and maintain an elusive understanding not only of time and place but of self. "I am an American, Chicago born," Bellow begins The Adventures of Augie March, poetic rather

than literal truth for Bellow--born in Quebec in 1915 and brought to Chicago at nine. "Chicago, that somber city," he continues, "and /I/ go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way."

Bellow's Chicago is both reality and metaphor. Unlike his use of New York as setting in The Victim, Seize the Day, and Mr. Sammler's Planet, which is essentially an outsider's New York, Bellow's Chicago settings are those of a Chicagoan, with the sense of obscure names and the feel of neighborhoods--and Chicago is a city of neighborhoods--, often used, as Robert Adams comments, as "shorthand for attitudes and values."

If Chicago is both reality and metaphor for an age, Bellow's people--each of them aging as the demands of society and the values of others evolve in an increasingly complex society--and as Bellow ages--struggle to meet, understand, and define their experience. Bellow's people attempt thus to cope with the individual, a fixed quantity, as he relates them to an inexorably unfolding history, in which the immediate, the local, is, in Emerson's terms, truly the only universal. In the background of each novel are those people, in the tradition introduced by Sherwood Anderson to Midwestern and American writing, who are clearly grotesques, warped psychologically if not physically by the experience of their time. But Bellow's protagonists, each an intellectual and an individualist, survive; perilously close at times to becoming grotesques, with fulfillment remaining elusive, they endure. Thus, twenty-six year old Joseph in Dangling Man finally seeks his justification in the war, the ultimate experience of his age; fifty-nine-year-old Albert Corde in The Dean's December, seeking an understanding of a Chicago grown grotesque in its violence, finally catches a glimpse, however momentary, of the infinite.