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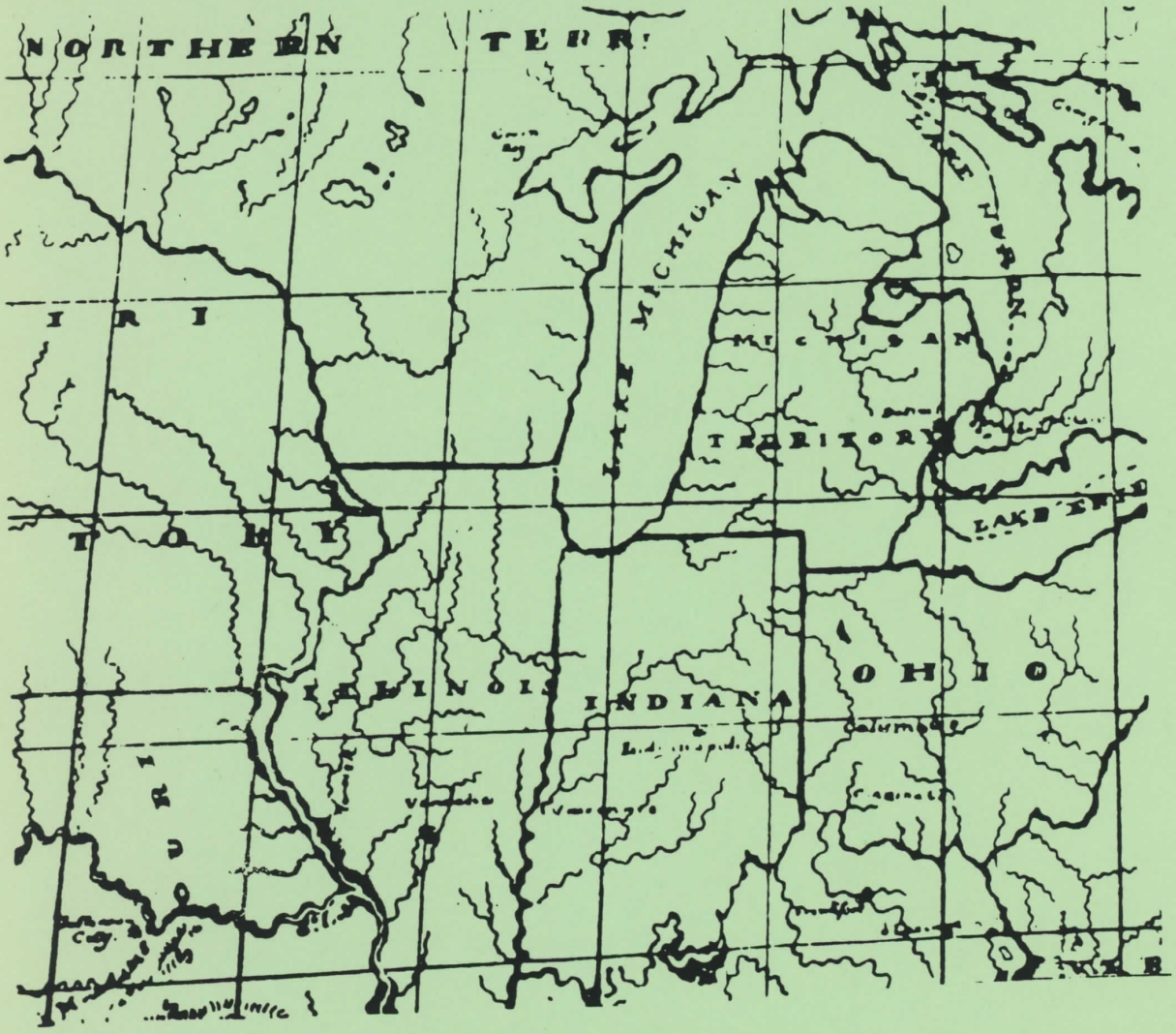


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# The Jesuit Relations as a Source for Midwestern History

Roger J. Bresnahan

One of the richest sources documenting the early experiences of Europeans upon the North American continent is the 73-volume compilation known as The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791, published betwen 1896 and 1901 under the general editorship of Reuben Gold Thwaites. The Jesuit missionaries were not the only Europeans in New France sending reports back to the home country. Missionaries of other Orders also sent reports to their superiors, and explorers sent letters to their patrons. But except for the better known narratives, such as those by Radisson, Tonty, Champlain, La Salle, La Clerq, Laval, and Hennepin, few have been readily accessible. The fact that the Jesuits systematically published their reports from New France for forty-one consecutive years in the mid-17th century meant there was a body of readily available information. The Thwaites edition made all this material available in English translation. Further, the "allied documents" stretched the period to nearly two-hundred years, thus encompassing the entire sway of France in North America.

The impulse which guided the first relations was the counsel of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, that members of the Order communicate frequently with each other, especially when long distances should separate them. No doubt this was the impulse obeyed by Father

Paul Le Jeune whose letter of August 28, 1632 -- written in a deep forest eight hundred leagues from Quebec -- became the first of what may be properly called the "Jesuit Relations of North America." Though his object was merely to report to his superiors, the Jesuit superior apparently thought that publishing Le Jeune's report might counteract criticism of the Jesuit missions in New France.

The Jesuits already knew such publicity could be a useful tool. Father Pierre Biard's report, covering his missionary activities during 1613 and 1614, was first circulated only among Jesuits in its Latin original. Translated into French and published at Lyons in 1618, Biard's Relation de la Nouvelle France proved effective in refuting charges that the Jesuits had been responsible for the loss of Port Royal and Saint Sauveur. Biard's account and a private letter of Father Charles Lalement were published in France in 1618 and 1627, respectively, in order to make the doings of the Jesuit missionaries in North America better known, and so it is not surprising that Le Jeune's superior should consider publishing that missionary's report.

The firm of Sebastien Cramoisy brought out the Le Jeune letter in 1632 as the first of what came to be a forty-one volume duodecimo series issued annually from 1632 until 1673. It is these 41 Cramoisy volumes that are properly called the "North American Jesuit Relations" with Biard's report and Lalement's letter being the first two of what are called the "allied documents." Though Le Jeune's report was framed for a Jesuit audience, those fashioned from 1633 onward were prepared for public

consumption. Typically, the superior residing at Quebec would collect the reports of the missionaries in the field and edit them, perhaps adding a general introduction before sending them to the provincial superior at Paris, where they would be edited again, generally by someone familiar with life on the mission stations, before being sent to Cramoisy for publication. Where the relation is actually a collation of the reports of several of the missionaries in the field, it appears under the superior's name. Otherwise it is the missionary himself whose name appears at the top.

It would be short-sighted to view the relations solely as documents concocted to impress the public and justify the financial contributions which supported the North American missions. But certainly the reading public was affected. Mère Marie de L'Incarnation, Madeleine de la Peltrie, Maisonneuve, and others attested to the influence of the relations in persuading them to come to North America. Lawrence C. Wroth, librarian of the John Carter Brown Collection, eloquently summarized the multiple effects of the series:

> At the beginning of its period of publication, 1632, Richelieu stood in high authority; at the end, 1673, was Colbert. In this period, political France was beginning to look with more than casual attention at its ancient and much neglected colony. Under these peculiar conditions, the French Jesuits must have realized the importance of their Relations as the sole chronicle, regularly published, of French imperial expansion. From various sources they must have received encouragement for the continuance of a series of narratives so exciting as these to national pride and national aspiration, carrying a message of growing importance to merchants in their counting houses, to members of the chartered

companies, to colonial officials, and to politicians at an awakened court. Learned men themselves, never inhumanly detached from the intellectual interests of the world, the members of the Society could not but appreciate also the unusual service of the Relations in the diffusion of geographical and ethnological data. In addition, therefore, to the primary motive of publication there existed several reasons of force and variety for the printing of this series of narratives freshly come each year from the forests and rivers and grim little cities of New France, distant land of material enterprise and of adventure in realms of the spirit. ("Introduction," James C. M$^{c}$Coy, Jesuit Relations of Canada, 1632-1673: A Bibliography (Paris: Arthur Rau, 1937), pp. vi-vii.)

The Relations proper, that is the Cramoisy series, ceased publication in 1673, due largely to acrimonious debate which arose concerning the Jesuits' China mission. Whereas the Jesuits in New France resisted the tendency of the Amerinds to adapt the Christian religion to their own culture, Jesuits in China deliberately sought to divorce Catholicism from its European background and adapted the externals of ritual to Chinese culture. Father Matteo Ricci even went so far as to become a Mandarin. This syncretism occasioned such bitterness at Rome that Pope Clement X prohibited publication of any further missionary relations by the Jesuits without Vatican approval. Realizing that their own government would take a dim view of such a procedure and would likely ban any publication which the Vatican had already approved, the French Jesuits ended publication of the series with the volume issued in 1673. Still, reports continued to be submitted to the superior at Paris and were housed in the Jesuit archives at Collège de Louis-le-Grand until 1762 when the Jesuits were expelled from France by Louis XV. Though many of the records were thus destroyed,

the Jesuit librarian, Father Gabriel Brotier, managed to save some of the hundred years' of relations which had come to the archives since the suspension of the Cramoisy series. These he brought to the Jesuit headquarters in Rome.

Meanwhile, from 1702 until 1776 various Jesuit editors managed to circumvent the Vatican prohibition by publishing a thirty-four volumes series, Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses Ecrits des Missions Etrangères. Mostly, these related to the far eastern missions, but seven of the letters were from missionaries in North America were later included among the allied documents of the Thwaites edition. And what of the documents saved from the Collège de Louis-le-Grand by Brotier? After the Jesuits returned to France in 1809 the "Fonds Brotier," as it came to be known, was returned to France and housed at Sainte- Geneviève, the residence of the provincial superior in Paris. With the second expulsion of the Order from France in 1901, the Fonds Brotier, by that time 199 bound volumes, twenty-six of them pertaining to North America, was sent to Canterbury and later to a seminary on the island of Jersey. Since the end of World War II this collection has remained at the archives of the French Jesuits in Chantilly.

As for the documents that Brotier could not save at Louis-le-Grand in 1762, many had duplicates at the archives of the Jesuit Order in Rome. The world-wide suppression of the Jesuits by Clement XIV in 1773, however, meant that some of this archival material was lost. The restoration of the Order in 1814 allowed Jesuit librarians to reassemble

the archives. But they were confiscated by Victor Emmanuel in 1873. That they were housed in the same building in Rome where the Jesuits had kept them accounts for the fact that they remained relatively intact, yet they were inaccessible to researchers until 1929.

Nineteenth-century interest in the Jesuit Relations was sparked by the Episcopal bishop, William Ingraham Kip. His compilation and translation of the Lettres Édifiantes was published in 1846 as Early Jesuit Missions in North America. A year later, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan published an article on the Jesuit Relations in the Proceedings of the New York Historical Society. In 1870-71, O'Callaghan reprinted seven allied documents which predate the Cramoisy series. This renewed interest resulted in collectors searching for the original Cramoisy volumes and related documents on the Jesuit missions in North America, with James Lenox and John Carter Brown amassing the largest collections. Though Wroth tells us that "save for certain special years, the little volumes are not so rare as first supposed" (M$^{c}$Coy, p. viii), Francis Parkman complains in the preface to The Jesuits in North America (1867) that he could not find a complete set of the Cramoisy volumes in the United States.

The Jesuit archives in Montreal were reassembled by Father Felix Martin after the return of the Jesuits to that country in 1842 from an exile which had officially begun with the suppression of the Order in 1773, but had been held in abeyance by the Bishop of Quebec until the last Jesuit in Canada died in 1800. The Government of Canada sent Father Martin to France to research the sources of Canadian history. He published the

entire Cramoisy series in 1858 in three large octavo volumes and brought out a two-volume collection of Relations Inédites in 1861, covering the reports submitted betwen 1672 and 1679. Martin's protegé, the ex-Jesuit John Gilmary Shea, unearthed many previously unpublished relations and allied documents. Between 1857 and 1866, Shea published his own "Cramoisy Series" -- twenty-five slim volumes of allied documents set in type which closely resembled that of the original series. Abbés C. H. Laverdiere and H. R. Casgrain brought out Journal des Jesuites at Quebec in 1871, which documented the establishment of the Xavier Mission near Montreal in 1668. At this period, also, a long list of other works came out, including memoirs by Champlain, Hennepin, and Radisson. Interest in the topic remained strong throughout this period. Indeed, in the centennial year Francis Parkman was able to persuade the U. S. Congress to subsidize publication, in French, of Pierre Margry's six-volume history of French exploration in North America Parkman published his own seven-volume series, France and England in North America, between 1865 and 1892.

It was in this flurry of historical publishing that the self-educated historian Reuben Gold Thwaites was able to gather a staff of translators to compile The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. To the seventy-one volumes of text was appended a meticulously constructed two-volume index compiled by James Alexander Robertson and Emma Blair. In addition, Thwaites recruited Victor Hugo Paltsit to compose the "Bibliographical Data" sections, thus carrying forward the work of previous bibliographers, notably the hand-list composed by James Lenox and Henri Harrisse's Notes pour servir a l'Histoire de la Nouvelle France (1872). The Cleveland

publishing house of Burrows Brothers brought out the collection between 1896 and 1901, issuing only 750 sets. In 1959, the Pageant Book Company of New York reissued the entire work in double volumes but limited production to 500 sets. If that total of 1,250 sets were all, then surely research would be hampered. Fortunately, the 73-volume Thwaites edition is now on microfilm, as are the original Cramoisy volumes, Shea's new Cramoisy series, and the 1861 Relations Inéites.

Like the original Cramoisy series, the Thwaites edition follows a chronological order, with the first seven volumes containing pre-Cramoisy relations starting in 1610 and the seventy-first volume carrying the narratives through 1791. The English translation, is printed facing the original text, usually French but sometimes Latin or Italian. For the convenience of those who want a solid introduction without the commitment that perusal of the whole sevety-one volumes of text might dictate, a one-volume selection, edited by Edna Kenton, was published by Albert and Charles Boni Company in 1925 and reprinted by Vanguard in 1954. Kenton reprints Thwaites's introduction and includes, among other relations, the journals of Jacques Marquette, as well as an account of Marquette's death and the grand procession of thirty Illinois, Iroquois, and Algonquin canoes which two years later brought his bones from the present site of Ludington up Lake Michigan to be buried at St. Ignace. A one-volume Canadian paperback, edited by S. R. Mealing and published by M$^{c}$Clelland and Stewart (Toronto, 1963) contains some of the relations found in the Kenton edition, as well as others of more directly Canadian interest. Both the Kenton and the Mealing editions are, sadly, out of print.

In his introduction Thwaites offers a vivid picture of the compilers of these narratives:

> Many of the Relations were written in Indian camps, amid chaos of distractions. Insects innumerable tormented the journalists, they were immersed in scenes of squalor and degradation, overcome by fatigue and lack of proper sustenance, often suffering from wounds and disease, maltreated in a hundred ways by hosts who, at times, might more properly be called jailers; and not seldom had savage superstition risen to such a height that to be seen making a memorandum was certain to arouse the ferocious enmity of the band .... We gain from his pages a vivid picture of life in the primeval forest, as he lived it."

Thwaites adds that we have in these Relations "our first competent account of the Red Indian, at a time when relatively uncontaminated by contact with Europeans."

The Jesuits of New France operated seven mission territories stretching from Cape Breton to Louisiana. For our purposes in exploring the Midwest in the Relations, two of these are important. The Huron or Wyandot mission was located in what today is central Ontario between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. Eastward toward Lake Huron were the Hurons, known to the French as the Tobacco Nation, and between Lake Huron and Lake Erie lived the Petun Hurons. The Ottawa mission encompassed the tribes west of Lake Huron -- the Ottawas and Pottawattomies of lower Michigan; the Miamis and Eries of Ohio; the western Pottawattomies north of the Kankakee River and the Illinois to the South; the Western Sioux near Prairie du Chien; the eastern band west

and north of St. Anthony Falls; the Christinos north of Lake Superior; the Hurons, Ottawas, and Chippewas in the vicinity of Sault Ste. Marie, Point St. Ignace, and Michillimakinac; and the Assiniboines further west at Lake of the Woods. In this area also were the Chippewas north and east of St. Anthony Falls, the Winnebagos and Foxes near Green Bay, the Pottawattomies along the western shore of Lake Michigan, the Mascoutins of central Wisconsin, and the Kickapoos to their west. That this area of more than 350,000 square miles should be traversed by only 320 single-minded individuals traveling on foot and by canoe, only rarely by horse, is a feat worthy of wonder.

It is difficult to comprehend the whole collection of these 238 narratives. Even the narratives touching in some way on the Midwest are quite a formidable body of texts. I have, therefore, selected twelve important Midwestern narratives composed by eight of the missionaries. They run from Marquette's account of his first voyage on the Mississippi, composed in 1674, to two letters of Father Louis Vivier, written from the land of the Illinois in 1750. From these texts I have extracted passages which deal most directly with the Midwest: the dense forests and lush vegetation and plentiful game, the midwestern landscape, and the character of the natives, whom they called Savages -- Sauvages. Here, as elsewhere, they reveal their own ethnocentrism. Yet sauvage is badly translated as savage. Or rather, in English it has taken on prejudicial connotations. The French denotes a person of the woodlands. In this respect, the term was no more prejudicial than the one used by the Spanish -- Indios. Indeed, by referring to the natives in terms of their habits of

life rather than the location of their lands with respect to Europe, as the Spanish term implies, the French word hints at human perfectibility while the Spanish lusts after the grand design of empire. Still, the French Jesuits did not call the natives simply hommes, except in connection with sauvage. Nor did they call them gens, as they would call French people.

As a further indication of the cast of thought they brought with them, it will be noted that they often compare the climate and landscape to that of Europe. In part, this indicates merely their consciousness of a European audience. But it also indicates that French categories of thought were being imposed on the North American experience. At times, the wish seems father to the thought as their normally keen powers of observation subside and they discover what they had expected rather than what is there, as when Father Gravier sees a crocodile on the lower Mississippi, or when Father Vivier claims that tigers roam the prairie groves, or when Father Marest, unable to conceive the vast expanse of the continent, guesses that the source of the Missouri River must be close to the Spanish silver mines of Mexico.

For the most part, these Jesuits were keen observers of their environment, enthusiastic about their work even in the face of the disappointment which their small gains must have occasioned, and generous in their assessment of those whom they had come to save. We find here none of the arrogant insensitivity often accompanies missionary endeavor, but instead an intense interest in the native beliefs and rituals. Nor do we find false sentimentality or foolish piety. These were strong

men who worked hard. Most of them died early, often from overwork, sometimes at the hands of those they only wished to serve. Father du Poisson, after only three years in North America, was killed by Indians at Natchez when he was thirty-eight. Father Aulneau was killed by the Sioux at Massacre Island in Lake-of-the-Woods after only two years in America. He was thirty-one. Father Marquette, despite his many achievements, including the discovery of the course of the Mississippi River, was only thirty-eight when he died. Father Binneteau was thirty-nine, Father Vivier forty-two, and Father Marest fifty-two. Only two of the missionaries whose relations are here excerpted lived into normal old age. Father Gravier died at fifty-seven and Father de Carheil, after sixty years in North America, died at Québec at the age of ninety-three.

### Excerpts From Nine Important Midwestern Relations

Note: The three texts relating to Jacques Marquette listed below have not been excerpted because they are available in the one-volume Kenton selection available in any good library.

Le premier voyage qu'a fait Le P. Marquette vers le nouveau Mexique et comment s'en est formé le dessein (Jacques Marquette, Baye des Puants, 1674). Vol. 59: 86-183.

Journal incomplet, adressé au R.P. Claude Dablon, supérieur des Mission (Jacques Marquette, n.p. [1675]). Vol. 59: 164-183.

Recit du second voÿage et de la mort du P. Jacques Marquette (Claude Dablon [Quebec, 1677]). Vol. 59: 184-211.

**DOC. #172, Letter of Fr. Julien Binneteau from the Country of the Illinois, January, 1699. Vol. 65: 64-77.**

". . . spending the winter with a portion of our savages who are scattered about. I have recently been with the Tamarois, to visit a band of them on the bank of one of the largest rivers in the world -- which, for this reason, we call the Mississippi or "the great river." More than seven hundred leagues of it have been found to be navigable, without discovering its source . . . ."

"There is a very great difference between this climate and that of Quebec, -- where the cold lasts a long time, and a great quantity of snow falls; whereas here, as a rule, the snow remains but a very short time. We have hardly felt the cold during the whole month of January."

"Vines climb all around the trees, up to their tops the grapes are wild and are not nearly as good as those of France. There are an infinite number of nut- and plum-trees of various kinds; also some small apples. We find here two other kinds of fruit trees that are not known in France; they are Assimines and Piakimines. [pawpaw and persimmon] Their fruit is good. We in this country go without all our other delicious fruits of France. Game is plentiful, such as ducks, geese, swans, cranes, turkeys. Ox, bear, and deer furnish the substantial meats that we eat in the game country. The ox of these regions is of a blackish brown, and is the animal called 'buffalo' in Europe; it has a large hump on nape of the neck, and very thick hair, like the wool of our sheep in France; this makes good bed-coverings."

"The women alone till the soil, and sow; they do this carefully and consequently the corn is very fine and abundant. The idleness of the men is the cause of all their debauchery, and of their aversion to the Christian religion. Balls are held here, as in France; while in a cabin the dancers move about to the cadence of some king of drum, you hear, on the other hand, some old women singing."

"I am almost forgetting to tell you of our gardens. One of their finest ornaments is what we call the watermelon, which grows to an extraordinary size. It has a very sweet taste, and differs from our melons because it does not turn yellow. These melons are eaten without salt, and are harmless even when eaten in quantities."

**Doc. #177 Fr. de Carheil, 1702 at Michilimakinac.**

**Vol. 65: 189-253.**

He laments that Frenchmen have sold brandy to the Indians and thus exposed the missionaires to "acts of brutality and violence; of injustice and impiety; of lewd and shameless conduct; of contempt and insults" and threatens that if the King doesn't stop the traffic in brandy the Jesuits will abandon their missions. The solution is "to abolish completely the two infamous sorts of Commerce which have brought the missions to the brink of destruction .... The first is the Commerce in brandy; the second is the Commerce of the savage women with the French." He remonstrates that the French garrisons are the root of the problem: "These, far from being necessary, are, on the contrary, so pericious that we can truly say that they are the greatest scourge of our missions; for they serve but to injure both the ordinary trade of the voyageurs and the advancement of the faith."

He accuses the commandant and the soldiers of the garrison of reducing their service tot he King to four chief occupations: keeping a tavern to sell brandy; going from post to post selling brandy along the way; "Making of their fort a place that I am ashamed to call by its proper name, where the women have found out that their bodies might serve in lieu of merchandise and would be still better received than Beaver-skins;" and gambling accompanied often "by the general Intoxication of all the players."

Later he claims that "all the prostitues of Montreal" journey back and forth between there and Michilimakinac.

**Doc. #175 Relation or Journal of Gravier of Journey from Country of the Illinois to mouth of Mississippi (1701). Vol. 65: 100-179.**

Left Chikagoua Sept. 8, 1700, 68 days to Ft. Mississippi. Laments that much time was lost on this journey because the Frenchmen manning the canoes insisted on landing to shoot "the wild oxen that abound along the River, almost all of which are left to be eaten by the wolves." He comments they did the same with bears.

"We saw so great a number of wood pigeons that the sky was quite hidden."

Of the calumet: "There is nothing among these Indians that is more mysterious or more reverenced. No such honors are paid to the crowns and scepters of Kings as those that they pay to it. It seems to be the God of Peace and war, the arbiter of life and death. If suffers for one to carry and to show it, to walk in safety in the midst of Enemies, who in the hottest of the Fight lay down their weapons when it is displayed. That is why the Illinois gave one to the late Father Marquette, as a safeguard among the tribes of the Mississippi. "There is one Calumet for Peace and one for war,and they are distinguished solely by the Color of the feathers that adorn them. Red is the sign of war. They use it also to terminate their quarrels, to strengthen their allainces and to speak to strangers. It is a sort of pipe for smoking tobacco, made from a red stone polished like marble, and bored out in such a manner that one end serves for holding the tobacco, while the other fits up on a stem. The latter consists of a hollow stick two feel long as large as an ordinary cane. Hence the French have called it 'calumet,' from a corruption of the word Chalumeau, because it resembles that instrument -- or, rather, a long flute. It is ornamented with the heads or necks of various birds, whose plummage is very handsome. They also add long feathers of red, green, or other colors with which it is entirely covered. They esteem it chiefly because they look upon it as the Calumet or Pipe of the sun; and, in fact, they offer it to the sun to smoke when they wish to obtain a Calm, or ruin, or fine weather. They scruple to bathe at the beginning of the Hot weather, or to eat new fruit, before they have danced the calument -- that means that the Chief, holding it in his hands, sings airs to which the others respond, while

dancing and making measured gestures to thesound of certain instruments shaped like small drums."

"Our people killed a Crocodile, three brasses long. This is an animal of the color of a Toad, shaped like a Lizard. It is often found on land, and, though it walks very slowly, no one approaches it unless he is well-armed .... To see it, and hear it gnash its teeth, frightens one. It is said that the tongue is good to eat, but I have never had the curiosity to taste any of it, or any other part of the body, which most of the Savages consider a great treat."

"I found Piakimina-trees [Persimmons] loaded with fruit, and many Coupal-trees that yielded gum. We passed on our Route through canes that were 40 feet high, and thick as one's arm. The stalks of the corn are more than 15 or 20 feet high, as are also the sunflowers, and thick in proportion."

Of the Tonicas dwelling at the mouth of the Yazoo River: "They are very docile; polygamy is rare among them; but their caprice and the custom of the country authorize divorce for almost nothing, -- the result being that the village is but little populated, and I hardly saw any children there. The girls are not lewd or bold, as among the Natchies and Taensa .... The men here do what the peasants do in France; they till and hoe the soil; they sow and harvest; they cut wood, and bring it to the cabin; they dress the skins of Deer and of oxen, when they have any .... The women do only household work, and make the earthe vessels and their clothes .... The Natchies were far from being as docile as the Tounika. They are polygamous, thievish, and Very depraved -- the girls and women being even more so than the men and boys, among whom a great reformation must be effected before anything can be expected from them. The customs of the Taensas, who speak the same language, are the same."

Natches custom of killing wives and children of dead chief in ritual funeral: "When Monsieur de Montigni, who has left this country to go to Siam, was informed of their custom, he made them promise to put no more people to death."

"The Women are all very neatly clad, and are decently covered .... Most of them have black teath, which is considered beautiful among them; they

blacken them by chewing the ashes of tobacco mixed with wood ashes, and rubbing them with these every morning."

"Since we have left the Natches, we have lived only on Indian corn with a few Squashes -- For it is a long time since either wild oxen, Deer, or bears have been seen in this quarter; and, if we have found a few bustards or wild turkeys they have been so lean that they were as tasteless as wood. This has caused our Canoemen very often to sigh for the River of the Illinois, and the beauty of the country and of the landing places; and for the numbers of wild oxen and Deer, and all kinds of fat and excellent Game."

**Doc. #187 Marest, Cascaskias 1712 (Illinois).**
**Vol. 66: 218-295**

"What is heard every day in Europe of those immense Countries studded with Towns and Villages, in which an innumerable multitude of idolaters present themselves in crowds to the zeal of the Missionaries, would give room to believe tha things here are upon the same footing. Such is very far from being the fact . . . ; in a great extent of Country, scarcely three or four Villages are found. Our life is passed in threading dense forests, in climbing mountains, in crossing lakes and rivers in canoes, that we may overtake some poor Savage who is fleeing from us, and whom we do not know how to render less savage by either our words or our attentions. Nothing is more difficult than the conversion of these Savages. . . . We must first make men of them, and afterward work to make them Christians."

Their spirit of self-reliance "enslaves them to the most brutal passions. . . . From this independence springs every sort of vice that rules them. They are indolent, traitorous, fickle, and inconstant; deceitful, and naturally thievish, -- so much so as to boast of their skill in stealing; brutal, and without honor; taciturn; capable of doing everything when you are liberal toward them, but at the same time thankless and ungrateful. . . . Gluttony and the love of pleasure are, above all, the vices most dominant among our Savages; they are habituated to the most indecent acts before

they are even old enough to know all the shame that is connected with them. If you add to this the wandering life that they lead in the forests in pursuit of wild beasts, you will easily admit that reason must be greatly brutalized in these people. . . . ."

"Our Illinois habitat is a very pleasant country . . . . The great rivers which water it, the vast and dense forests, the delightful prairies, the hills covered with very thick woods . . . . Although this Country is further South than Provence, the winter here is longer; the cold weather, however, is somewhat mitigated. During summer the heat is less scorching: the air is cooled by the forests and by the number of rivers, lakes, and ponds with which the country is intersected . . . . All the plains and prairies are overspred with oxen, roebucks, hinds, stags, and other wild beasts. There is a still greater abundance of small game. We find here, especially, multitudes of swans, cranes, bustards, and ducks; the wild oats, which grow freely on the plains, fatten them to such a degree that they very often die, their fat suffocating them. Turkeys are likewise found here in abundance, and they are as good as those of France."

The Missouri is "one of the most beautiful rivers in the world . . . . It is extremely rapid, and it discolors the beautiful water of the Mississippi, which flows from this point to the Sea. The Missouri comes from the Northwest, not far from the mines which the Spaniards have in Mexico, and is very serviceable to the French who travel in that country."

"The swamps are filled with roots, some of which are excellent, as are the potatoes and others, of which it is useless to note here the barbarous names. The trees are very tall and very fine: there is one to which has been given the name of cedar of Lebanon; it is a lofty, very straight tree, which shoots out its branches only at the top, where they form a sort of crown. The copal is another tree, from which issues a gum that diffuses an odor as agreeable as that of incense."

"Fruit-trees are not very numerous here; we find apple-trees and wild plum-trees that would perhaps produce good fruit, if they were grafted; there are many mulberry-trees, of which the fruit is not so large as those in France and there are different kinds of nut-trees. The pecans (it is thus that the fruit of one of the nut-trees is called) have a better flavor than our nuts in France. Peach trees from the Mississippi have been brought to

us; they come in very good condition. But among the fruits of the Country those which seem to me the best, and which would certainly be appreciated in France, are the Piakimina and the Racemina [persimmon and pawpaw] . . . . We also have grapes, but they are only indifferently good."

"It seems that a Country as beautiful and as extensive as this ought to be overspread with well-populated Villages . . . ."

"The Illinois are much less barbarous than other Savages; Christianity and intercourse with the French have by degrees civilized them . . . . These Savages do not lack intelligence; they are naturally inquisitive, and turn a joke in a fairly ingenious manner."

"The journeys that are made in this Country ought not to be compared with those that you make in Europe. You find, from time to time, Towns and Villages, houses to receive you, bridges or boats for crossing rivers, beaten paths which conduct you to your destination, and people who put you on the right way if you are going astray. Here there is nothing of that; we have traveled for twelve days without meeting a single soul. Sometimes we have been on prairies stretching as far as the eye could reach, intersected by brooks and rivers, without finding any path which could guide us; sometimes it has been necessary for us to open a passage through dense forests, mild thickets filled with briars and thorns; at other times we have had to go through marshes abounding in mire, in which we sometimes sank waist-deep."

"Michillimakinac is situated between two large lakes, into which other lakes and many rivers empty. For this reason this village is the general resort [l'abord ordinaire] of the Frenchmen and of the Savages; and it is the center of nearly all the fur trade of the country . . . . The water, which constitutes the charm of the place in summer, renders a sojourn here during the winter very dreary and very monotonous."

"This is what we call making a portage: The canoes that are used for navigation in this Country, being only of bark, are very light, although they carry as much as a shallop. When the canoe has carried us a long time on the water, we, in our turn, carry it on the land, in order to reach another river; and that is what we did in this place. We first transported all that

was in the canoe . . . then we carried our canoe thither. We were only two days in making this portage, which was a league and a half long."

"Besides the beauty of the place, we also have salt-springs in the neighborhood, which are of great benefit to us. Cows have just been brought to us which will render us the same service in tillage that the oxen render in France. We have tried to tame the wild oxen, but we have never succeeded."

**Doc. #199 du Poisson, Akensas, 1726. Vol. 67: 248-263.**

". . . the Mississippi presents to the traveler nothing beautiful, nothing exceptional, save itself: nothing mars it but the continuous forest on both sides, and the frightful solitude in which a person is during the whole voyage."

"Their dances, as you may well imagine, are somewhat odd; but the precision with which they mark the time is as surprising as the contortions and efforts that they make."

"In fact, to accept their calumet involves considerable expense. But even if I could do so, I would certainly avoid it, because there would be danger of their hearing me speak of Religion only from interested motives; and because elsewhere we have learned by experience that the more we give the Savages, the less cause/ have we to be satisfied with them, as gratitude is a virtue of which they have not the slightest idea."

"A Savage gives nothing for nothing, and we must observe the same rule toward them; otherwise we should be exposed to their contempt."

**Doc. #201 du Poisson, Akansas 1727 [Journal of 44 day journey on Miss. R. from New Orleans to mouth of Arkansas R.]**
**Vol. 67: 276-325.**

French in the area include "women or girls taken from the hospitals of Paris, or from the salêtrière, or other places of equally good repute, who find that the laws of marriage are too severe, and the management of a house too irksome. A voyage of four-hundred leagues does not terrify these heroines; I already know two of them whose adventures would furnish material for a romance."

"... the greatest torture -- without which everything else would have been only a recreation, but which passes all belief, and could never be imagined in France unless it had been experienced is the mosquitoes, the cruel persecution of the mosquitoes. I believe the Egyptian plague was not more cruel ... There are here the frappe-d'abord, and the brulots; these are very small flies whose sting is so sharp -- or, rather, so burning -- that it seems as if a little spark had fallen on the part where they have stung. There are gnats, which are brulots, except that they are still smaller; we hardly see them, and they especially attack the eyes. There are wasps, there are gad-flies, -- in a word, there is omne genus muscarum; but we would not speak of the others, were it not for the mosquitoes. This little creature as caused more swearing since the French came to Mississipi, than had been done before that time in all the rest of the world .... We are obliged to wave our handkerchiefs continually, which seldom frightens them .... Chicagou, in order to make the people of his tribe comprehend the multitude of Frenchmen that he had seen, told them that there were as many in the great village (in Paris) as there were leaves on the trees or mosquitoes in the woods."

"We began to perceive the sand-banks; we found on them turtles' eggs, a new luxury for us; these eggs are a little larger than those of pigeons and are found in the sand of the shallows, where the sun hatches them ... we found quantities of them, and made them omelets which were relished by people who were only living on gru." [boiled cornmeal mush seasoned with bear fat]

**Doc. #209 Aulneau (Ft. St. Charles 1736 among Christinos nr Lake Superior). Vol. 68: 286-305.**

"I journeyed nearly all the way [from northern extremity of Lake Superior to Fort St. Charles on foot, 300 leagues] through fire and a thick stiffling smoke, which country prevented us from even once catching a glimpse of the sun . . . . [Indians had set fire to woods to flush out game] So long a journey through any other country would have been diversified by a number of interesting features calculated to awaken one's curiousity, but all that was to be met with in this vast region was limited to lakes, rocks, immense forests, savages, and a few wild animals. . . ."

**Doc. #220 Viver, Among the Illinois, June 1750. Vol. 69: 142-149.**

"The Climate is very much like that of France, with this difference, that the winter here is not so long and is less continuous, and the heat in summer is a little greater. The country in general is covered with an alternation of plains and forests, and is watered by very fine rivers. Wild cattle, deer, elk, bears, and wild turkeys abound everywhere, in all seasons, except near the inhabited portions. . . . During a portion of the spring, the country is overrun with swans, bustards, geese, ducks of three kinds, wild pigeons, and teal. There are also certain birds as large as hens, which are all called pheasants in this country, but which I would rather name grouse; they are not, however, equal in my opinion to the European grouse. I speak not of partridges or of hares, because no one condescends to shoot them. The plants, trees, and vegetables that have been brought from France or from Canada, grow fairly well. As a rule, the country can produce all things needed to support life, and even to make it agreeable."

"Nothing but erroneous ideas are conceived of them in Europe; they are hardly believed to be men. This is a gross error. The Savages, and especially the Illinois, are of a very gentle and sociable nature. They have wit, and seem to have more than our peasants, -- as much, at least, as most Frenchmen .... Most of them are capable of sustaining a conversation with any person... I found in them many qualities that are lacking in civilized peoples."

"The women sow the maize. As to the men, with the exception of a little hunting now and then, they lead a thoroughly idle life; they chat and smoke, and that is all. As a rule, the Illinois are very lazy and are greatly addicted to brandy; this is the cause of the insignificant results that we obtain among them."

**Doc. #222 Vivier Among the Illinois, November, 1750.**
**Vol. 69: 200-229.**

He decries the brandy the French have brought: "The Savages -- and especially the Illinois, who are the gentlest and most tractable of men -- became, wild beasts. They fall upon one another, stab with their knives and tear one another. Many have lost their ears, and some a portion of their noses, in these tragic encounters."

"From the twenty-ninth to the thirty-first degree of latitude it did not seem to me wider than the Seine in front of Rouen, but it is infinitely deeper. As one ascends, it becomes wider, but is shallower in proportion.... Mississippi, in the Illinois language, means 'the great river.' It seems to have usurped the name from the Missouri. Before its junction with that river, the Mississippi is of no great size. Its current is slight, while the Missouri is wider, deeper, more rapid, and takes its rise much farther away .... The first travellers who came through Canada discovered the Mississippi; that is the reason why the latter has acquired the name of 'great,' at the expense of the glory of the other."

"Both banks of the Mississippi are bordered, throughout nearly the whole of its course, by two strips of dense forests . . . . Behind these forests the country is more elevated, and is intersected by plains and groves, wherein the trees are almost as thinly scattered as in our public promenades . . . . The plains and the forests contain wild cattle, which are found in herds; deer, elk, and bears; a few tigers; numbers of wolves, which are much smaller than those of Europe, and much less daring; wildcats; wild turkeys and pheasants; and other animals, less known and of smaller size. This river, with all those that flow into it, as well as the lakes, -- of which there are a great number, but which, individually, are quite small in extent, -- are the abode of beavers; and of a prodigious number of ducks, of three kinds; of teal, bustards, geese, swans, snipe; and of some other aquatic birds, whose names are unknown in Europe, to say nothing of the fish of many kinds in which they abound."

"The Illinois . . . climate, which is very different from that of New Orleans, is almost similar to that of France."

"The soil is fertile, and vegetables of all kinds would grow in it almost as well as in France, if they were cultivated with care. Nevertheless, wheat, as a rule, yields only from five to eightfold . . . But, on the other hand, maize -- which in France is called Turkish corn -- grows marvelously; it yields more than a thousandfold . . . . The country produces three times as much food as can be consumed in it. Nowhere is game more abundant."

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# THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN MIDWEST: SOME BICENTENNIAL OBSERVATIONS

David D. Anderson

Unlike New England and the Upper South, the Midwest has never lived in its past. Nevertheless, those two regions gave their people and their values to the movement across the Appalachians into what was the Northwest Territory in the closing years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, the years that began the transition from Old Northwest to Midwest. Unlike those areas, the Midwest had no colonial tradition--that is, no English Colonial tradition although it had been French and, in places, Spanish since the sixteenth century--nor did English settlement antedate American independence. The first region--and one might argue the only region--whose origins were uniquely American, the Midwest had its inception not in European dissatisfaction and yearning but in an act of Congress in 1787, of the Continental Congress, then known officially as the Congress of the Confederation, and in the working out of the ideal that had made the nation a decade earlier.

Both the act of Congress--the Ordinance of 1787, the Northwest Ordinance--and the ideal were firmly rooted in the intellectual ferment of the eighteenth century and the working out of that ferment in the American revolution that sought to emulate the perfection of the universe in human affairs, that proclaimed faith in the inevitability of human progress and the perfectability of man and his institutions, and that believed man was a rational creation of a rational God, endowed by his Creator with certain rational, natural, inalienable rights. Out of that ferment of revolution and change came a spreading belief in government that was itself rational and orderly,

protective of the rational rights of its people in a society that would be open and free.

Those who had made the revolution and were embarked upon the building of a nation had as their goal a society that was visionary but which would, through human determination, become real; their vision would, in fact, through the instrument of the government that they created, direct the course of American destiny. And many of them saw the wilderness beyond the mountains much as did Thomas Jefferson in his first inaugural address as part of "A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, . . . advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye... . "

To Jefferson government was the instrument by which the wilderness beyond the mountains would become the rich and orderly land that he foresaw, and he had, in 1784, secured congressional passage of an ordinance that would provide for the rapid assumption of self-government in the territories. That act was folowed the next year by the Ordinance of 1785, which applied the New England township structure to the survey of public land in the Northwest as the basis for an orderly transition to private ownership and self-government.

Both ordinances attempted this rational, orderly transition, but each was limited and incomplete. These shortcomings were to be corrected in the ordinance of 1787, the act that is perhaps the single most significant achievement of Congress under the Articles of Confederation. Not only did it revise, codify, and in some respects slow the transition of the Territory from wilderness to order, but it provided a statutory expression of the rational political philosophy that demanded progress and order in the development of the area at the same time that it defined in eighteenth century

terms the role of the individual in the new society and the proper relationship between the individual and his government.

As the instrument of orderly transition the ordinance provided that the area of the Old Northwest ceded to the Federal government by its Eastern claimants--Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Virginia, each of whose claim was colonial, arbitrary, and royal in origin--would move through three successive, progressive stages from initial settlement to ultimate statehood "on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever." The act thus provided the pattern that was to prevail as the Eastern nation followed its path of destiny and political expansion to the Pacific. At the same time the document provided the fundamental faith in orderly progress that marked the search for progress in human rights and individual prosperity as the area developed in the nineteenth century, through the growth of Jacksonian democracy, abolition sentiment, and a new concept of nationhood, and as it moved into a new role in progressive and liberal politics in the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, a newer transitional era that at times threatened to subvert the order and the faith that motivated the first.

In both cases--in the establishment of an orderly process and in the expression of a faith--the philosophy of government inherent in the document was new and revolutionary as well as statutory: for the first time it transmuted the ideals of the new nation, those articles of democratic faith expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the natural rights of the eighteenth century, themselves not self-enforcing or maintaining, into civil rights with the full force of government to protect them.

The sections of the ordinance that make up what we later learned to call a bill of rights are, in effect, the eighteenth century terms, a social

contract between government and the governed, guaranteeing religious freedom, due process, trial by jury, and other rights only later to be included in the first ten amendments to the Federal Constitution. In addition, in Jeffersonian terms, it includes other rights not included in that later document but necessary if the new land north and west of the Ohio River was to become an open, democratic society. Article III says that "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged . . . ," and Article VI proclaims in no uncertain terms that "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, wherof the party shall have been convicted . . ." Tempered somewhat by the inclusion of a fugitive-slave clause, nevertheless the document proclaims, in keeping with the eighteenth century ideal, that men shall be forever free in the new society that is to grow out of the wilderness.

The territory to which the Ordinance applied was, in 1787, little changed from that described by Father Louis Hennepin in his A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America nearly a century before:

> The country . . . is very well situated, and the soil very fertile. (There) are vast meadows, and the prospect is terminated by some hills covered with vineyards. Trees bearing good fruit, groves and forests so well disposed that one would think nature alone could not have made, without the help of art, so charming a prospect. That country is stocked with stags, wild goats, and bear, which are good for food, and not fierce as in other countries: some think they are better than our pork. Turkey cocks and swans are there also very common; and our men brought several other beasts and birds, whose names are unknown to us, but they are extraordinary relishing. The forests are

> chiefly made up of walnut trees, chestnut trees, plum trees, and pear trees, loaded with their own fruit and vines. There is also abundance of timber fit for building; so that those who shall be so happy as to inhabit that noble country, cannot but remember with gratitude those who have discovered the way . . .

Whether Hennepin's description was accurate or he was indeed the first writer of Midwestern fiction as his critics insist is irrelevant; Joel Barlow's description in his brochure for the Scioto Company in 1788, addressed to prospective French settlers, was not dissimilar:

> The climate of Ohio is wholesome and delightful. Frost, even in winter, is almost entirely unknown. The river, called by way of eminence, "The Beautiful," abounds in excellent fish of a vast size. There are noble forests, consisting of trees which spontaneously produce sugar. There is a plant which yields ready-made candles. There is vension in plenty, the pursuit of which is uninterrupted by wolves, foxes, lions, or tigers. A couple of swine will multiply themselves a hundred fold in two or three years, without taking any care of them. There are no taxes to pay, and no military services to be performed.

Hennepin's prose captured no settlers, and, although Barlow, through the Scioto Company, lured some six hundred misguided Frenchmen to the Ohio Valley, the bulk of the newcomers who crossed the mountains, floated down the Ohio, and ascended the rivers into the heart of the territory read neither records of discoveries nor real estate brochures. They came in search of cheap land and a new country, and they came, not because of what they read, but because of the more realistic but glowing accounts of those who had gone before. In 1800 only one-twentieth of the nation's population was west of the mountains, but they came in such numbers that by 1828, when the West was politically

strong enough to send Andrew Jackson to the White House, one-third of the country's population was in the West, many of them in the Northwest Territory or in the new states--Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois--that had been carved out of it.

By Jackson's time, the area that was becoming the "Old Northwest" and was to become the Midwest little more than a generation later had contributed, too, to a new concept of progress, a concept more suited to their aspirations and environment than that evolved in the stable agrarian East: its settlers sought dynamic rather than gradual expansion; they demanded a loose interpretation of the Constitution; they expressed themselves with noise and energy rather than Eastern restraint; they wanted immediate results rather than gradual progress; they exhibited a deep patriotism toward the Federal government but rejected paternalism; they exhibited a nearly absolute faith in the wisdom of the people. They had, in other words, become Western, Jacksonian democrats rather than those whose inspiration came from Jefferson.

Nevertheless, they revered Jefferson and the documents that he inspired, and the philosophical changes that the West engendered were of degree rather than kind. The Northwest Ordinance, the act that provided for the transformation from wilderness to civilization, a Jeffersonian document, was that which directed the settlement and development to the Mississippi and beyond as the nation moved westward; and it provided the foundation for the philosophy of expansion that the nation accepted so readily.

The impact of that document on the evolution of the territory and on popular thinking as the Old Northwest became the Midwest by the middle of the nineteenth century cannot be overestimated. So strongly did the document

reflect the faith of the nation's founders in orderly progress, in the protection of individual rights, in the necessity of education, in human freedom, and in government that encouraged individuals and social growth that the simple statistics of the area in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century reflect the working out of the ideal in practical terms. At the same time they reflect the emergence of a way of life, a governmental function, and a human search so deeply felt that they have taken on mythic dimensions in our own time.

Those statistics convey the rythmic movement of the age from the beginning of the nineteenth century to its end, from the western watershed to the Appalachians to the eastern slope of the Rockies. The sounds, the dates, and the facts of that movement become the spirit as well as substance of the transition from Old Northwest to Midwest. In 1790, the region was a wilderness with a white population estimated at 5,000; a decade later the first two territories had been carved out of the whole. Ohio Territory had 45,000 inhabitants and Indiana Territory 5,000. By 1820 four new states had appeared on the map. Ohio, admitted in 1803, had 581,000 people; Indiana, admitted in 1816, had 147,000; Illinois, addmitted in 1818, had 55,000, and Missouri, admitted in 1821, had 66,000. Michigan Territory, recently wrestled from the British, had more than 8,000, and it became a state in 1837. Iowa was admitted in 1846, after twice refusing statehood to avoid Federal taxes, and Wisconsin Territory, with a population of 30,000 in 1840, achieved statehood and 305,000 inhabitants in less than a decade. Minnesota Territory, with 6,000 people in 1850, had 172,000 and statehood in less than ten years. During that decade the story was repeated in spite of border bloodshed in Kansas, which was admitted

in 1861. Nebraska was admitted in 1867. Finally, in 1889, Dakota Territory became two states, creations of the rivers, the railroads, and the first major influx of immigrants directly from Europe.

With the statistics of empire are paired the names, evocative of a past rapidly becoming remote and romantic, uniquely American and themselves the inspiration for a literature Midwestern in inception and inspiration, the literature of Sandburg, of Lindsay, of Sherwood Anderson, who wrote, "Keokuk, Tennessee, Michigan Chicago, Kalamazoo--don't the names in this country make you fairly drunk?"

Together with statehood and empire, education marched westward, and again the names echo rhythmically as they mark the end of old traditions and the beginning of the new: not only had Congress set aside the sixteenth section of land in each township for the use of schools--and the remnants of one-room schools regularly mark the Midwestern landscape even yet--but higher education moved north and west with settlement, order, and progress. Ohio University was founded in 1804, Miami in 1809, Kenyon in 1824, Denison in 1831, Oberlin in 1833, all in Ohio, and on to the West: Franklin, Indiana, in 1837; Knox in Illinois also in 1837, Kalamazoo, in Michigan, in 1833 and Olivet in 1844; Grinnell in Iowa in 1846, and beyond. Beside them grew the state universities, some of them antedating the Morrill Act of 1862: Missouri, 1939; Michigan, 1841; Indiana, 1824; Iowa, 1847; Minnesota, 1851; Illinois, 1867; Ohio, 1870, and on to the West.

As early as 1816 the Indiana Constitution proclaimed that "It shall be the duty of the general assembly . . . to provide by law for a general system of education, ascending in regular gradations from township schools to a State University, wherein tuition shall be gratis and equally open to all." More

than a generation before the Civil War the area had contributed coeducation for women and higher education for blacks, both at Oberlin, and the remarkable record that followed led President Frederick Barnard of Columbia to wonder in 1880 how England, a nation of twenty-three million, could function with only four degree-granting colleges, whereas Ohio, a state of three million, had thirty-seven. Mortality was high and quality was uneven among the colleges of the new states, but each one was a statement of faith in education and in the future.

Just as the intellectual and political seeds of the eighteenth century took hold and flourished in the new country beyond the mountains, providing a new political and educational structure for the West, that movement was reinforced by a significant new emphasis in the fundamental nature of religious experience. Attempts by Calvinists and Anglicans to move West and to hold the people of the West to their doctrines were largely unsuccessful as denominations little more than sectarian cults in the East found fertile soil in the West.

These sects--primarily the Methodists and the Baptists--went West with the settlers, found a mutual attraction with the people and the politics in the West, and flourished. Both doctrines and techniques of these churches were attractive to the Westerners, and revivalism, the circuit-rider system, the selection of clergy from among the people tied the people and their churches tightly together.

Perhaps most important in the success of these denominations in the West was their strong democratic appeal. No longer were society and the church dominated by an elect group, either of God's choosing, of a hierarchy's domination, or of a social group's insistence upon the prerogatives of birth

and wealth. Not only did the clergy come out of the people, in democratic fashion, but salvation itself was the concern of the individual alone, and anyone, regardless of status, was free to choose to be saved.

So pervasive and successful were the techniques and the doctrines that not only did circuit-riding preachers--the Methodist revivalist Peter Cartwright is the best known example--became powerful Jacksonian Democrats--but the established churches, particularly the Presbyterians, found it necessary to reject the concept of election and open salvation to all in order to survive, thus contributing further to the democratic multiplication of sects on the Frontier as powerful preachers advanced highly individualistic doctrines.

Particularly important to the political and moral future of the West as it became the Midwest was the work of Charles Grandison Finney, an Eastern lawyer who underwent a sudden conversion and became a Presbyterian minister on the Frontier. As a result of his own experience, he adopted the revivalist technique of the West, constructed a new theology of salvation, and contributed much of its future direction to his own church, and he was responsible in many ways for the growing moral dimension of the West.

Not only was he an early long-time president of Oberlin College, but he contributed to Western theology the doctrines of perfection and usefulness. The former opened moral perfection and ultimate salvation to all who chose it; the latter, a condition of perfection, decreed that those who would be perfect and hence saved must be useful to others. In so doing he not only directed Oberlin College toward its strong abolitionist-temperance stance as the Western frontier became the Midwest by mid-century, but he gave impetus to the wave of reform--temperance, women's rights, and, of most importance,

abolition--as the nation moved toward resolution of the slavery crisis.

Just as the religious fervor West of the mountains reinforced the democratic enthusiasm in the new territory and advanced the cause of reform and human freedom, it contributed a great deal to the growth of education. Not only did virtually every town found an "academy," usually under the aegis of a local clergyman, but higher educational institutions were almost invariably denominational and private until midcentury. Above, all the intense religious activity reinforced the conviction of the West that men and institutions could be made perfect.

During these years, too, the democratic influence of universal white male suffrage spread from the West--from Ohio in 1803, Indiana in 1816, and Illinois in 1818--to the East--to Connecticut in 1818, Massachusetts and New York in 1821. Both Michigan and Wisconsin claim the origins of the Republican Party, the party that send Abraham Lincoln of Illinois to the White House and extended freedom throughout the nation. The Midwestern record in the abolition movement and the Civil War is impressive: Benjamin Lundy published the Genius of Universal Emancipation at Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, as early as 1821; Elijah Lovejoy's Alton Observer in Illinois was so outspoken that three of his presses were destroyed and he died protecting the fourth; Sherman M. Booth edited the American Freeman at Prairieville, Wisconsin, and the Free Democrat at Milwaukee; Mrs. Jane G. Swisshelm published the Visitor at St. Cloud, Minnesota, in 1858.

Ohio experiences the great Oberlin-Wellington slave rescue, and Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa supported John C. Fremont for the Presidency in 1856; in 1860 they were joined by Illinois, Indiana, and Minnesota in supporting Abraham Lincoln. And when the nation went to war against itself, the Midwest

not only sent hundreds of regiments to fight on every major battlefield in the East, but its own Army of the West, under Grant and Sherman, permitted the Mississippi, in Lincoln's terms, to "flow unvexed to the sea," and under Sherman, they marched and conquered from Atlanta to Savannah and beyond.

By the end of the Civil War, as the troops returned home to states and territories that had, within three generations, passed from wilderness through progress to order, the Midwest had largely become the reality that we know, the heartland that Lincoln had described in his Annual Message to Congress on December 1, 1862. As he spoke, much of the region had become an integral part of the nation and it was about to embark on a brief period that Sherwood Anderson had called a time of waiting before seeking new ideals and a new fulfillment, wisely or not, in a new era. True, there were Indian wars yet to be fought, frontiers to be settled, but in the future was a political domination that existed virtually unchallenged for nearly half a century. Industrialism, exploitation, populism, and a new wake of reform were also in the future. The nation was not yet a continental power, much less an international power, and world wars were unknown.

Nevertheless as the nation began what Lincoln had come out of the West to call a "new birth of freedom," the Midwest had become a reality, the goal for new waves of immigrants and the point of departure for others--for new goals, new places, new achievements. Yet to be born was the literature that was to direct the mainstream of American literature in our time. But the foundations of the future had been laid on the ideology of the past, and the nature of Midwestern society, its roots reaching into the eighteenth century, was fixed, its ideal made real, its identity clear, and its significance and permanence a microcosm of the whole, an integral part of the American experience.

For more than half of its past the Midwest ws to most Americans the West, the wilderness, the Old Northwest; and its history as a geographic and cultural entity is little more than a century old. Yet in that century the region has not only made its influence felt in every dimension of the national life, but in many cases its influenence and leadership have been so powerful and pervasive that much of what we call American today is Midwestern in origin and development. More than any other region it gave the nation its political tradition, its cultural identity, and its economic fabric.

The political tradition that came out of the Midwest to direct the national dealing for better or worse is compounded of strong leaders and profound faith. The men include those who make up the history of the Presidency, from Abraham Lincoln to Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, but they include too men who never achieved or did not seek the Presidency yet directed the political affairs of the nation: Lewis Cass, Stephen A. Douglas, Edwin M. Stanton, John Sherman, Willian Jennings Bryan, Eugene Debs, even the great political machines to which men have given their names: Kelley - Nash - Daly in Chicago, Pedergast in Kansas City, Foraker - Taft in Cincinnati.

This political leadership during critical times in the nation'a history is paralleled by the military men who have directed our wars: William Henry Harrison, McClellan, Grant, Sherman, the first MacArthur, Pershing, Eisenhour. Not only did they execute national policy, but in many cases, in the Army or later in the White House, they made it. Not only did they cement the national fabric in the process but they made the country a continental nation and an international power.

Other elements in the national life, perhaps less spectacular but no less significant, had their origins in the Midwest and Midwesterners as their

spokesmen, their founders, and their leaders: the populist democracy that has indelibly marked the national character and political structure; the industrial and transportation system that began with the rivers and extended to the substratosphere through the instrument of Henry Ford and the Wright Brothers, combining with the Midwestern ingenuity of the Thomas Edisons and the Charles F. Ketterings and the economic shrewdness of the John D. Rockefellers to industrialize the nation and the world.

The Midwest gave strong public higher education to the nation and a literature studded with the names of Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, Penrod, Babbit, and Augie March, of Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson, and the Nobel Prize winners in literature: Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow. It gave, too, an American vernacular that has made American English the dynamic, expressive language we know. Perhaps most important to American culture, however, again for better or worse, and most pervasive, is the image of "MidAmerica" or "Middle America" that is used to define our culture today. From Northwest Territory to Old Northwest, from Midwest to MidAmerica, the Northwest Ordinance has to a great extend shaped the America that we know today.

Michigan State University

# Discipline Nonchalances

Bernard F. Engel

The prose of the poet who was both an acute critic and a genius as an editor, the woman who said that verse is "nonchalances of the mind," yet an art requiring "reticences with rigor," is at last available to the reader who does not have a research library at his doorstep. Patricia C. Willis, curator of literature at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, has edited in one substantial volume of The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore, a work containing "all of the prose Moore chose to publish in her lifetime" (Viking 1986).

The collection is important not only because it makes available the prose work of one of our finest modern poets, but also because it shows her ideas on aesthetics and technique and because it gives light on the rise of modernism and on the principles of not only Moore herself but also of Eliot, Pound, Wiliams and Stevens, men who were her professional--and cordial--associates, writers whose ability she was early to recognize and who in turn admired her. The correspondence of these figures shows strong mutual support that has yet to be explored by critics and scholars.

Like Eliot, Moore was a native of the Midwest--both were born in or near St. Louis--who left the region early and did not in adult life return to it. Moore's stay was so brief, indeed, that seeking Midwestern influence or resonances in her work seems a waste of time. Yet it is significant that three of the five leading American modernist poets--Pound was born in Idaho--came from areas other than the metropolis--significant, at least, in showing that by the late nineteenth century America had a culture that drew on the whole nation rather than on the city alone.

The temptation is always to turn an account of Moore's work into a pastiche of quotations. I will indicate her style and the precision of thought with two. This one is from a 1934 review of Williams's Collecting Poems: "Struggle is a main force in William Carlos Williams. And the breathless budding of thought from thought is one of the results and charms of the pressure configured." The last eight words are of course a summary of what Moore wished to achieve in her own work.

Another comes from a 1935 comment on three poems by Elizabeth Bishop. After observing that Bishop is not a abstract observer, "one of these frettingly intensive machines," Moore writes: "The specific is judiciously interspersed with generality, and the permitted clue to idiosyncrasy has a becoming evasiveness." Devoted to accuracy of presentation though she was, Moore was never merely a literalist of the literal: "a becoming evasiveness" states what she seeks from the poet, described in "Poetry" as "a literalist of the imagination."

Moore adds to the observation on Bishop one of her few comments that classifies by gender: "Some feminine poets of the present day seem to have grown horns and to like to be frightful and danity by turns; but disturbed propriety suggest effeteness." The world has changed since 1935, but one suspects Moore would not be pleased by the delayed but now growing attempt to read her as having been a preternaturally early radical feminist. Of course she defended and spoke for her own gender. But early women critics were seldom appreciative of her work, and the feminists of the 1960s and early 1970s ignored it. She wished her achievement to be compared with that of the best, regardless of gender

The collection includes not only numerous reviews and comments on her fellow modernists but also such impressive essays as "Idiosyncrasy and Technique" and "Henry James as a Characteristic American," and some 600 pages of reviews, essays, and comments arranged chronologically from a handful of short stories published in a Bryn Mawr literary magazine to a prediction in September 1968 that the Cardinals were going to win the World Series. A 67-page appendix gives letters Moore wrote to editors, dust jacket blurbs, answers to questionnaires, and other miscellaneous pieces.

The overall impression is that Moore wrote fewer major essays than one somehow remembers, but that she wrote far more reviews and brief comments that most of us have realized. Though the works in this volume were all published, many of them were in obscure publications now available only at the largest libraries.

The book has an index, but only a brief table of contents. Editorial notes are limited to identifications of titles or topics, journals, and dates. Some indication of the context of a statement would be helpful. But the collection brings the prose out of the library, and adds to the evidence that Moore earned by her art the praise she received from the best of her contemporaries.

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