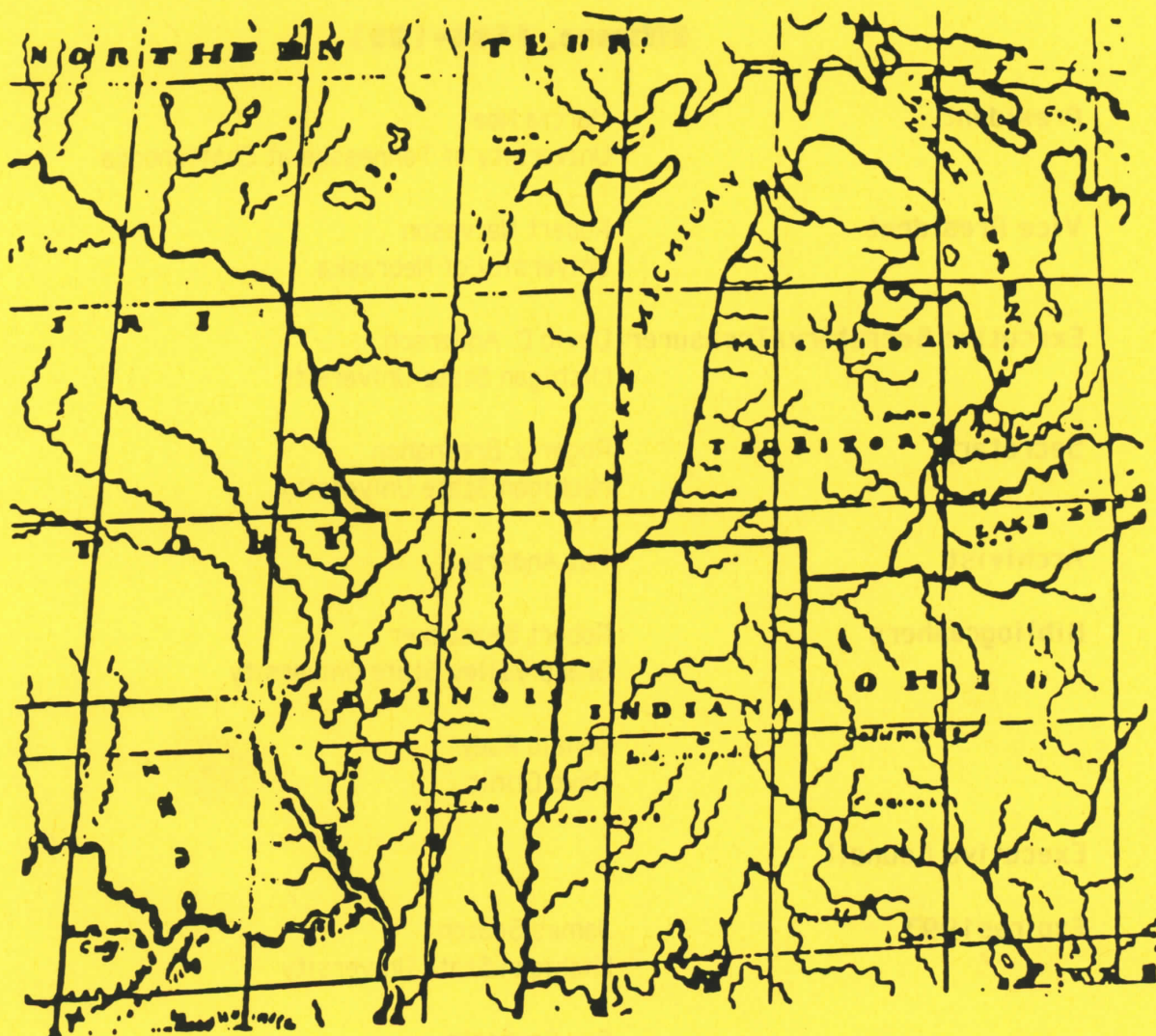


SSML Newsletter



The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

The Center for the Study of
Midwestern Literature and Culture

Founded 1971

VOLUME TWENTY
NUMBER ONE
SPRING, 1990

SOCIETY for the STUDY of MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

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Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Newsletter

Volume Twenty, Number one

Spring, 1990

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SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

NEWSLETTER

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Number One

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The Twentieth Annual Conference

The Twentieth Anniversary meeting of the Society, the symposium "The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest" and "The Midwest Poetry Festival," was held at the East Lansing Holiday Inn on May 10-12, 1990. About 100 members participated, with about 40 papers presented and 40 readings of poetry and prose. Featured were a plenary address, "Twenty Years of Midwestern Literary Study," by David D. Anderson and the presentation, at the Awards Dinner on Friday, May 11, of the Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to Midwestern Literature to Jim Harrison of Lake Leelanau, Michigan, and the MidAmerica Award for distinguished contributions to the Study of Midwestern Literature to Philip L. Gerber of the State University College of New York at Brockport.

At the Annual Connivium, held at the home of Roger and Mary Bresnahan on Saturday, May 12, winners were announced for the Midwest Heritage Award for the best paper presented and for the Midwest Poetry Award for the best poem read. Each winner received a cash award of \$250.00, provided through the generosity of Gwendolyn Brooks.

Winner of the Midwest Heritage Award was William Barillas of Michigan State for "To Sustain the Bioregion: Michigan Poets of Place." Winner of the Midwest Poetry Award was Alice Friman of Indianapolis for "In This Night's Rain." Winning works will appear in *MidAmerica* XVII (1990).

Honorable mention papers were "Harmony and Discord in Fairfield, Iowa," by Bruce Curtis; "Breath of Life: William Maxwell's Midwestern Adolescents," by Richard Shereikis, and "Lincoln and Civil Religion" by James Seaton.

Honorable mention poems were "Cicadas" by Roger Pfingston; "High Sky and Morning Water" by Margo LaGattuta; "When Mother Drew my Father In" by Anita Coleman; and "Letter to my Daughter," by John Jacob.

Newly elected officers for 1990-91 took over their duties at the business meeting on Saturday morning. They are:

President:	Marcia Noe, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Vice President:	Robert Narveson, University of Nebraska
Executive Council:	James Seaton, Michigan State University Guy Szuburta, University of Toledo

The next conference will return to the Kellogg Center of Michigan State on May 16-18, 1991.

THE MARK TWAIN AWARD

When the Mark Twain Award came into existence in 1980, its purpose was to acknowledge the significant contributions of writers who not only explain our region to ourselves and to others, but who do so in the tradition that, coming from its namesake, Mark Twain, speaks in the living language of the journey that is, perhaps, its own meaning and justification. Fittingly, the first award was to Jack Conroy, not only a Missourian, but the one who presented the image and reality of The Disinherited to an America battered and baffled by the Depression.

Tonight the writer we're honoring is very much part of the tradition established by Mark Twain and that, in the works of the other writers who've received the Award, is a vital part of our living Midwestern and American literature. A significant poet and essayist as well as a major novelist, he writes in modes both popular and literary of the substance of Michigan and the Midwest and the larger world beyond. In works as similar and yet as diverse as Wolf, Farmer, Legends of the Fall, Warlock, Sundog, and Dalva, in his poems, including seven volumes of poetry, the newest of which is The Theory and Practice of Rivers, he demonstrates a sense of history that is both prologue and reality, cultural and natural, in a style uniquely his own. He has a forthcoming novella A Woman Bit By Fireflies, and also "Sporty Food" in Snail Magazine.

I am very pleased to present The Mark Twain Award for 1990 for distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature to Jim Harrison.

David D. Anderson

THE MIDAMERICA AWARD

The oldest of the four awards presented annually by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, The MidAmerica Award, recalls that place on the map that Sherwood Anderson called his "Mid-America," the only place that, good or bad, he would ever know. It represents, too, that place in time and purpose as well as geography that gives focus to our work.

Annually since 1977 the Award has been presented to a scholar/critic who has made significant contributions to our further understanding of the literature that has come out of the Midwest to define the place and its people to ourselves and our world. The first recipient was John Flanagan; others include Russel Nye, Walter Havighurst, and Harlan Hatcher.

The award tonight goes to a scholar/critic who continues in that tradition. The author of dozens of articles on Midwestern writers and their works, ranging from Theodore Dreiser to Harriet Monroe, including a remarkable series of interviews with the artist Gilbert Wilson published in SSML Newsletter several years ago, he has contributed major booklength studies of a number of literary figures, including those on Willa Cather and Theodore Dreiser. Currently in press is Bachelor Bess, The Homesteading Letters of Elizabeth Corey, 1909-1919, published by the University of Iowa Press. His clear insight into the nature and inspiration of their works, his meticulous scholarship, his precise, provocative prose, make him the logical choice for the MidAmerica Award for 1990 for distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern literature. I am pleased to present it to Professor Philip Gerber of SUNY-Brockport.

David D. Anderson

Twenty Years of Midwestern Literary Study

David D. Anderson

When the late Satchel Page, the oldest and perhaps the greatest of baseball pitchers came out of the old Negro League to the American League Cleveland Indians in 1948 he had a standard reply to those who asked his age, his earned run average, his other statistics, or anything else that might illuminate his long relationship to a sport that had, as recently as 1940, been described in the Spaulding Baseball Book as "a sport for Caucasian gentlemen."

"Never look back," Satch inevitably replied. "They may be gaining on you."

Who "they" were, Satch never said, nor did he have to; the odds against his having made his way to the majors were so astronomical under the circumstances that the fact and the wonder of having made it were both more important and more tenuous than the path there, with a concurrent denial of significance in his accomplishment, on insistence that his performance was by definition inferior, and a condescending relegation of his long career to the backwaters of baseball history. "They" were waiting for him to blow it.

And so, here I stand to talk about "Twenty Years of the Study of Midwestern Literature," feeling somewhat like old Satch on that occasion when he stood on the mound in Cleveland to face St. Louis for the first time, knowing that I should say, "Well, we've survived for twenty years, and we've done some things, and here we are," and then I should shut up and sit down, knowing that if I don't they may catch up with us yet, those who said that it couldn't be done, that it shouldn't be done, or that it wasn't worth doing anyway.

But we're here, and I don't see any of them, so I'll take the risk, although I suspect that the next twenty years of the study of Midwestern literature may be more exciting and rewarding in many ways than the past twenty. We have come a long way in twenty years, but there's still a long way to go and a good deal yet to be done.

Actually the germ of the idea that was to become the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature goes back more than twenty years, to Friday morning, October 24, 1969, at the Midwest MLA meeting in St. Louis. There were three papers presented in the section called "American Literature II: Literature after 1870," of which Bern Engel was incoming chairman. Sanford Marovitz of Kent State spoke on "Howells and the Ghetto: The Mystery of Misery,"; Alexander Kern of the University of Iowa spoke on "Dreiser and Fitzgerald as Social Critics;" and I spoke on "Sherwood Anderson and the Coming of the New Deal." All were in general accord with the theme of the conference, which was "Criticism and Culture," an important concern of a meeting of the 60s in which Paul Goodman and Louis Kampf were featured speakers.

But as I listened to the others and thought about my own paper, I realized that each of us was talking about something more--and more intriguing--than the repudiation of the old, no longer relevant New Criticism and the attempt to construct a newer criticism based on a new sensibility growing out of the social turmoil of the sixties, a theme that ran through many of the speeches and was bandied about in the halls and lobby of the Chase Park Plaza.

That newer criticism did not emerge except in the fragments of feminist criticism and ethnic studies, and I hesitate to guess why; in our section, it struck me, we had returned to something and were talking about a sensibility and a relationship of writers to people and institutions that reflect growth and identity and compassion rather than the protest and vituperation that Kampf especially called

for. And, at the heart of the papers in our panel I felt rather than saw the clear dimension of place, of the 19th century Midwest out of which each of these writers had come.

At the end of the meeting I mentioned this observation to Bern, who, although he was a West Coast skeptic, was interested; I suggested we explore it in a future meeting; he said that I should write Sherwood Paul, then secretary of the MMLA, to propose a special program at the next meeting in Chicago. I later wrote Paul, who was at Iowa, making the suggestion; his reply--at that time I was neither cynical or suspicious-- was entirely unexpected. He said that nobody would come to such a session, that nobody could possibly be interested.

At that point I should have been properly humble and dropped it--if I had, my life would have been simpler--but I didn't. Instead I wrote or spoke to a number of others, scholars and friends whom I knew would be more sympathetic, people who had sensed the same thing and had shown it in their works. Only one said that life was already complicated enough; the others--Mert Babcock and Russel Nye of MSU, Bob Hubach of Bowling Green, Bernard Duffey of Duke, Bill McCann of East Lansing, and Bill Thomas of Ohio State--agreed that the idea was worth pursuing, that whatever it was that gave writers who had come out of the Midwest a common thrust, perhaps a common core of compassion, was worth exploring, and that each of them would like to do it.

Finally, in March 1971, Volume One, Number One of the Newsletter--a two-page description, invitation, and enrollment form, described with tongue in cheek as a historical document, was sent out to perhaps a hundred people whom I thought might be interested. Again, I should have quit when I was ahead, but I didn't, and the Newsletter announced that "the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature is now unofficially and informally a reality." Perhaps because dues were only \$1.00,

the initial response was quite good. By May 15, we had 83 members, and the second issue of the Newsletter, including reviews, announcements, bibliographies, and letters, was sent out. The Department of American Thought and Language of Michigan State, of which Bern Engel was then chairman, supported the initial mailings.

Of most importance to those who responded was the purpose of the Society as the first Newsletter defined it, and as it remains. It read:

This Society will be dedicated to the study of the rich literary heritage of the area that Sherwood Anderson called "Mid-America"--the land between the Appalachians and the Rockies, the Canadian Border and the Ohio River Valley. The Society will first of all recognize the fact that much of the literature in the mainstream of the American literary heritage is Midwestern in its influences, inception, origin, and/or subject matter; and that the relationship between the works and the region is both real and significant.

With this as a point of departure, the Society will exist to encourage and assist the study of that literature in whatever direction the insight, imagination, and curiosity of the members may lead.

Those statements remain, in my view, not only the Society's reason for being, but the only possible reason that such an organization should exist. It's not to aggrandize an institution or to glorify an individual or provide an opportunity for some people to score points at the expense of others; it exists to support the interests and study of the members, all of whom share a common curiosity, a common interest, perhaps even a common identity.

Among the first responses to the initial Newsletter was a letter from the late John T. Frederick, founder and editor of the Midland, the first journal of Midwestern literature from 1915 to its death in the Depression in 1933, and editor of Out of the Midwest (1944), the first, and with John Flanagan's America is West (1945), the basic collection of Midwestern literature. At that time John had recently retired from the University of Iowa. He wrote,

I am indeed much interested in your Newsletter which I received today. I think your idea is sound and that there is a truly valuable potential in the direction it proposes. . . .

May I suggest that in the follow-up mailing which I hope you will be

making, you mention the fact that The Prairie, by Walter J. Muilenburg, certainly one of the best Midwestern novels, has been reissued in paperback by the Popular Library. . . .

I hope that you will let me know what response your proposal receives.

John Frederick should have been the first to receive the MidAmerica Award; unfortunately he was dead before we had the resources or the nerve to begin it in 1977. The first award went to John Flanagan.

With the first conference, held at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, the Society became an organization. A one-day conference, attended by about thirty members, it consisted of two panels, each an exercise in definitions that have not yet been resolved--perhaps they never can be--but that loom large in discussions that are still going on. The first panel discussed "The Dimensions of the Midwest: Geographical and Literary," and the second discussed "The Durability of Midwestern Literary Identities." Russel Nye, the lunch speaker, focused on "Identifiable Cultural Elements in Midwestern Life and Literature."

It seemed to me then--and it still does--that these are the three questions--here transmuted into statements--that are not only most frequently addressed to us by non-believers or by literary migrants and seekers, but they're the ones we continually return to in our efforts to provide philosophical and critical foundations to our work.

In this effort we Midwesterners--or scholars of Midwestern Studies--are faced with a task that is infinitely more complex than that of our colleagues in the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, the Western Literature Society, the Center for New England Studies, or the Great Plains Study Center. All this indicates that a lot of regional research and criticism is underway in spite of the traditionally derogatory interpretation of the word, usually by Easterners, but also by Midwestern writers who should know better, that the regional is intrinsically second rate.

But the activity fails to point out a substantial difference between our activity

and theirs that makes ours infinitely more difficult, more complex, and more in need of clear, acceptable definitions. This difference is both historical and geographical. The other regions have three characteristics that we have been deprived of: (1) each of the others has a history and an identity older than the nation, and in each there has been a cultural continuum from the beginning of their existence; (2) each of the others has a reasonably clear public identity, whether fraudulent or not--the ten-gallon hat, white or black, the taco, and the saddles, full or empty, of the West; the white pillars of Tara, the Lost Cause, the crinolines, and the darkies become blacks become African-Americans as slaves become free men become voters of the South; our Pilgrim ancestors, Paul Revere's furious ride, Bunker Hill, Harvard and Yale, the Kennedys, and the tall ships of New England; the rolling emptiness and grazing steers and teepes of the plains; (3) each of the others has a controlling myth by which it explains itself to itself: the New England search for freedom at any cost; the Southern loss of a promised Eden; the Western conviction that justice will triumph.

Images have been superimposed on the Midwest--playing in Peoria, the little old lady from Dubuque, the TV image of Fernwood, Ohio, and the MGM "Picnic" production, or they have been earned, as in Big Ten football power and popularity, but their legitimacy, their age, and their durability, even of the later, are limited and properly in doubt. It's no wonder that the most frequent question I'm asked by others, whether sceptical or sincere, is "How do you define the Midwest?"

The lack of a durable, central, popular image, again, whether fraudulent or not, is paralleled by the briefness and the schizophrenia of Midwestern history. In spite of a long pre-history and the French, English, and even Spanish colonial experience, the Midwest is a creation of the Federal government, its history is post-revolutionary, and for the first seventy-five years of its existence it was the Northwest. In the

ensuing years, since Abraham Lincoln first proclaimed it the great body of the Republic in 1862, it has been characterized by paradoxes: the competing images of Zenith and Winesburg, Ohio, of Rust Belt and Corn Belt, of woodland and plain, of Great Lakes and great rivers. The question recurs: is there a Midwest? Or is there more than one? One friend sees two: east of the Mississippi, the Midwest, and west, the Middle West, one characterized by industry and farming, the other by farming and industry. Perhaps those of us who prefer "Midwest" and those who say "Middle West" are onto something, intuitively or not. And yet I prefer to think--with some supporting evidence--that beyond that apparent diversity, beyond what some insist is regional schizophrenia, lies a clear, identifiable regional unity. And much of the work of the Society and its members during the past twenty years has been based on a perceptive appreciation of that unity, and it has moved us closer to resolution.

Central to whatever it is that lies beyond the apparent diversity of the Midwest, its people, and its literature is the fact that the region is the product of the national experience and it is the product, too, of the vast migration of peoples that made a wilderness orderly and productive in less than a century as it sought the two components basic to the American promise of the Declaration of Independence and the Northwest Ordinance; these foundations were an open society and cheap land, and in the last years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth, New England villages were desolate and farms were abandoned as fear and failure were left behind in the search for promise and fulfillment. Much recent scholarship is beginning to explore the promise made reality in the wake of American independence and the promise of the land west of the mountains. It is in this promise and reality that, I am convinced, both the central image and the most enduring myth of the Midwest--its usable past--will be found.

But the promise did not automatically become reality then or since; for some it

never could in the past nor can it for others in the present or future. Not only did some Connecticut newspapers run two-paneled cartoons--the first, depicting a well-dressed man and his prosperous family, all well-mounted, leading a long pack train, labeled "Going to Ohio" and the second, depicting the same family in rags, mounted on nags, labeled "Returning from Ohio"--but the journey, the promise, the failure, and the return have provided the substance, literally or metaphorically, for the works of many of the diverse Midwestern writers, ranging from William Dean Howells and Hamlin Garland and Zona Gale to Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis and on to James T. Farrell and Saul Bellow and even Jim Harrison and Toni Morrison of our own day, all of them the subject of much study and speculation and interpretation by members of the Society in the past twenty years. Perhaps the continuum of past and present, reality and metaphor, was best described by Sherwood Anderson in the revised ending of the second edition (1922) of Windy McPherson's Son (1916), a classic story of the pursuit, the realization, and the failure of a dream. Anderson wrote first of the fear and determination and hope of the past,

In our father's day, at night in the forests of Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and on the wide prairies, wolves howled. There was fear in our fathers and mothers, pushing their way forward, making the new land.

But that fear was literal, and his people were driven as much by later psychic manifestations of the wolves as they were by the literal originals, as they did what they had to do; in Anderson's words, "Roads had to be cut through the forests, great towns must be built," and that impetus, as literal or psychic memory, was to drive generations of Americans in fiction or in life even yet, down and up the rivers and across mountains and the prairies so vast that only Scandinavians, farmers, heirs of the Vikings and heroes of Rolvaag's works, could navigate them. But Anderson goes on to define the continuum of the impetus that continued in the age of industrialism, as progress and Populism became progressivism. "When the land was conquered," he wrote, "fear remained, the fear of failure. Deep in our

American souls the wolves still howl," driving generations of young people--George Willard and Carrie Meebler as surely as their creators--simultaneously away from what had become the past and into the cities of the future and of promise, that took a younger group across the Atlantic to fight a war and then into the wastelands of Paris and Pamplano, of East Egg and West Egg, of Floral Heights and Zenith, that continue to take generations of young Midwesterners from the Big Ten campuses, MBAs in hand, into the concrete jungles, whether of the skyscrapers of a moribund modernism or the freeways to nowhere except Long Beach and San Bernardino, the wolves of success, fed and watered and nurtured by their parents as much as by a fraudulent promise, still howling sotto voce in their souls even as they're echoed by the auto salesmen turned commencement-day visionaries on those same Big Ten campuses.

Nevertheless, Anderson's wolves, real, metaphorical, or psychic, provide the impetus for the central image of the Midwest and its most enduring myth, that of movement--across the mountains and prairies, up and down the rivers, to the city and the East and Europe, from cotton patch and tobacco patch to assembly line, from ghetto to ghetto, from European penury to American wage slavery, as Easterners, New Englanders, Western, Eastern, and Southern Europeans, and American Southerners, black and white, all of diverse origins, simultaneously running from something and to something, become Midwesterners, perhaps only temporarily, but more likely permanently, or, as Midwesterners often do, to leave only to return, as writers as diverse as Louis Bromfield, Saul Bellow, and William Gass and Wright Morris and R.V. Cassill have done in their works if not also in their lives.

This image-metaphor-myth is the point with which much Midwestern literary scholarship and criticism have been struggling to come to grips during the past twenty years, as the pages of MidAmerica make clear; the Midwest has become mid-point in the geography of America, in the remorseless movement Westward, in the unfolding of the American dream, and in the simultaneous flight from and the search for, both prepositions to which each generation supplies its own reality and dream as objects, as the nation and the region lost their creativity to consumerism, their dream of fulfillment to mediocre reality.

What I'm talking about is not merely "Twenty Years of Midwestern Literary Study;" it is rather one of the great epics of human history, an unfolding epic reflected in the literary work we've been studying for twenty years, that, perhaps

because we are also observers of if not players in its drama, we have only begun to scratch the surface of as we look at the parts of Midwestern literary history--the writers, the genres, the works, the settings--rather than the total record to which each of the parts contributes. These writers and their works provide us with both the usable past and the meaningful present of the Midwest and its people if we learn to read them as the clear and eloquent Midwestern documents that they are.

Unlike those of the other regions, the central image and the unfolding myth of the Midwest are rooted in reality. They explain, in terms both epic and literal, the course of history that has taken us and the many pieces of our record in literature out of the nineteenth century past and through the fleeting present into a future we can and cannot imagine. At this point, however, the past twenty years of the study of Midwestern literature become the next twenty, and perhaps the next and more after that.

Perhaps this is the time when we must begin our movement out of diversity into the perception and study of the unity that gives impetus and substance to our region and our work. As I look at the program of both the symposium and festival for this year, I am impressed by--to paraphrase the purpose in our first documentary record--the diversity of "the insight, imagination, and curiosity of the members" and the works in which they find meaning or expression; I am aware that, as Emerson insisted, the local is the only universal; as I see a number of names that are only names or not even that to me, I am painfully aware of my own limitations, and I am doubly aware not only of the work that has been done in the past twenty years but of that which remains to be done.

I do think that at some point in the not-too-distant future we must ask ourselves what, other than the accidents of geography or circumstances, makes each of these writers Midwestern, how each of them reflects or refutes the controlling image, the unfolding myth, what distinguishes each from the writers of other regions while contributing substantially to the national literature, what, indeed, is there in the work of each of these writers that makes him or her part of the regional whole? All too often place of birth, of residence, or subject matter is considered a sufficient criterion; I don't think that it is, yet state and city literary histories often fail to come to grips with such identification except on the most superficial levels, and when the comprehensive history of Midwestern literature is written, as it surely will be in the next twenty years, whether it is an individual or a collective enterprise, that failure can only be repeated at the

cost of the integrity of the work.

An anecdote, if one is necessary, will make clear what I mean. Some years ago I edited a volume of Michigan literature for Gale Research, the first in what was to be a series of fifty. Mine was the first and last, so I supposed I killed the project--but anyway I insisted upon including only works that in some way gave significant insight into the experience of Michigan. Included were writers as diverse as Father Louis Hennepin and Jim Harrison, but where was James Oliver Curwood? To Curwood, Michigan was an accident and a convenience and his portrayal of a Michigan experience or experience of Michigan was non-existent. His Michigan memory may be suitably celebrated by the sidewalk sales of merchants in Owosso, but certainly his fictional, romantic North Country has no place in an anthology of Michigan literature. Yet periodically I face the question even yet, and I patiently try to explain without, I'm afraid, convincing those who still accept accident of place for intrinsic substance.

Useful precedents have already been established, not only in the fine anthologies edited by John Frederick and John Flanagan, but in some of the state and local histories--Arthur Shumaker's History of Indiana Literature, Bernard Duffey's The Chicago Renaissance, and others, and some of the studies now going on by members of the Society. But each is a part of the whole, and we must find it in ourselves to seek out the relationships, if not to others, at least to ourselves.

Most of you remember, many of you use, and others have contributed to the first and unfortunately only major study of the literature of the region to come out of the work of the Society. I'm referring to A Bibliographic Guide to Midwestern Literature, edited by Gerald Nemanic, former president of the Society, and published by the University of Iowa Press in 1981. Under Gerry's editorship, it was and is a first-rate work. But as is so much of what I've talked about tonight, it is also prefatory to the larger works, the more comprehensive and the more insightful works that are to come. I am, for instance, simultaneously green with envy at and annoyed at the arrogance of the publication of The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, a media as well as scholarly event of last year. And yet we Midwestern studies scholars--perhaps because of our lack of arrogance, but, I suspect, more likely our lack of confidence, perhaps even our lack of regional identity or our lack of understanding of ourselves and what we do, find it impossible to conceive of such a project, much less to carry it out.

Perhaps grandiose self images and arrogant self-confidence are not part of

our Midwestern nature--anyway, I hope not, but nevertheless, it is time to think again, as Gerry did some fifteen years ago, of a project that will build on his accomplishment, stretch our imaginations and insights, and give us further insights into what it is that we profess. What I am suggesting is a collective project to which we, like the contributors to Gerry's volume, can bring the best insights we have. What I am suggesting is, as a major project of the Society, not a grandiose cultural encyclopedia, at least not yet, but a more modest dictionary of Midwestern Literature, to be compiled by the members of the Society in the next decade, with a proposed publication date scheduled to coincide with the beginning of the next century. If such a project does become a reality, it will, I am convinced, go a long way toward establishing the foundation of a common literary identity, one that will simultaneously tell us where we have come from in our study of Midwestern Literature, where we are, and perhaps suggest the direction of the future.

There is much that we have to concern ourselves with in the next few days in addition to our attention to the breadth and depth and richness of the program, and I add the foregoing suggestion to the hopper. Perhaps something will come of it; I like to think so.

In closing I have one other comment. Tomorrow evening we'll make two awards to two distinguished representatives of our common enterprise. I like to think on occasion of the names of those awards and what they represent: one, the Mark Twain Award, recognizes the source of our language, our sense of justice, our purpose, and our conviction that somewhere, somehow, down the river, across the mountains, over the hill, or around the corner, somewhere, perhaps in the territories of the spirit, there may be a meaningful end to a meaningful journey; and the other, the MidAmerica Award, suggests the place, the only universal, where the beginning of the journey, the journey itself, and perhaps the end, if it exists, can be found, where, in Sherwood Anderson's words, we come eventually to know and perhaps even to understand that MidAmerica as the place where literature and life, metaphor and reality, eventually become one.

IN MEMORIAM: JACK CONROY

Jack Conroy of Moberly, Missouri, author of the celebrated novel The Dininherited (1933) and first recipient of the Society's Mark Twain Award in 1980, died in Moberly on February 28, 1990. Jack, a member and supporter of the Society from its beginning, was 91. His wife of 60 years, Gladys, died in 1982.

Born on December 5, 1898, in the mining camp of Monkey Nest near Moberly, Jack attended the University of Missouri for a year, 1920-1921, and worked at a variety of industrial jobs while becoming a writer, editor, and spokesman for the exploited and dispossessed of his generation. Founder and editor of The Rebel Poet, The Anvil, and The New Anvil, he was also author of A World to Win (1935) and three juvenile works with Arne Bontemps. The Jack Conroy Reader appeared in 1979 and Writers in Revolt in 1973.

Of Jack and his work memories and comments continue. Doug Wixson reminds us that "Jack Conroy's special brilliance was that he took the tales of his fellow workers and was able to transform them into literature." Studs Terkel said "Let's face it: like his writings, the man is larger than life;" Mark Harris said he was "a national landmark and treasure."

Jack's funeral was held in Moberly on March 2. He is buried in Sugar Creek Cemetery, down the road from Monkey Nest Camp. He is survived by a son, Jack Conroy, Jr. of Corvallis, Oregon, six grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

David D. Anderson

In Memoriam: James C. Austin

James C. "Jim" Austin, Professor Emeritus of American Studies at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, recipient of the MidAmerica Award for 1989, and member and supporter of the Society from its beginning, died in Collinsville on March 7, 1990. Born in Kansas City on November 27, 1923, he grew up in Cleveland and had spent much of his professional career in South Dakota and Southern Illinois, where he directed the American Studies Program. He has had visiting professorships and Fulbrights to the Phillipines and France and served in the Army during World War II.

Jim was an able jazz musician and a poet as well as a scholar. Among his books are Fields of the Atlantic Monthly (1953), Artemus Ward (1964), Petroleum V. Nasby (1965), Bill Arp (1970), Popular Literature in America (1972), and American Humor in France (1978). He also wrote librettos for four musical plays.

A memorial service was held in Edwardsville on March 18. Memorial contributions may be sent to the Collinsville Memorial Public Library, 408 West Main Street, Collinsville, Illinois 62234.

Jim is survived by his wife Lee and sons Eric and Bruce.

David D. Anderson

The Glass Woman by Patricia Traxler. Brooklyn, New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1983. 95 pages. \$5.00, paper.

This book begins well; "The Glasscutters" provides both challenging and rewarding reading. Given the title of this book, we presume that the author or the persona of the author is a glass woman. The "Glasscutters" then, have come to hurt or at least shape her, to cut her down to something useful. Because the glasscutter comes in her sleep in section I, she tries to remain awake. It is her dreams and doubtless her imagination that is being sliced. We also discover that she tries remaining awake for the sake of the men sleeping beside her; she "must dance the horizontal dance/of the openeyed dreamer." But dreams tug at her and she realizes that:

I have always, suddenly,
waited for this crescendo
this filling away beneath me
this plunge
into unblinking blackness
where glasscutters wait for my dreams.

The second, longer half of this opening poem gives us "Eleven Glass Dreams in Winter." The dreams are fraught with strained images, like icicles which won't melt "above the soft bellies of crocuses." Ultimately, however, the dreams deal most tellingly with the relationship between the glass woman and the man who sleeps beside her.

In each dream there is the hint of leaving. Dream Seven Says:

Maybe the thing is
that so much of what we dream
depends on
yet ignores
the inevitability of waking
It's March You're whispering
in your sleep and I can't understand
the words: I think they may be
Etruscan. I hear the sound
of windowpanes reasoning with the wind
I want to translate your words but the wind
gets in the way: one of you is saying This
is what I want
the other is saying A season
is ending.

By Dream Ten we realize the man will leave:

There are just so many dreams
allotted any one dreamer
and hoarding does no good since dreams
don't keep. . .

Unfortunately, many of the rest of the poems in the volume are not as rewarding as "The Glasscutter." They do not rely on the tension and complexities which shape the best of Traxler's work. However, another strong thread which runs through the book is Traxler's memory of both her grandmother and mother. On this theme Traxler again shines, both in her serious recollections and in her more humorous, anecdotal poems. In "The Roomer," a powerful poem, we see her serious side. And in "How Trust Works" humor bubbles up.

A number of the poems in The Glass Woman reveal how Traxler views her life in Kansas. Although these poems tend to be among her less interesting and original work, occasionally Traxler sees the prairie with fresh insight:

. . . Chips of flint
I've picked up lie cool in the hand
in my pocket; they make a sound
nothing like money. I'm here
now, nowhere else, and the man whose dreams
kept me awake nights, half a continent

away, strides ahead of me: midwestern man
full of silence as this land is. Silence: you
can plow it and plow
again. You will find the soil rich

as you imagined. Plunge
your fingers in: you will come up

with fragments that tell you
only what you haven't asked. That is all
you may take back with you. The rest
belongs to itself.

Traxler's voice is full of spirited energy--especially when exploring the intertwining themes of family relationships, dreaming, and the influence of men on the lives of women. In addition, Traxler's sense of humor, her warmth, and her flashes of insight make The Glass Woman worth reading.

Cynthia S. Pederson

Sherwood Anderson's Literary Apprenticeship

Sherwood Anderson: Uncollected Writings, ed. by Ray Lewis White.

Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989. 179 pp., notes, bibliography, \$12.95.

David D. Anderson

Among the most durable of the many myths surrounding Sherwood Anderson, the advertising man became business executive become serious literary artist, is that perpetrated by Waldo Frank, Paul Rosenfeld, and other critics of the short-lived Seven Arts group in 1916-1917. According to this myth, created and of whole cloth and wishful thinking by critics and editors who had come out of the Ivy League determined to create an indigios American literature, with the publication of Windy McPherson's Son in September, 1916 Anderson, the rustic businessman had disappeared, and Anderson the mystic and artist had appeared, spontaneously and fully developed, on the Western horizon, an authentic, untutored, uncorrupted American original. That he had already published fiction in Harpers and fiction and essays in the Little Review, that, indeed, he had served a long writing apprenticeship in essays that began in speculation about his profession and became increasingly imaginative was beside the point to the Seven Arts critics, and in the past seventy-five years, that apprenticeship has been largely ignored by critics and biographers who have known better, but have passed it over with little more than lip service, if that. Yet the evidence of it has been available to those who chose to seek it out.

The publication of Sherwood Anderson: Early Writings, edited by Ray Lewis White (Kent State University Press, 1989) not only gives the lie to the myth, but makes it impossible for future critics and biographers to dismiss that apprenticeship as casually as it had been in the past. In the collection Professor White collects the evidence of the long apprenticeship, ranging from "The Farmer Wears Clothes" (Agriculture Advertising 9, Feb. 1920), a pitch for ready-made clothing manufacturers

to address this potential market via "the high-class farm papers," to "Blackfoot's Masterpiece" (Forum 55, June 1916), an essay in story form anticipating much of his later imaginative journalism of the 1920s and 30s as it defines the fate of a poor painter who ultimately rejects commercialism and corruption.

Included between the extremes are the series of essays in his columns "Rot and Reason" and "Business Types" in Agricultural Advertising, his final literary essay, "The New Note" (Little Review, March 1914), his first published story, "The Rabbit-Pen" (Harpers, July 1914), and the stories and essays of the years between 1914 and 1916 that saw him emerge as a literary artist.

In his afterward, "A Note on Editing," Professor White discusses particularly the problem of determining which of the numerous anonymous filler items in Agricultural Advertising were written by Anderson and his sensible decision to include only that transitional material following eight of Anderson's columns in 1903, essentially an apprenticeship technique that Anderson learned to avoid.

White provides background for each of the inclusions in brief transitional notes that place the writings in the context of Anderson's life and career without making critical claims or assertions that make the works more than they are, either as part of the productivity of a young writer slowly finding himself or as the works that show the evolution of Anderson's style, technique, and attitudes. Many of the pieces are good for what they are, and the relationship between the later works and the achievement that was to become evident in Winesburg, Ohio is clear, but Professor White lets them speak for themselves.

Noticeably evident is the lack of any of Anderson's writings from the years 1905 and 1913, the years when in Cleveland and Elyria, Anderson's children were born and he came close to business success. These were the years, too, when, at first secretly and then more openly, he began to write seriously, probably producing, among other things, the texts of what were to become Marching Men and Windy McPherson's Son, as well as "The Rabbit-Pen," before making the break with business that was to become the central image in the myth into which he transmuted his life and that of the nation during his lifetime.

Nevertheless, from those years in Elyria, one published document remains uncollected, that of "Commercial Democracy," a pamphlet that apparently proposed a

joint-stock partnership in his business and that may be the substance of the work he later insisted that he wrote and destroyed called "Why I Am a Socialist." One copy of the pamphlet is known to exist; it was sold several years ago by an Ohio bookdealer (for \$50.00!) to an owner who insists upon anonymity.

Professor White's contributions to the study of Sherwood Anderson are legendary; Sherwood Anderson: Uncollected Writings is another important addition to those contributions. It belongs not only in the collections of Anderson scholars but in the hands of everyone interested in the growth of modern America as well as in the beginning of a major literary movement and the career that gave it its impetus.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dorys C. Graver, professor of literature and languages at East Texas State University and an active member of the Society from its beginning, has received the Distinguished Faculty Award from ETSU. A widely published poet and fiction writer as well as a productive scholar and prolific presenter of papers, she also received a major ETSU research grant. Her most recent publication is John Graves, a monograph in the Western Writers Series.

The North Stone Review has resumed publication after more than a decade. Edited by James Naiden, number nine, 1990, contains articles, essays, fiction, verse, and review-articles, 248 pages of text for six dollars.

Orders and submissions may be sent to:

The Editors
The North Stone Review
D Station, Box 14098
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Newly published is Cather Studies, edited by Susan J. Rosowski at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Editorial address is Department of English, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588.

Dave Anderson has been designated University Distinguished Professor by Michigan State University.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

The 1991 meeting of the American Culture Assn./ Popular Culture Assn. will be held March 27-30 in San Antonio. For a panel on romance writers, send papers or abstracts by Sept. 1, to Anne Kaler, 134 Jenkins Avenue, Lansdale, PA (215-368-0484). For a panel on literature and politics, send one-page proposals by Sept. 10 to Adam Sorkin, Penn State-Delaware County Campus, Media, PA 19063.

Far West PCA/ACA meets Jan. 24-26, 1991 in Las Vegas. Submit panel and paper proposals on all aspects of American and pop culture to Felicia Campbell, English Dept., Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV 89154 (702-739-3457). Deadline: November 5.

The Journal of the Midwest MLA is planning special issues on topics of general interest. Send submissions and suggestions for future topics to Rudolf Kuenzli, MMLA, 302 EPB, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

For the Spring 1991 issue: on cultural studies and the new historicism: theories of cultural studies and their usefulness for interpreting literary texts; British vs. American definitions; cultural studies and women; new historicism and marxism; Stuart Hall's "cultural studies" vs. Stephen Greenblatt's "poetics of culture"; new historicism and feminism; Foucault and new historicism; essays that exemplify a certain theory of culture in interpreting a literary text. Deadline: December 1.

The Fall 1991 issue will focus on professional and pedagogical concerns, such as publishing vs. teaching; how to evaluate teaching; effective undergraduate and graduate programs; assessment of foreign language proficiency; status of part-time faculty, etc. Deadline: April 1, 1991.

"Fast Rewind-II: The Archaeology of Moving Images," June 12-16, 1991 in Rochester, New York, will focus on preservation and use of "moving image documents." Quantitative or qualitative papers are welcome, as are literature reviews, application studies, case studies, and works focusing on methodological, curatorial, or theoretical issues. The conference will also feature production showcases in which recent film and television programs relying on archival materials will be presented and discussed. Panel and paper proposals, or abstracts, should be submitted in triplicate. Send a synopsis, treatment or script for a work-in-progress; send a 16mm or 3/4 inch NTSC videocassette of a completed work. Contact: Bruce Austin,

Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY 14623-0887 (phone 716-475-2879). Deadline: January 4, 1991.

JOURNALS

Mad River, a multi-disciplinary journal of essays for the educated general reader invites contributions on the history and philosophy of science and technology; Ohio, local and regional studies; literature, the arts and politics. Send manuscripts to Charles Taylor, Editor, Mad River, Dept. of Philosophy, Wright State Univ., Dayton, OH 45435 [Bitnet: ctaylor@wsu] [Internet: ctaylor@desire.wright]

FOAFtale News, published by the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, reports on rumors and legends circulating in all parts of the world. To subscribe, send \$18 to Mark Glazer, Behavioral Science, Univ. Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX 78539.

The Cryptic Scholar, a new journal concerned with historical research on Freemasonry, invites submissions. Send submissions and subscriptions (\$15/yr) to Don McDermott, English Dept., Northern Michigan Univ., Marquette, MI 49885

CONFERENCES

Midwest PCA/Midwest ACA meets October 4-7 in Toledo. Contact Garyn Roberts or Gary Hoppenstand, American Thought & Language Dept., Michigan State Univ., East Lansing, MI 48824-1033

The Poetry Society of America's 80th Anniversary Celebration: Poets are invited to take part in a special two-part program in St. Louis on consecutive Saturday afternoons, October 20 & 27. Contact Charles Guenther, 2935 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63104-1536 (phone 314-664-2384).

The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature will sponsor two sessions at the 1990 Midwest MLA meeting in Kansas City, Nov. 1-3.

Look for the SSML sessions at MLA in Chicago, Dec. 27-30, including a special session at the Newberry Library.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The Science Fiction/Fantasy Collections at the Popular Culture Library, Bowling Green State Univ. includes some 8,000 volumes, 8,500 pulp magazines, 36,000 graphic novels and comic books, and 3,500 fanzines, as well as manuscripts and papers of Ray Bradbury, Joanna Russ, Alexei and Cory Panshin, Robert Bloch, Joseph Payne Brennan, Jeffrey A. Carver, R. A. Lafferty, Carl Jacobi, Sheldon R. Jaffery, and Philip K. Dick. The Popular Culture Library has recently acquired the original films for thirty-six episodes of "Studio One," a live dramatic anthology telecast 1948-58, as well as some 450 outlines, synopses, and scripts relating to television production and broadcasting, 1949-60. Contact: Brenda McCallum, Popular Culture Library, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0600 (phone 419-372-2450).

The Hess Collection of Children's Literature at Univ. of Minnesota contains over 80,000 publications, including dime novels, story papers, series, comics, Big Little Books, periodicals, and pulps. Address: Children's Literature Research Collections, Walter Library, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Long Ride Back, a novel of the Vietnam War and its aftermath by John Jacob, has been published by Thunder's Mouth Press. The Village Voice calls it "a mature and poignant first novel," and the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times Book Review refer to Jacob's writing as "terse and vivid." Jacobs, who has read at the Midwest Poetry Festival, has published five books of poetry, one of which won the 1980 Carl Sandburg Award. His chapbook, Summerbook, is available from the Spoon River Poetry Press (Peoria).

The Red Azalea: Chinese Poetry Since the Cultural Revolution, edited and translated by Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Dai Fang, has been published by University of Hawaii Press. Morin, whose books of poetry include The Dust of Our City and Dear Carnivores, has read at the Midwest Poetry Festival.

Bernard F. Engel has published a revision of his 1964 study, Marianne Moore, in the Twayne series. This is still the only study to give a reading to each of the works in Moore's Collected Poems (1981), including those written or revised in later years. A founding member of the Society for

the Study of Midwestern Literature and author of a dozen books and more than 150 articles, notes, and reviews, Engel has been a frequent participant on SSML panels at various professional meetings, as well as the SSML annual Symposium: The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest.

Philip L. Gerber has published Bachelor Bess: The Homesteading Letters of Elizabeth Corey, 1909-1919 with University of Iowa Press. In these 180 letters a young woman writes of homesteading on the Dakota frontier. Gerber is the recipient of SSML's 1990 MidAmerica Award for distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern literature.

F. Richard Thomas has published Americans in Denmark: Comparison of Two Cultures by Writers, Artists, and Teachers with Southern Illinois University Press. Of this book, Garrison Keillor has said, "I picked it up one night and couldn't put it down." A widely published poet and editor of Centering, a magazine of poetry and short fiction, Thomas has worked behind the scenes to shape the SSML annual Midwest Poetry Festival.

Conversations with Filipino Writers by Roger J. Bresnahan, oral histories of eleven English-language fictionists, has been published by New Day in Quezon City, Philippines. It will be available in the U.S. in October from The Cellar Book Shop, Detroit (313-861-1776). Included are interviews with three U.S.-based writers: Bienvenido N. Santos, N. V. M. Gonzalez, and Linda Ty-Casper. With David D. Anderson, Bresnahan co-chairs the SSML annual Symposium: The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest and the Midwest Poetry Festival.

AWARDS

Poet and translator Charles Guenther of St. Louis has received the 1990 Missouri Writers' Guild Award for the best newspaper article published in 1989, a poetry review which appeared in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

David D. Anderson, founder of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, has received the rank of Distinguished University Professor at Michigan State University. Anderson, who has published more than thirty books and serves as a nominator for the Nobel Prize in literature, co-chairs the SSML annual Symposium: The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest and the Midwest Poetry Festival.

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LONG RIDE BACK

A Novel by John Jacob

■ CONTEMPORARY FICTION SERIES

"Few people have managed to be poet, teacher, editor, scholar in one life, and to accomplish those skills with such clear excellence and vision."

—Michael McClure

"John Jacob is a writer of striking versatility and inventiveness."

—Ralph J. Mills, Jr.

With unflinching accuracy, in a wrenching and poignant first novel, *Long Ride Back*, award-winning poet John Jacob captures the harrowing experience of the Vietnam War and its bitter aftermath—the waking nightmare that continues for those Americans who survived.

This haunting novel is about how memory keeps a terrible past alive; whose relentless intrusions wreak havoc upon the present.

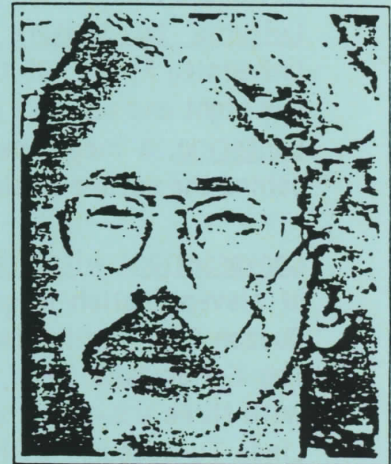
After returning from a tour of duty in Southeast Asia, only fellow veterans, guys like six foot six McCoy (who seems to have adjusted), Ray Sharp (an ace with a knife, now in jail), and Swanson (who, after his return, donned his combat gear and went hunting for the enemy in a Chicago suburb) know what's really going on with Travis Jones.

His scarred body wracked by recurring malaria, each night Travis fights the sweats and chills of fever with Flagyl and Meclizine. Even worse, both day and night, reality gives way to the terrible memories and dreams of war. Travis, along with his friend Ray Sharp, were "Cut Men," members of an elite group of the U.S. Army's highly trained intelligence troops. Sent out by the brass on the most dangerous missions, wary as wild animals, these men, who knew the ways of the jungle and the enemy, met the challenge with cool heads and matchless courage.

During the war, Travis didn't question why he was fighting, but followed orders and concentrated on staying alive. He was, however, mystified by American cooperation in the field with two unknown officers—one French, the other English. Toward the end of his tour, when he and Sharp—sole survivors of their squad—move to carry out a top secret order taken from their dead commander, they discover the shocking truth behind these joint maneuvers.

Long Ride Back, a seamless tapestry of past and present, dream and nightmare, war and its devastating and long-lasting effects, marks John Jacob's impressive debut as a novelist.

John Jacob has published five books of poetry, one of which won the 1980 Carl Sandburg Award. He has taught at six colleges and universities since 1972, most recently at the University of Illinois-Chicago and Northwestern University, where he teaches writing.



POETRY

FORTHCOMING

THE RED AZALEA

CHINESE POETRY SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

edited and translated by Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Dai Fang

Introduction by Leo Oufan Lee

When the repressive Cultural Revolution ended soon after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, a few young Beijing writers dared to express their personal feelings in unauthorized magazines. These poets became culture heroes, opening a window of free speech for other writers and the later Democracy Movement activists. For a decade the climate for imaginative writing in China steadily improved—until the 1989 Beijing demonstrations and massacre.

The most comprehensive poetry anthology to date of this exciting period, *The Red Azalea* contains 120 poems by two dozen writers spanning five decades or "generations"—from Ai Qing, who began writing in the 1930s, to the youngest neo-Dadaist now in his twenties. Unlike other collections of literature from the People's Republic, *The Red Azalea* focuses solely on poetry, chosen for literary merit and durability rather than for documentary value in the ongoing "China watch." Yet, as readers of Eastern European poetry have discovered, poetry can sometimes be a more reliable witness than journalism.

Edward Morin's books of poetry include *The Dust of Our City* and *Dear Carnivores*. Dennis Ding is Chairman of Foreign Languages at Guizhou University in southwest China. Dai Fang is currently a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature at the University of Michigan.

Fall 1990 (tent.), \$TBA

ISBN 0-8248-1256-5

DECLARATION

For Yi Lo-ke the Martyr*

Bei Dao

perhaps the last moment is here

I haven't left a will

only a pen . . . to my mother

I'm not a hero

during the years without heroes

I just wanted to be a man

the quiet horizon

separated the ranks of the living from the
dead

I had to choose the sky

and would never kneel on the ground

to let executioners look gigantic

so they could block the wind of freedom

out of star-like bullet holes

a bloody dawn is flowing

*Yi Lo-ke, a young writer judged to be in violation of socialist policy because he argued that social class is not necessarily inherited. He was shot and killed by soldiers in 1970, about six years before the end of the Cultural Revolution.

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University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Hawaii Press
2840 Kolowalu Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

PUNCHING OUT

By Jim Daniels

In a series of tightly woven poems, Jim Daniels tells the story of a young man, Digger, who takes a job in an auto factory. Daniels takes us inside the plant where we meet a range of characters--among them the foreman Santino, Digger's good friend Odie, a wizened, cynical mechanic named Old Green, and Jeannie, an attractive woman wise enough to survive sexual harassment. Characters reappear from poem to poem, giving the book the feel of a novel, and Daniels' poems play off one another so that as the book progresses it accumulates a tension and an energy.

Digger's initial reaction of shock and dismay at the difficult working conditions changes to cynicism as he begins to realize that, like his father, friends, and neighbors, the factory is swallowing him up. Unlike the factory, Daniels imbues his characters with humanity, sometimes humorously, sometimes tragically.

Punching Out offers no easy answers, but by personalizing the complex issues and programs facing today's blue-collar workers asks us to consider their lives as a way of examining the system.

GLOVE/HAND

The hands have trouble being naked.
The hand has trouble with the pen.

In the gloves the fingers do not feel
hot or cold or sharp.
the gloves make the hands
part of a machine.

The gloved hand is a paw,
an awkward, swiping thing.

Without claws.
The glove gets the job done.
The hand has little to say.

Jim Daniels was born in Detroit and currently lives in Pittsburgh. His poems have been heard on National Public Radio and have appeared in numerous publications including *Paris Review*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly*. His first book, *Places/Everyone*, won the inaugural Brittingham Prize in Poetry.

96 pages
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ISBN 0-8143-2191-7 paperback, \$ 9.95

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