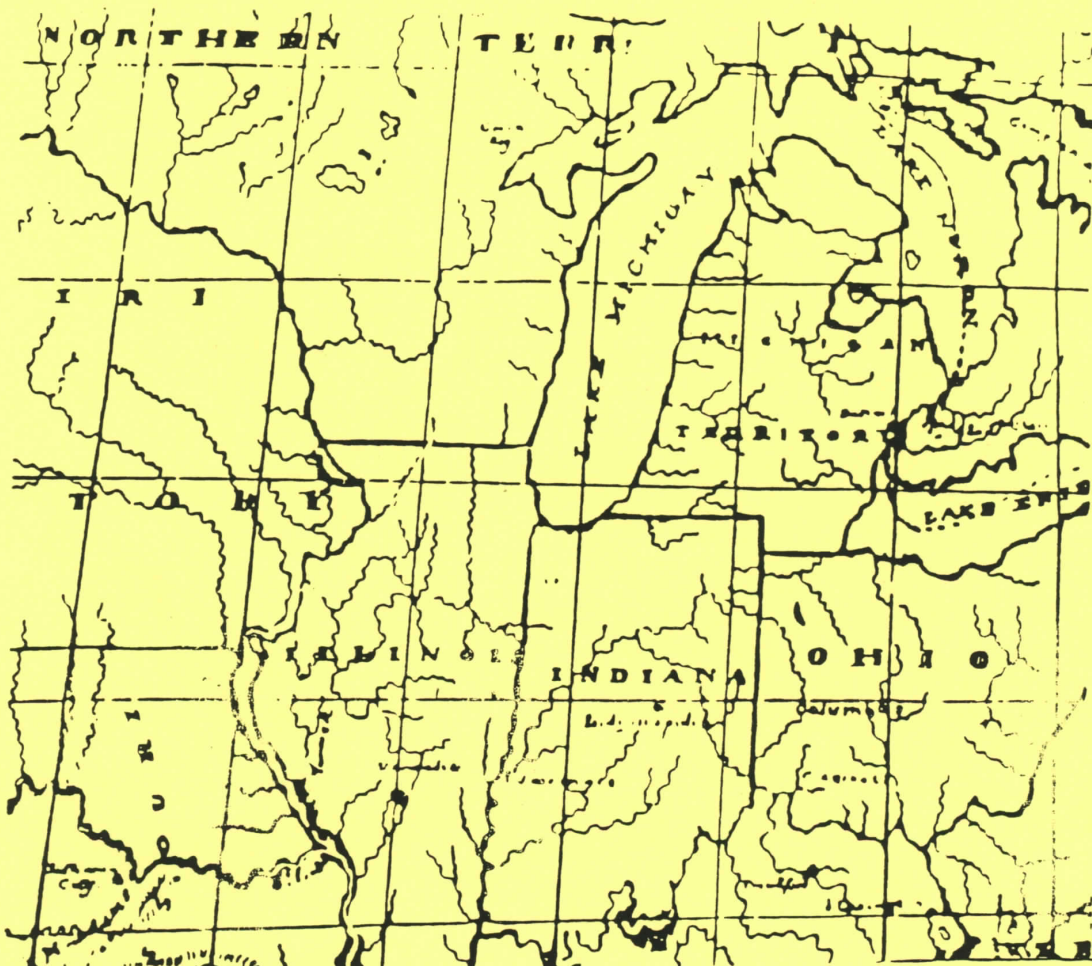


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THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

William Thomas

A mile south of our farm a big iron bridge spanned the Scioto, and across, on the road to the north, was John Berridge's blacksmith shop, where my father took his horses to have them shod. It was a wondrous place, a cavernous shed from whose rafters and beams hung fantastic shapes of iron and on hooks horseshoes of all sizes. The south end was bright with sunlight from the open big west door, and there on the plank floor the horses would be tied while John held one or another of its feet between his knees against his leather apron. I watched eagerly when he nailed the shoe, and was ever amazed at the defenses with which he clipped off and clinched the nails on the upper side of the hoof. I asked my father if it didn't hurt the horse, and he said it didn't. The horse seemed not to mind, except rarely, and then John would skillfully manoeuvre him off balance and have the hoof between his knees in spite of him. After the nails were clinched he would pare off the edge of the hoof outside the shoe with a curious knife whose blade at the end had a sidewise curl.

In the middle of the shop was the big anvil, bolted to a great block of wood on the floor of packed earth, and near the east wall the forge, from whose yellow coals John would take a horseshoe with his long tongs, hold the glowing red tip of one prong over the anvil point, and hammer it into a short angle or hook. I was fascinated by this. The shaping of both prongs done, he would plunge it into the big vat of dark water by the forge, whence would issue a great sizzling and a cloud of steam. Cooled at once, it was ready for nailing to the hoof. While standing by the vat, John would probably give the handle of the blower a turn, sending a white glow out of the

forge, where another shoe was heating, although, watch as I might, I could never see him put it there.

Here in this middle area were up-ended nail kegs for casual visitors to sit on, and for the habitual guests luxurious comfort in a fully upholstered automobile seat, in front of which was plenty of room to spit. Beyond, filling the gloom of the north end, were wagon wheels and tires, big iron pipes, and complicated-looking iron shapes; on pegs, big and little iron bars and rods; and on nails from beams and walls, clevises, single-tree hooks, and hames. You could not get within ten feet of the north wall because of this profusion of iron.

It is assumed difficult to hold in the memory specific tastes or odors; but I can easily recall the blacksmith shop's peculiar and distinctive smells. That of fresh manure was evanescent; but there was the pungent and durable odor of hoof parings, like strong, stale sweat; the smell of the forge itself, not smoky, as of an ordinary fire, but sharp and tangy and agreeable; and the sudden, brief, prickly scent that came with the steam out of the vat when the hot horseshoe was plunged into the water. Even the iron had an odor, but thin and delicate, overpowered by the others, which were ambrosial.

Whenever I bent a pedal bar of my tricycle, it was John Berridge who would straighten it. My father would take the tricycle along in the wagon when he had the horses shod or on one of his frequent trips in the buggy to the other farm. John would stop whatever he was doing at the time and attend to it at once--it took but a minute--and never charged for it. He would grasp the frame with his left hand, lift it, place the end of the pedal bar on the anvil, and give it a couple of hard blows with his hammer. It seemed to me he was hitting it on the wrong side, but my father said not, and it was done. John would tell me to ride it home.

Ohio State University Emeritus

The Half-modern World of William Vaughn Moody

Bernard F. Engel

Though the notion that literary generations exist can mislead critics and historians, it is nevertheless true that we are all creatures of our times. Keats and Shelley were Romantics, Tennyson and Browning Victorians, Eliot and Pound modernists in good part because they were sensitive to the currents dominating the flow of literature by their contemporaries. Such currents are strong enough that the failure of some talented writers to achieve major accomplishment may be owing in part to their having been born at a time when one tide was ebbing and the next one was not yet formed. One may cite as examples Richard Eberhart (born 1904), Robert Penn Warren (1905), and Elizabeth Bishop (1911)--all gifted with high capability but born too late to take part in the modernist mode at its height, too early to associate closely with Robert Lowell & Company.

An earlier case in point is that of William Vaughn Moody (1869-1910), the Midwestern poet and playwright who moved halfway from late Romantic--"Victorian," if you prefer--assurance to the oncoming doubts and strictures of the modernists. Moody sensed a need for change, writing to Harriet Brainerd on January 31, 1907 (Mackaye 323), that William James's pragmatism would cause a revolution in metaphysics and could clear away "pretty much all of the century-old lumber by which our lives are encumbered." Yet he clung to the moralistic approach. In a letter to Harriet on January 21, 1907, criticizing the "success-madness" of the theater; he said that he was thinking of writing a play on the subject. He knew, he wrote, that she would object that "no work of art with so moralistic an origin ever got anywhere." But, he added, "moral passion" may be "as good a motive-spring of art as any other passion." (Mackaye 322). Moody did, especially in poems dealing with the Spanish-American

War, take one stride toward the disillusion with traditional rationality regarding society and self that lay behind the urgencies of Pound and Eliot. But in almost all of his work he continued to voice the sense of American community, the democratic political ideals, the ethical enthusiasm, the love of beauty, the discovery of that beauty in nature, and the dedication to idealism that made up the creed of writers born a decade earlier than he--the "genteel" doctrines that were to be scorned or ignored by those born ten or a dozen years after his own birth.

The majority of Moody's poems were in traditional lyric and narrative modes. His lyrics were often Romantic in setting and theme (moorland, Italy, the love affair of a knight in armor), and were Romantic too in their presentation of a speaker who is on a quest for a golden but indefinite Keatsian beauty. His narratives, equally conventional in form and manner, often ponder mankind's relationship to the universe, the sort of large question most modernists would regard as vague, soft-headed, or unanswerable.

Throughout his short life he talked of ideal beauty as the highest value, even though he was aware that the everyday world rarely presents the ideal. Moody's practices show in "Gloucester Moors," a rhymed tetrameter meditation on the complexities of earthly existence. The poem's impressionism, its speaker's love of beauty and his discovery of it in nature, represent the poetic mode scorned by the modernists. The speaker has set out to enjoy the beauties of the northeastern countryside in June; in the first three stanzas he cites details of the resurgent life that gives early summer its aesthetic appeal. But by the fourth stanza he realizes that the quick comings and goings of life forms suggest that the earth itself is almost as ephemeral as the delights of the season. He is, moreover, taken aback by observing that in this life some men and women seem doomed to suffer while others are privileged to govern.

The speaker ends with puzzled questioning: will Earth eventually see a "brotherly" spirit in humanity, or will "a haggard ruthless few" continue to dominate? Maurice Brown finds it ironic that this "uncharacteristic" Poem has become Moody's best known work in verse (111). But the method--setting the natural scene carefully before turning to the argument--is one Moody used in other narratives, presumably because of his belief that nature is intimately related to events in the human world. Concern with public issues rather than merely personal ones is also typical.

Similar difficulties in comprehending the ways of the universe with mankind give rise to "Road-Hymn for the Start." Here the speaker, no doubt a reader of Arnold, sets out to see life "whole" but learns that God "maketh nothing manifest," does not explain his purposes. There is, however, a measure of hope. Moody has his speaker find this in the thought that God does give to humankind "the boon of endless quest," does allow his creatures to seek answers. The opening injunction to the seeker to leave human concerns behind himself leads to the declaration that one should "wander." No specific direction can be given: presumably one traveling in any direction in the natural world may hope to find some indication of a transcendent life. One wishes that Moody had been less easily satisfied with approximations of his meaning: such expressions as "Soldiers heedless of their harry?" need reworking.

Life's uncertainties also were the theme in some of Moody's investigations of faith healing, a practice he thought possibly valid (Halpern 160-64). The speaker of "Until the Troubling of the Waters" is a mother hoping for a miracle to heal her retarded child. But when she sees a Christ-like visitor by his bed she finds herself swept by the fear that a cure would turn the boy into someone other than the one she loves. She soon realizes that this reaction is selfish, and

takes the child to the city where, she has heard, a faith healer is successful. The poem ends with the mother torn between hope and doubt as she waits for the healer to appear. The reader does not learn the outcome. The poem is meant not to provide assurances or arouse despair, but to show the mother's move toward what Moody saw as psychological maturity. It also illustrates the limitations of human knowledge.

Uncertainty is again the theme in "Good Friday Night," a poem written after Moody watched a religious procession in Sorrento in 1897 (Manly xx). The speaker at first holds himself aloof. But when he sees his dead mother's face on an effigy of Christ's mother, he sinks to his knees. After the event he walks away chatting with another watcher; when this companion seems to disappear into the moon, the speaker realizes that he was perhaps Christ. The implication is that the experience has brought the speaker something of the spiritual transcendence he desires. In Eliot's early poems, Christ is absent, and Pound chose to present him as the "goodly fere," a knockabout scornful of the weak.

The god that Moody's characters accept is one who requires effort and even suffering. In "The Brute," the speaker recognizes that some being or force when dealing with people "takes them and . . . breaks them," appears arbitrary and ruthless. This "brute," who is also pondered in other Moody poems, uses power and cunning to exercise his will, freely savaging the beauties of nature and enjoying the woes of slum dwellers. The speaker reports that eventually the people think they have bound up this hostile force, and he sees them boasting of their triumph--only to find that the brute stands with "the Lion and the Eagle" by the throne of God. It appears that hardhanded treatment of the world is willed by the creator: the Brute is a necessary antagonist, a catalyst to bring progress toward a better life. Moody thereby accounts for the persistence of what

people see as evil in a world they want to believe was made by a heavenly parent.

A gentler suggestion as to the human condition appears in the amusing "The Menagerie," wherein a tipsy man who has been told to leave the zoo at closing time reflects upon the similarity of beast to human and observes that "Aman's a fool to look at things too near: / They look back, and begin to cut up queer." By the turn of the century the thoughtful, including Moody, had made their peace with the theory of evolution but still found its implications worth discussion; rueful humor was one way of admitting its authority. For Eliot and Pound, the argument had already lost interest.

In addition to emphasis on the relation of the individual to God, Moody's poems show religious mysticism and enjoyment of the sensuous. These qualities are also dominant in the set of three related blank verse closet dramas meant to make up "a trilogy on the Promethean theme" (*Poems* 182). The trilogy combines Greek myth with the Christian story, demonstrating Moody's attachment to the classics as well as his acceptance of traditional belief. The first of the three dramas in logical order (though it was written after what became the second play) is "The Fire-Bringer" (1904). In the opening scene, people and minor Greek deities are attempting to recover from the flood that Zeus had sent as punishment of Prometheus, the Titan who had disobeyed by bringing fire to earth. Though still unbowed, Prometheus agrees to help restore prosperity to the world. Soon he triumphantly announces that he has reestablished the bounds of earth and sky, of day and night, has restored the order needed for successful living. In so doing he has defied the wrath of Zeus.

The second play, "The Masque of Judgment" (1900), shows angels and figures from Greek mythology discussing Christ's incarnation and crucifixion, and watching the effort of the devil to take over the world. The story ends inconclusively. The third drama,

"The Death of Eve," was meant to show a reconciliation of God and man, but Moody did not live to complete it (Act I was published posthumously in 1912). All three plays include songs in a variety of meters. Though they illustrate and speculate on themes employed in Moody's narrative poems, the plays lack the tension needed for dramatic action. These works also exemplify Moody's determination to find grounds for optimism and to use traditional poetic diction and blank verse. Though both Eliot and Pound drew on the classics, their purpose was to ransack them for incident and argument relevant to their own bleak view of present day circumstances, rather than to retell them appreciatively as guides to feeling or conduct today. Eliot and Pound often wrote blank verse too, but their versions of it were likely to be interrupted, fragmented, shifted into the colloquial, and otherwise broken up in order to suggest in the language itself the crises they saw in civilization. The plays have not been staged; it is unlikely that producers at any time would think them suited to an audience desiring the dramatic.

Moody had success on stage when he finally turned to prose. "The Great Divide" (1906) lasted two years on Broadway, and was made into movies in 1917 and again in 1924. The play contrasts a woman representing Puritan inhibitions with a man coming from the frontier; Martin Halpern properly describes it as a boy-meets-girl story, with of course a problem but a happy ending (118). Less successful with the public, but esteemed by such scholars as Arthur Quinn (II 14-17), was "The Faith Healer" (1909), the story of a woman made able to walk after five years in bed. Quinn's admiration is for the play's illustration of the idea that miracles can in fact happen. Perhaps because of doubts raised by skepticism and scientific opinion, Moody revised and rewrote the play for over a decade.

The Spanish American War also aroused unsettling questions. Most prominent Midwestern writers later generations have thought of

as literary--Garland, Howells, Twain, Masters--opposed the war, but only Moody published verse on it at the time (Twain and Masters wrote poems on the war, but these appeared only later). Moody's principal war-related poem is "Ode in Time of Hestitation" (May 1900), a troubled meditation on U.S. ideals and imperial politics. Moody presented a speaker who, in the tradition of the sentimental realist, holds that "the people" are well intentioned but misled: the fault lies not in themselves but in the stars of their political firmament. As an emblem of what America at its best stands for, Moody chose the Shaw statue in Boston (an idea that, as the Glasheens observed (121), had been expressed by William James in 1897). The speaker senses that the ghosts of Colonel Shaw and his black heroes suffer "pangs" upon hearing of American intentions to keep the Philippines. The time being early March, the speaker dwells for 63 lines on the coming of spring across the continent. But when imagination brings him to America's farthest reach, the newly annexed Hawaiian Islands, he is jolted back to political reality and declares--with a nod to Kipling--that "East and West are twain"; he asserts "The Lord hath sundered them; them be sundered yet."

The heavily sarcastic fifth section of the ode continues the contrast between "our loftiest heritage" and the sordid "scramble" to build an overseas empire. The American response to "sick Cuba's cry" was the formation of "beautiful armies" that fought with "chivalry" on San Juan Hill. But the move to the far Pacific is only for gain and conquest; unless we "let the island men go free," the ghosts of the Union heroes will righteously haunt us. The ode ends in a warning to political leaders. The public may mistakenly follow them now, but sooner or later will understand that they have been led away from their ideals and will develop an "intolerable self-disdain" that will cause them to demand a bitter vengeance.

As poetry, the "Ode" is heartfelt but wordy and somewhat

inconsistent in focus. Few writers, indeed, were able to maintain artistic discipline in this debate. The ode's thoughtful content elevates it above the merely popular, however. Another of Moody's anti-imperialist poems, "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines," is so obvious as to seem a versified newspaper editorial. In a letter to Moody, E.A. Robinson criticized it as "near popular rot" (Kramer 322). Moody's intention, however, was more political than esthetic. He was deliberately using the mode of patriotic verse to attack the creed of most such writing, especially as that creed was expressed in the sloganeering of the expansionist. The speaker sentimentalizes a dead soldier as pathetic, an unwitting instrument of national policy who has no moral responsibility for his own actions. The evil days of national guilt are coming, the speaker says, when the country will busy itself in self-reproach for its failure to live up to the ideals of its past. The soldier's bullet will prove to have injured not "its island mark" but the guilty heart of the homeland.

The poem "The Quarry" protests the rush of western countries to obtain fiefdoms in China, and praises the U.S. for its restraint. The poem pictures an elaborately adorned elephant bearing a gorgeous throne occupied by a figure "stiff with gems" who has the "frozen gesture" and "unfocused eyes" of a "buried king." This rider is virtually inaccessible to the speaker, perhaps suggesting again the view that the culture of the East is closed to the eyes of the West. The elephant and its rider (China) are menaced by beasts of prey which suddenly become "doubtful" as they notice an enormous shadow (the U.S. eagle) circling in the sky, a presence who causes the speaker to cry out "What dost thou here?" The flier seizes the leading beast, and disappears. Looking askance, the other animals then slip away. The flier, it appears, is a version of that retributive spirit Moody wrote of in "An Ode in Time of Hesitation" and elsewhere. The poem seems meant to warn European nations that the United States will

save Asia from despoliation. Thoughtful and earnest as they are, such verse considerations of political policy assume existence of a righteous moral spiriting U.S. public life. In the wasteland of Eliot, which strongly resembles "the old bitch gone in the teeth" of Pound, no such analyses and remedies are possible.

Moody, indeed, often dealt with subjects and themes important to his age, expressing both its confidence and its doubt. On the whole, however, his intellectual and moral world remained that order which Santayana memorably labelled genteel. Though he was sometime careless with syntax, continued to use a lax line that allowed employment of filler words to achieve consistent meter, and frequently resorted to archaic diction--indulging, that is, in the practices Pound was attacking when he declared that poetry should be as well written as good prose, Moody was attempting not merely to echo Romantic sentiments but to deal with interests of the thoughtful. But he settled for worn comprehensions and ways of expression. His step toward modernism were too tentative. As new ages often do, the era of modernism did not answer or refute his queries and speculations: it disregarded as stale and moot, and went on to other concerns. Yet Moody was aware of irony. Near the end of "The Menagerie," he has his tipsy speaker opine that the animal in the zoo find it hard to believe the notion that human beings represent the highest order of being (as Darwin was then thought to have established). The person who looks at the chimpanzee should be restrained in his or her pride, for, the speaker warns, "There may be hidden meaning in his grin."

Michigan State University, Emeritus

Notes

1. I refer to the "Ode" as printed in The Poems and Plays. The first version appeared in Atlantic Monthly 85 (May 1900), 593-98. For a reading that sees the poem as "a memorial to the collapse of the Romantic grand manner in America", see Eckman (85).
2. Grounds for uncertainty about the interpretation of "The Quarry" are discussed by Halpern (191, note 13).

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Family Dynamics

Janet Ruth Heller

Bruce Guernsey. January Thaw. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

In a decade in which verbose "long poems" are given much attention, it is refreshing to read a master of the short lyric. Bruce Guernsey's poems in January Thaw are precise and concise: no words are wasted. For example, in an eight-line poem with 19 words, Guernsey captures the falling dreams that many of us experience as we begin to sleep.

Falling to Sleep

At night's ledge
the mind frays

The body,
heavy climber,

that sudden twitch,
Slipping, slipping--

darkness,
a rotted branch. (p. 16)

Here, Guernsey takes our English idiom, "falling asleep," and explores its psychological meaning. Sleep is not always restful: it can frighten us badly.

Many of the poems here concern Guernsey's family, and there is often an underlying tension between the poet and his father. In "The

Coop," the son resents his father's murdering chickens on the grandfather's farm in order to save money. In rebellion, the poet as a child refused to eat the cooked chickens (p. 27). The father's favorite pastime was watching televised boxing matches on Saturday nights. Guernsey emphasizes his father's kinship with the boxers: just as the boxers "slugged each other's eyes shut," the father is "pounding" the television to get a better picture ("The Saturday Night Fights," p. 50). Just as the father enjoyed fights, he joined the Army for World War II. As a child, Guernsey resented his father's absence. "Houses We Lived In" expresses the poet's frustrated desire to be close to his father. During the World War, "my father, a soldier, was never home." After the war, the boy dresses himself in his father's Army uniform in the family's attic and secretly searches for war medals. When Guernsey is in college, he defies his father by deciding not to fight in Vietnam.

We sat in the den,
our words twisted by gin
and the war I wouldn't fight.

In the last stanza, Guernsey hopes that the father-son conflict will lessen now that he has his own family.

The long war is nearly over.
In the fall I'll go hunting with my father. (pp. 51-52)

The real war in these poems is not global conflict but tension between men and their sons.

In other published poems that are not included in January Thaw, Guernsey again emphasizes this tension. For example, "My Father's Voice" (published in the journal New Letters in 1982) presents a bad telephone connection as a metaphor for the poor communication and

emotional static that Guernsey and many other men experience with their fathers.

Guernsey's hopes for a reconciliation with his father are clear in the poem, "January Thaw," the title poem for this volume. Here, the poet associates the winter thaw and melting snow with his father's bedtime kiss (p. 39).

In contrast to Guernsey's problematic relationship with his father, the poet has a close relationship with his grandfather. All of the poems in January Thaw about the grandfather emphasize the kinship between the older man and the young poet, both of whom are imaginative. In "Indian Trail," the grandfather shows Guernsey

. . . the path
where Indians danced all night
in our minds, their painted faces
flashing like jack-o'-lanterns by the fire. (p.45)

Like The Artist and the Crow, January Thaw stresses survivors and the act of surviving winter and death. In "Flying Home," Guernsey focuses on how his grandmother and he cope with the death of his grandfather. After the funeral, Guernsey flies home and imagines the old man's presence.

Drunk in my seat
I stare out the window
for my grandfather
knowing he's here,
in the light,
and fall asleep. (p. 18)

Years later, Guernsey, who is now on a train, remembers his grandfather's love of card games during train rides,

shuffling cards,
the soft applause
of their falling together. (p. 47)

Guernsey often uses what the British romantic poets called "the sympathetic imagination" to identify with the experiences of other people. This happens most frequently in January Thaw when a situation resembles that of Guernsey's family. In "Louis B. Russell," the poet imagines what it feels like to an older man to have the transplanted heart of a 17-year-old boy who was killed in a hunting accident. The new heart stirs Russell to remember his own youth and the thumping of his own heart when he experienced "that first kiss." When Russell dreams, he re-lives the donor's hunting accident (p. 6). This poem resembles the poems about Guernsey's grandfather because, again, we have an older man who feels close to a younger man.

Because Guernsey himself has a younger brother, the poet easily identifies with the older son in "Brothers." Like "Louis B. Russell," this poem was provoked by a newspaper article, and in both, the poet uses his imagination to re-create the experience. In "Brothers," Michael Wilson saves his baby brother's life by sacrificing his own body to shield the baby from a helicopter that plunged through the roof of their home. Michael's role as a substitute parent is emphasized here:

you bounced him on your knee
as a father might
and fed him for your mother,
holding him close
on your own small lap
as he sucked the warm milk.

After the accident, searchers find the baby alive, "swaddled/in a wreath of crushed bone" (p. 49). Instead of tension between father and son, this poem portrays the love and sacrifice of one brother for another.

In contrast to the poems about relationships, Guernsey's poems about fishing stress isolation. In one, the fisherman works alone, keeping just ahead of the fog. Finally, he sees another man, who vanishes suddenly. The last stanza here is effective:

You have stayed too late.
Deep in the river,
the white silence of fog. ("The Lost Fisherman," p.35)

Here, the isolation is terrifying. However, in "Fishing the Newfound," the solitude is exhilarating for the poet. After a successful day of fishing, he takes shelter from a storm under a pine tree, which provides him with "a coat of needles, sweet with pitch." When the storm passes, he emerges alone, but refreshed:

I step out alone, alone
on the bank, the world glistening
before mosquitoes, before time,
before the rib was cut from my side. (p. 42)

He feels like a new Adam before the creation of Eve.

When he writes about male-female sexual relationships, Guernsey's imagination reaches toward the surreal. For example, he imagines a snow man seducing a neglected wife ("The Snow.Man," p. 5). Similarly, Guernsey uses circus imagery to portray how a woman seduces a married man. The woman enters the party "on a trapeze," "swallows a sword of fire," is "riding your boredom bareback," and eventually, "saws you in half" (p. 24). The woman is a very

threatening presence in this poem. I find the passivity of the seduced man somewhat unconvincing.

Like many twentieth-century writers, Guernsey is intrigued by irony and incongruity. His neighbor has a skull in the home which watches "my neighbor's four kids and delicious wife/ . . . each day" ("The Skull," p. 29). In "The Dismal Swamp," a female bass fearlessly defends her eggs from all predators, even snakes, but ironically eats her own young after they hatch (p. 31).

Several of the poems in January Thaw concern the incongruity of poverty in the United States. In "The Dump Pickers," an entire family, dressed in nice clothes, is "swarming/ the piles like gnats" right after church services (p. 11). Clearly, the poor people at the garbage dump are incongruous because they are so well dressed. Similarly, innocent-looking school children who are standing "in front of their shack/ waiting for the bus" throw a "snowball/ packed with rock" at a sentimental motorist who stops to wave at them ("Back Road," p. 4).

Guernsey personifies animals to emphasize the close relationship that can sometimes evolve between humans and the natural world. In "Toad," the poet calls the toad "The mad uncle/ nobody loves but the children." The toad does a "soft-shoe" dance for them. In contrast to the princely frog, the toad is

. . . a jester,
his coat of warts,
brown motley. (p. 10)

Similarly, Guernsey personifies the noise of the wasp:

the crone at her whell,
in her dark shawl,
humming--
a widow's lullaby. ("The Wasp," p. 30)

In "The Coop," Guernsey explains why he would not eat chicken as a child. He helped his father catch and slaughter chickens, and he helped his mother clean the birds for cooking. On one occasion, he felt

a half-formed egg.
No shell,
just a soft, damp sack,
like what I felt between
my boy's legs,
and as warm. (p. 28)

Again, the poem highlights the closeness between a human and an animal.

Guernsey is less successful when he tries to mythologize the ordinary, as he does in "The Chopping Block." Here, the poet uses first associations, including references to the execution of Charles II and the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, to construct a meditation on chopping blocks. Guernsey's main point is that the block is a memento mori, a reminder that everyone must die. However, the poem needs a stronger ending. In the last stanza, the poet switches from a simple description of the block to an incongruous imitation of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land.

This block is so old
moss grow on its side.
Look into this compass, sailor.
Weep, for you are lost. (p. 33)

Guernsey is good at conveying the personal response that we have to different seasons of the year. I especially like "The Ritual" (p. 53), which details his family's customs on the first night of frost

each fall. The poem captures our excitement during a change of the season. This is the final poem in January Thaw.

Guernsey's work is valuable because of its exploration of family dynamics, especially the bonds between father and son, brother and brother, and grandfather and grandson. His use of understatement and irony is masterful. Guernsey breaks away from the solipsism characteristic of much modern poetry to sympathize with both older and younger men. These poems have a universal appeal.

Grand Valley State University

Saul Bellow's Mexican Fiesta: The Adventures of
Augie March as Expatriate Spectacle

David D. Anderson

Many years ago, on one of my own excursions to Mexico, I heard an expression that applied to me then, as well as to many of my American compadres. There were two kinds of Americans who went to Mexico, the saying went, those who were wanted at home and those who weren't. Without admitting which of the categories I belonged to, I recognize the long affinity that Americans have had for Mexico, almost to the beginning of the American republic, and surely to the beginning of the Mexican, to the glory as well as the pain of both countries.

American writers, from Washington Irving and William H. Prescott to Ambrose Bierce, Stuart Chase, Harte Crane, Sherwood Anderson, and dozens of others have shared that affinity, yet Mexico rarely figures in American works of fiction or poetry other than the Western and adventure fiction that my and earlier generations of American young males found to be a more than adequate prefiguration for "Gunsmoke", "The Rifleman," or "The Wild, Wild West," and the other allegedly adult entertainments yet to be born.

Whether or not Saul Bellow, a decade older than I, read "Dime Western" in its many incarnations and versions, I have no idea, and it never occurred to me to ask him, but he does admit to having grown up in the Humboldt Park branch of the Chicago Public Library reading Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson, and, although unacknowledged, I'm willing to bet, whatever pulps fell into his hands as well, as did

most of my generation. And I'm equally willing to bet that it was that adventurous affinity that took him to Mexico as a young man, perhaps either wanted or not wanted back in Chicago, and that provided a substantial part of his most Midwestern, most Chicagoan, I'm tempted to say, most American novel, The Adventures of Augie March, as well as that of two of his strongest short stories, "The Mexican General" and "Mosby's Memoirs."

Much of the critical analysis of The Adventures of Augie March has centered on its origins--out of Mark Twain by way of Sherwood Anderson--, its language, its scope, its enthusiasm, its exuberance, even, in Bellow's own self-criticism, its excesses, as the novel takes its urban Chicago/^{hero}from boyhood, wherein, as a department-store elf he concocts a lucrative if temporary scam and learns about reality from his Grandma in name only and his mentor, Einhorn, the operator; it takes him through the Depression, a Mexican idyll, the war, shipwreck, and ultimately a success almost within grasp in the post-war European black market. In the course of the novel Augie loves and is loved, he betrays and is betrayed, he grieves, he loses, he enjoys, he suffers, he wanders, he hustles, yet, curiously, Augie remains unchanged; the twentieth-century world is his early nineteenth-century river or his late nineteenth-century Main Street in Winesburg, Ohio, the two most enduring literary metaphors to which Bellow is most obviously and most deeply indebted. But, again curiously, unlike either Huckleberry Finn or George Willard, Augie remains a passive hero; others seek him out, women to love him and men to teach him, and yet, from his boyhood on the Near North Side of Chicago, he remains what he was, through

the episodes that continue without the convenience of a river rapidly running out or a personal determination to break with a past and simultaneously seek out a future. As with Mark Twain's and Sherwood Anderson's work, as, indeed, with Fitzgerald's, Hemingway's, and more recently Wright Morris's and Frederick Manfred's, the protagonist's movement is inexorably in time and inevitably in space, simultaneously running from something and searching for something else, through sometimes innumerable human contacts and adventures in the form Mark Twain imposed on Midwestern fiction, but unlike that of the others, Bellow's picaresque structure is just that and, as Earl Rovit has commented, "Augie's novel could have been legitimately concluded two hundred pages earlier, or, for that matter, it could have been continued almost indefinitely."

As the novel opens, narrator Augie proclaims on the first page that "I am an American, Chicago-born--Chicago, that somber city--and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style...;" on the last, six hundred small-printed pages later, he concludes that "Why, I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe that you can come to them in this immediate terra incognita that spreads out in every gaze..." Throughout, Augie's passive path, as exuberant as it may be, is marked, not by a search, whether for innocence or experience or fulfillment, as so much Midwestern fiction has emphasized, but for, in Augie's terms, "a way out" of each situation he finds himself in. The only question Augie admits to is "whether I was a man of hope or foolishness." But in the absences of purpose or direction or cause or faith, or, for that matter, the absence of a determination to escape, Augie seems to answer his

own question. The failure of Mark Twain's ending, when Huck Finn reverts to the childhood he had lost along the river, is echoed in Augie's flight by night across a war-ravaged Europe, thus demonstrating the difficulty of ending such a novel short of the Gulf of Mexico or the train ride to something, or perhaps a return to the West of one's youth, or perhaps not even them.

Because critics have concentrated on the structure, the tone, the language, the Bellovian dangling of Augie March as well as the role of Chicago as place or force or setting or metaphor or on the journey itself, almost invariably they have ignored or overlooked or misinterpreted Bellow's Mexico, that interlude in the novel in which Augie, Chicago born, bred, and self-taught, first comes into contact with nature, with freedom, with dependency, with, most importantly, Mexico as it offers the illusion of sanctuary from a world of violence and destruction.

Augie's Mexican interlude, which occupies seven of the twenty-six chapters in the novel, is Augie's first extended absence from Chicago after graduation from high school (receiving a visit to a brothel from his mentor Einhorn, the gambler, as a graduation present), and a short unsatisfying stint at college with his brother Simon. He worked briefly at a sales job in a sporting good store, from which he was rescued to become the protege of the wealthy owner, Mrs. Renling, through whom he was introduced to the world of the rich as well as to the beautiful, rich Fenchel sisters, Esther and Thea. The latter was later to take him to Mexico. However, before the trip, Augie resists Mrs. Renling's offer to adopt him, feeling it would cost him his freedom.

He then takes a variety of odd jobs, including a venture smuggling immigrants from Canada, which results in a night in jail followed by a brief trip riding the rails through the hobo culture of late-Depression America.

Envious of his brother's² success and marriage, Augie then returns briefly to college as a profession, stealing books to order for graduate students and reading them before delivery. Finally, after working as a C.I.O. organizer, during which he's beaten up by a goon squad, and after a brief affair with a Greek girl, Augie finds Theo on his doorstep. She asks him to call at her hotel.

At this point the direction of Augie's life is again taken over by a woman. Thea confesses her love for him, they make love for three days in Thea's suite, and she invites him to accompany her to Mexico where she will divorce her husband. On the way, she tells him, they will train an American eagle to hunt lizards, and in Mexico they will continue the eagle's training, perhaps writing articles about it for the National Geographic. Augie is impressed with her carelessness with money--she keeps cash in the refrigerator, mingled with wilted lettuce leaves--and her ardor, and he happily consents; he is in love.

In Mexico, living in Thea's house, Casa Descuitada, they train the eagle, whom Augie names Caligula, to kill and eat small lizards. Augie, suspicious about the enterprise and disliking Thea's determination to train the eagle, is secretly delighted when, after encountering resistance from an iguana, the eagle refuses to hunt, flying instead back to his cage. Thea is furious.

Caligula's second and final chance is also a failure. Augie, mounted on an old horse, takes the eagle to the hills. The horse stumbles, Augie falls and is injured, the eagle flies back to its cage, and Thea, still furious, takes up snake collecting in the hills.

Caligula is shipped to a zoo in Indiana, Augie undergoes extensive convalescence, increasingly spent gambling successfully and drinking with expatriates from a wide range of ethnic origins, Thea collects snakes obsessively, and it is clear that the relationship is expiring. When Thea's divorce is granted and there is no suggestion of their future, Augie, still in love, knows that it is over. He helps a young woman, Stella Chesney--who will much later become his wife--to escape her protector-exploiter, thus provoking Thea, who takes another lover and goes off on a collecting expedition. Augie, furious, kicks over the snake cages, and resigns himself to the inevitable, borrowing enough money to take him back to Chicago.

Two significant but momentary encounters are easy to overlook in the intensity of Augie's relationship with Thea. Both encounters are with Leon Trotsky, Communist exile from Stalinist Russia, who lived in Mexico from 1937 to his assassination in 1940. In the first, Augie sees Trotsky's entourage in the Zocalo. He had been an admirer of Trotsky's in Chicago and is pleased to discover an old Chicago friend among the Trotsky bodyguards. Later, after Augie's break with Thea, his friend suggests that Augie join the entourage as Trotsky's "nephew" from the States, while Trotsky, beardless, posed as a tourist, but Trotsky rejects the idea, and Augie returns temporarily to his past

on the way to his future.

Augie's Mexican adventure, like Huck's less complex but no less suggestive adventures along a river moving inexorably deeper into slave territory, is replete with opportunities for explication and interpretation, particularly because it introduces Augie to experiences dominated first of all by Thea, the eagle, and a sparse, lizard and snake-ridden nature, and then by those who have, for reasons known only to themselves or the police of several continents, intruded themselves into a Mexican society, like the eagle, possessed of the potential for corruption by foreign values. The section is less deceptively simple, however, than readers and critics have suggested; it is, instead another of Augie's, like Huck's before him, successful if tempting and threatening encounters with the corruption imposed by dependency, security, and love, parallels overlooked by those who fail to see beyond Augie's appearance: older, urban, street-smart, and sexual, all of which, except the latter, with their counterparts in Huck Finn.

Among the dimensions of Augie's Mexican interlude ignored or overlooked or distorted by those who don't quite know what to make of it except as a coda to Augie's life as a Near North Side provincial are the echoes--faint, but also evident in Bellow's second published story, "The Mexican General"--of his Tuly High School faith in Leon Trotsky, a faith also echoed in Bellow's first novel, Dangling Man. But other elements are equally important: Bellow's portrayal of Augie's romantic gullibility, an echo of an older but no less juvenile gullibility that Huck and Augie eventually outgrow; his sketches of those, including both Augie and Thea, who are either wanted or not wanted

at home; his emphasis on Augie's street smarts in understanding the trained eagle's preference for fresh-meat handouts to fresh-killed prey; and most importantly the atmosphere of feeble fiesta that permeates the casas and zocalas of the bewildered expatriates.

Low-keyed, fleeting, but important in the section is Augie's brief, indirect relationship with Trotsky, not because of what happens but because of what doesn't in spite of Augie's attitude toward him. Bellow was born in Quebec in 1915 and spent his first nine years/^{there}in what he later described as "partly frontier, partly the Polish ghetto, partly the Middle Ages." His family moved to Chicago in 1924, where, on the Northside, like his near-contemporary(a decade older), James T. Farrell on the Southside, he became a peculiar combination of street and park and poolroom kid and public library intellectual.

At Tuly High School in the early 1930s he and his friends, the late writer Isaac Rosenfeld and the novelist Oscar Tarcon, fell under the influence of Nathan Gould, a legendary Trotskyite, and became active in the Spartacus Youth League and the Young Peoples Socialist League (Fourth International) after American Trotskyites founded the Socialist Workers Party. At the University of Chicago he and Rosenfeld were members of the Trotskyite Socialist Club, where he and Rosenfeld were regarded as wits or clowns, taking turns reciting Swinburne in various accents. In 1935 Bellow transferred to Northwestern, where he published his first short story, "The Hell It Can't," a takeoff on Sinclair Lewis's It Can't Happen Here. In the story a Trotskyite is beaten by a group of fascist thugs.

In 1937, Bellow married Anita Goskin, a fellow Trotskyite, and

in the early 1940s, when he and Rosenfeld had both moved to New York to pursue their literary careers, both drifted away from politics, Bellow's only remaining interest becoming a source of reminiscing with old friends and as further grist for the mill of his early fiction. Thus, in "The Mexican General" (Partisan Review, May-June, 1942) Bellow deals with Trotsky's assassination as seen by the investigator in the case; in Dangling Man Joseph dangles as much from his loss of faith as from his peculiar position, no longer a free civilian, not yet a soldier. The character of Augie March is perhaps based partly on a Chicago Trotskyite friend, Abraham Liebick, killed in the Pacific in 1944. In the novel, Augie March's attraction to the Old Man, as Trotsky's protectors refer to him, is not ideological. Rather, his perception of Trotsky is as a great man, perhaps the only one he would ever see:

...he was very gingery and energetic, debonair, sharp, acute in the beard....He wore a short coat with fur collar, large glasses....As I looked at him I decided with a real jolt that this must be Trotsky, the great Russian exile and my eyes grew big. I always knew my entire life would not go by without my having seen a great man....

For Augie, Leon Trotsky, revolutionary ideologist, had become nothing more or less than a celebrity, and Augie betrays no sense of his political significance.

Augie's romantic gullibility is as much at odds with his street smarts, his instinct for larceny under whatever name he chooses, and his determination to be free at whatever cost as Huck Finn's early nineteenth-century pre-adolescent equivalents and with as much reason for being, with one important difference: Huck's gullibility is part of his inherent natural innocence, uncorrupted by social or

religious or philosophical values other than those tested and accepted by his own innately practical mind. Augie's gullibility, conversely, is the product of his superficial sophistication. Street-smart he is in every sense except in his relationships with women, who remain Augie's true terra incognita.

Of most importance, consequently, Huck's most unrealistic dimension, that of his total sexual innocence, is parallel to Augie's. In spite of his high-school graduation present and his increasing numbers of brief and not-so-brief affairs, Augie is as romantic in his search for love as Huck is in encouraging an elopement that brings on a major fire-fight, and with consequences as severe. Augie clearly has found his place with Thea, and to keep it he must accept her values as his. Like the eagle, Augie is much more willing to fly to the cage than to flee it, a characteristic that becomes obvious to Thea but not to Augie, until finally, comes the moment of realization:

If I didn't have money or profession or duties, wasn't it so that I could be free, and a sincere follower of love? Me, love's servant? I wasn't at all. And suddenly my heart felt ugly, I was sick of myself. I thought that my aim of being simple was just a fraud, that I wasn't a bit goodhearted or affectionate, and I began to wish that Mexico from beyond the walls would come in and kill me and that I would be thrown in the bone dust and twisted, spiky crosses of the cemetery, for the insects and lizards.

After a last encounter with Thea, in which she rejects him again, Augie concludes that "That was how it was. Nothing as I had foreseen it," and he is ready to return to Chicago, leaving behind neither love nor nature nor significance but only the sad fiesta:

It was one fiesta after another....The band plunged in the zocalo, clashed, drummed, and brayed; the fireworks bristled and ran off in strings, the processions swayed around with images. A woman died of a heart attack at a five-day drunk party, and there were scandals. Two young men,

lovers, had an argument about a dog and one of them took an overdose of sleeping pills. Jepson forgot his jacket in the faco rojo; the madame herself, Negra, brought it to the house. Iggy's ex-wife locked Jepson out, so he begged to sleep on Moulton's porch. Moulton wouldn't let him stay because he tried to borrow money, he drank his whisky. Now Jepson was living in the street, but as the town was foaming his sorrow wasn't particularly noticeable in it. Wolves or wild swine or the giant iguanas themselves or stags wouldn't have been either if they had slipped in from the mountains.

With the fiesta and Thea and the Mexican mountains behind him Augie returns to Chicago. Mexico had been no more and no less than Huck's territories would have been for him, had he been able to light out for them, had Mark Twain carried him forward in time. He concludes that "there was something about the effect of Mexico on me, that I couldn't hold my own against it anymore." To his brother he confides that he had gone to Mexico to work out something important, but what it is he has no idea. The territories, whether of Chicago or the Mexican desert or the never-ending feeble fiesta, or even those of the spirit, are as empty as every place else. And yet there are miles to go and time to fill in with whatever comes next.

Michigan State University

Notes on Getting Published: Part III

David D. Anderson

In earlier essays I attempted to define some of the steps that embryo writers might take to increase the chances of editorial acceptance of their work and to dispel some of the haze that often obscures the relationship among the sometimes unholy trinity of writer, editor, and publisher. In this, I'll address some of the writer's rights and responsibilities in that relationship.

The writer's rights and responsibilities are both legal and professional, as are those of the editors and publishers with whom he or she works. Legal rights and responsibilities are inherent in a remarkable legal entity called "copyright," as well as in any contractual relationship that may exist among writer, editor, and/or publisher. Both "copyright" and contracts deserve more attention and understanding than most embryo and too many experienced writers give them.

"Copyright," in the United States and among members of the international copyright association of subscribers to the Universal Copyright Convention is legal recognition of your ownership rights to any written work of your creation. Contrary to too many misconceptions even among professional writers, ownership of every such work, whether it is registered with the Copyright Office or not, is protected, currently under the law, and in the past and in many other countries, under common-law copyright. The moment a piece of writing is completed, whether it be an essay, a short story, a novel, a poem, a love letter, a duty letter to an aging aunt, or an obscene limerick, it is protected under current American copyright law, and that protection continues, whether it is registered or not, for the rest of the writer's life and an additional

fifty years for any work created or registered after January 1, 1978. Works created or registered prior to that time are protected for a period of twenty-eight years and may be extended for a further twenty-eight years. Works currently under the second twenty-eight years will be automatically renewed for an additional nineteen years, for a total of seventy-five. At the end of the legally designated period, ownership of the work passes into the public domain.

While the work is protected, the writer's ownership right is virtually absolute. It not only recognizes the writer's ownership, but it gives him or her absolute control over the work's destiny--to offer for publication, with or without limits or restrictions, to squirrel away, to destroy, to rewrite, to prevent unauthorized use, even for so-called educational or religious purposes. (Incidentally, teachers, professors, and the clergy are the most frequent, flagrant, and self-righteous violators of copyright law and writer's rights, while violations are almost unknown among editors and publishers.)

There are two major exceptions to the above copyright protection under current law. The first has to do with writing done under commission or as part of one's work obligations, and the second has to do with work written anonymously or under a pseudonym only. In the former case the copyright inherent in the work belongs to whomever has commissioned the work or is the legal supervisor of the work done. Thus, if one agrees to write a particular article for pay or if one is a regularly-employed newspaper writer, the copyright properly belongs to the person or institution for whom the work is done, and the writer has no more

control over it than the legal owner is willing to share.

In the case of an anonymous or pseudonymous work, copyright protection extends for a full hundred years after the work's creation, or seventy-five years after its publication, whichever expires first, after which it passes into the public domain.

Given the extensive nature of copyright protection available to any writer, there is rarely any real need for a writer to register his work in order to protect it. When such an occasion does occur, the procedure is simple: a completed copyright form, a ten-dollar fee, and a copy of the work(two, if published) are forwarded to the Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20559. The Copyright Office will provide the forms as well as a Copyright Information Kit.

When the work is protected, whether by registration or not, its disposition is up to the writer, and normally writers, whether neophyte, academic, or professional, seek publication, either as the result of a sale to an editor or publisher, or, in the case of an academic writer, whose rewards come from heaven or central administration, as the result of formal or informal acceptance by an editor or publisher. In a contractual relationship, the specific property rights that pass from writer to editor or publisher are spelled out in detail, as well as whatever the writer receives in exchange, re continued property rights, outright fees or royalties, and possible ultimate return of copyright ownership to the writer. The rights that may pass to the editor/publisher are, unless contractually defined(and sometimes even then) often poorly understood by the writer. Such rights include

"First Rights," which includes one-time reproduction rights only, and which gives the writer the right to sell or publish it again after its first use; "One-Time Rights," which varies from first rights in that the writer may publish it elsewhere first; "Serial Rights" and/or "Book Rights," which indicates publication in a periodical or book only; "Reprint Rights" to an already published work; "Simultaneous Rights," for publication in more than one source at the same time; and "All Rights," which effectively transfers copyright ownership to the editor/publisher.

The best interests of the writer are served through selling "First Rights" or "One-Time Rights" only; those of the editor or publisher, by acquiring "All Rights," although often rights are ultimately returned to the writer. However, most journals--and this includes those of the SSML--share "First Rights" with the writer, by relegating all control over subsequent publication to the writer, only stipulating that the journal must be consulted before reprint rights are granted and that the reprinting publication carry an appropriate credit line. All payment from such reprinting goes to the writer, and the writer has final control over granting or withholding permissions.

Such a policy is perhaps as fair as one can be, and it recognizes the ultimate right of the writer to his work, but I know of innumerable cases in which the writer is completely ignored in either granting permission, profiting from reprinting, or even knowing that a work has been reprinted, and writers--and often academic editors and publishers--are unaware of what rights exist or do not exist, which are trampled, and

which professional courtesies are ignored. One of my own essays, published in a reputable journal, was reprinted in a book, a substantial fee paid, and a copy of the book sent to the journal for me, none of which was ever brought to my attention by the editor/publisher. Such behavior can often be avoided by writers knowing which rights have been given up and limiting those concessions as much as possible, but it's often impossible to avoid if the editor/publisher refuses or neglects to recognize those rights or common professional courtesy.

The legal implications of copyright protection and contractual relationships places important obligations on writers as well. When a writer offers a work for publication, it must be his or hers to offer. That is, all parts of it must be his or hers to offer, either as original creations or the words or ideas of others, to whom proper credit is given and appropriate permissions secured, or some combination thereof. A writer can not and must not violate the legal responsibilities and professional courtesies that he or she expects others to respect. And, of course, there are possible legal repercussions, as well, as some of the professional mass-copying, mass pirating organizations have finally been compelled to recognize.

Rather than mend their ways entirely, however, some of these copy-for-profit organizations, exploiting innocent academics, writers, and students, ask for blanket permissions to reprint--at no fee for the writer or publisher. My own answer to such requests is a clear "permission refused," and I recommend it to others. If, however, one feels some need to grant permission, I recommend a substantial fee--

perhaps \$100.00--each time the work is copied. The advent of the copying machine has worked enough havoc with literary property rights; it is up to writers and editors/publishers to attempt to undo some of it.

As in previous essays I conclude with a warning: ultimately the writer-editor-publisher relationship is mutually beneficial and sometimes even mutually profitable, and that relationship is governed by legal restrictions that go a long way to protect the ultimate rights and interests of the writer. But it is governed, too, by a mutual awareness of professional courtesies and responsibilities, whether or not legalities are involved. The legal relationship is rarely violated, but all too often the professional relationship is. And when that happens, writer, editor, and publisher--indeed, the entire attempt to communicate clearly, effectively, and significantly--are all diminished as professionals, as mutual explorers of the human experience, and as contributors to a complex relationship that has the potential for bringing humankind closer in mutual understanding. Each part of the complex has rights and responsibilities, and each has a duty to recognize those of the others.

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