MIDAMERICA XXI

The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Edited by
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In honor of
Edgar M. Branch
and
John E. Hallwas

PREFACE

With the publication of the present volume, *MidAmerica XXI*, the Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature begins its third decade of publication, even as the Society itself begins its second quarter-century. If durability alone were the test of accomplishment at this point, we might well congratulate ourselves, settle back, await the publication of *The Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, and tell ourselves that we have defined the Midwest and its canon as we set out to do a quarter century ago and have nothing more to do.

But neither the region nor its literature nor those who approach both in the spirit of inquiry as well as reverence will permit us to delude ourselves so easily. Two perceptive analytical and retrospective essays on *MidAmerica*, Roger Bresnahan's "*MidAmerica:* A Ten-Year Retrospective" in *MidAmerica X* (1983) and Marcia Noe's "*MidAmerica:* the Second Decade" in the current volume, make clear the fact that although the task of doing what we set out to do is well begun, not only do we have a great deal yet to do, but an ever-growing canon and ever-changing insights and perceptions suggest that we've begun something to which there can be no end, that the work to do will continue to demand of us the will with which to do it well beyond the foreseeable future.

Thus, appropriately, this volume is dedicated to Edgar M. Branch of Miami University and John R. Hallwas of Western Illinois University, two Midwesterners by birth, by choice, and by dedication to the work well-begun. Both recipients of the MidAmerica Award for 1994, they point out in their own work some of the many directions that the work of the members of the Society must take in the future.

September, 1995 — David D. Anderson

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THE DEAD OF WINTER

EDWARD HAWORTH HOEPPNER

We broke slowly through the snow above the Arrowhead,
six days, northwest, the Boundary Waters solid
beneath us into Canada, the sun hardly rising
past the hemlock and the tamarack, a dull bead,
a white hole in the sky opening to a whiter room.
To hear the wolf before it disappears—our snowshoes'
slide and drag numbering that vapid prayer.

Or see the prints along some ridge, the pack imagined
strung like bees around a clearing elk have stamped
and torn the snow for what there is to eat in any world
like this. All of us dreamed of the wolves,
though we spoke little over coffee, a thin fire,
before we packed off. None of our dreams were true
but one: this was something we would never do again.

Listen. It is a lie there is no misery here,
dying or out of the wind, unless you see this
from a study, looking through a book or glass,
a painting on the wall. To have been cold
long, cold for days, the pain comes toward you
everywhere. From everything. A jay's leg
snapped sharply off, lying in the path,

the bones you count along the deer springing
difficultly through the crust and buried trunks.
And the trees themselves, those silent people moan.
This is why, the Ojibewa say, a demon sweeps
out of the sky, drags the lost man or woman,
feet on fire, screaming to the sun: tracks
on the frozen lakes that simply disappear. Why

they say that there are children laughing
just beyond our hearing them, at night in these
woods. When the fire's gone to orange,
all of us have stopped, cup in hand, a frozen
boot lace, thought we've heard. In the end,
this was all. Some frostbite, fingers gone
sullenly gray, a story in which nothing

came about, twenty years gone by. Tonight,
I've sewn a badge on my son's uniform, a wolf's
head in gold, on a scarlet patch. He's been
walking where the dog has walked, in the prints
she's left, on the blacktop in the drive.
"Look," he's said, turning back, "I'm a wolf.
See the tracks?" Then, reading him to sleep,

the imprint I have made upon on his bed,
getting up, sheets glowing in the dark.
It is all that we saw then: in the drifts
where we had slept, the carefully detailed
hollow that a body makes in snow, shapeless
and then not, or nearly human, hardened into ice
by this weak heat that we give off alive.

Oakland University

FIVE PORTRAITS

CHRISTOPHER STIEBER

Roxanne

With the money she earned babysitting me, Roxanne bought my first pair of blue jeans. She played records by the Monkees and the Beatles and I learned all the bandmembers names and songs. My parents took a corner of our basement and had it tiled and panelled and put a bed and a desk in there. This is where I would listen to Roxanne's records and this is maybe where Roxanne would stay if she stayed overnight.

In the closet of this basement room hung my father's hunting vest and jacket. Camouflage. On the outside of the vest, near the pockets, were rows of ringed cloth. Inside the rings were twelve-gauge shotgun shells. I played Roxanne's records while holding one of these shells in my hand. The shell was as big as my hand. As big as a microphone in the hand of a singer.

In Roxanne's bedroom, in the house she lived in, there was a big picture, "a poster," of Bobby Kennedy. His hair was all over and he was in the sun. He looked like Roxanne's boyfriend, Rick. And I wanted to look like both of them.

Rick worked in a Standard gas station and wore blue jeans and drove an old gray car big enough to play or fall asleep in. I would sit on our kitchen counter and bang my heels against the pots and pans cabinet door while Roxanne talked to Rick on the phone. Roxanne would hand the phone to me and I would say, "Hello?" and Rick would say, "What are you laughing at you little sonuvabitch," and I would laugh harder, and Rick would say, "you better let me talk with Roxanne again you little shit turd bastard," and I would howl and hear laughter coming out of the phone and as I kicked the cabinet door harder Roxanne would take the phone out of my hands and laugh into it, "I think you'd better cut it out, Rick."

Roxanne would fix lunch. Tomato soup, peanut butter and jelly, crackers with frosting that would have to set in the refrigerator a while before we could eat them. After lunch we would lie on the couch together and watch daytime TV. Soap operas, Dark Shadows, The Dating Game. The game show host was as old as her Dad, Roxanne said, but was trying to act younger. He dyed his hair. He was a fraud. And I thought of a frog, slimy, wet and green. Roxanne was angry but laughing at the same time. I was confused so I said her name again and again.

My mother rocked me through my nightmares but I wanted Roxanne. When the morning finally came the TV came on and my mother talked to the screen, "Oh for God's sake won't you let the man die in peace!" But then she covered her mouth and began to cry. She sort of ran into the bedroom to wake my father.

There were a lot of bumping arms and backs on the black and white TV and the picture jiggled around. Them a voice yelled louder than the other yelling voices. "Give him air!" The backs and arms cleared and Bobby Kennedy was lying on a cold dark floor. His eyes were wide open and his head was in a puddle of oil. A boy knelt near him, holding his hand. Bobby Kennedy looked like a boy, too.

One day I had a new babysitter because Rick was going to Vietnam. She was huge, three of me across, and she had a moustache. She made me a peanut butter sandwich, no jelly. I took it down into the basement because I couldn't look at her and eat. The room smelled different, chemical, frightening. I could taste the new babysitter's smell in the peanut butter, bitter, almost evil. I spit out the bite, put on a record, and grabbed a shotgun shell. I jumped up and down on the bed, singing into the ammunition. The new babysitter walked into the room and I dropped to my knees, embarrassed. I looked up and screamed for her to leave me alone. She left the room and cried.

Jesse Owens

One afternoon in 1968 my father met Jesse Owens' plane at the airport in Dubuque, Iowa and drove him to Loras College where he was scheduled to speak. On the way to the campus my father looked at his watch and said to Jesse Owens that they were quite a bit early and that, if he liked, they could stop

off somewhere ahead of time. Jesse Owens thought a moment, looked down at his own watch, and said then that that might be all right.

Carl Herberger owned the Copper Kettle. When my father began introducing Jesse Owens to him, Carl Herberger waved his hand and told him he didn't have to tell him who Jesse Owens was and asked them what they wanted to drink. My father said that he wasn't sure, how about a manhattan, and asked Jesse Owens if he'd like a manhattan. Jesse Owens said he'd never had a manhattan but that he'd try one and that's what everyone had.

Carl Herberger was a big football fan and he asked Jesse Owens if he knew Jim Brown. Jesse Owens said no he didn't know Jim Brown but they'd met once. Carl Herberger asked Jesse Owens if he ever thought about playing football and Jesse Owens said no he hadn't, he was too small. Not receiver or safety asked Carl Herberger and Jesse Owens said no, not really, and said then that the manhattans were pretty good.

Carl Herberger poured another round and asked more questions. Jesse Owens told them what it was like growing up in Decatur, Alabama, about how his mother cut out this abcess on his calf in the kitchen of their home and how this saved his career. Carl Herberger kept asking him about all the records he broke at Ohio State.

And then Carl Herberger brought up Munich. Jesse Owens really thought Hitler was going to have him killed, especially after the three gold medals. 1936 said Carl Herberger and Jesse Owens nodded his head and then Carl Herberger asked him to please remind him which events he'd won and Jesse Owens told him. The hundred, the two hundred and the broad jump. Carl Herberger reminded Jesse Owens that he'd broken the record in each event and Jesse Owens said no, he'd only tied the record in the hundred. He talked about his rival, the German, Luz Long, and about how Long shook his hand and what a brave thing this was for Long to do. Everyone knew Hitler wasn't going to shake Jesse Owens' hand. He really did think he might be killed.

My father asked Jesse Owens if he'd ever been to Hamburg because that's where my father had been stationed in the army and Jesse Owens said no, just Munich, and that's when my

mother walked in. She began yelling at my father about how the college had been ringing the phone off the hook and how could he end up here today of all days and began yelling at Carl Herberger who did he think he was when Jesse Owens was supposed to be giving a speech at that very moment. Jesse Owens looked down at his watch and said, "Oh cripes."

By the time my father and mother and Jesse Owens reached the auditorium people were already filing out. My father told my mother and Jesse Owens to stay in the car while he went inside and looked around. Alone in the car, Jesse Owens apologized to my mother who sat staring out the windshield. She said that it probably wasn't Jesse Owens' fault she was going to wind up a laughingstock it was her horsesass husband. He ought to have his head cut in.

When my father got back to the car he told Jesse Owens that it was useless to go in. The place had been packed and it was less than half full now. They were going to have to hide him or something. Jesse Owens ran a hand over his mouth and said that the only money he made was off of speeches like this and that he'd already paid his airline ticket on his own. My mother shook her head and turned around and asked Jesse Owens if he'd even had the good sense to eat that day. My father told Jesse Owens not to worry about the money and began driving across campus to Father Lange's. Father Lange was my father's old philosophy professor. They were drinking buddies and they drank with the college bursar, Father Whalen.

My father dragged my mother and Jesse Owens up three flights of steps to Father Lange's room. He pulled Jesse Owens in from the hall and introduced him to Father Lange. Father Lange didn't have the slightest notion who Jesse Owens was. My father brought up the Olympics, brought up Hitler and then, remembering his old classes, brought up Nietszche's superman. Father Lange held up a finger then told my mother to go down the hall and wake up that sonofabitch Father Whalen. He went off into the kitchen to mix drinks.

Father Whalen knew who Jesse Owens was. He walked into Father Lange's with his buddy, the art instuctor, Father Sullivan. They each already had a drink in their hand. My father took Father Whalen aside and they whispered together for a while, looking over at Jesse Owens every now and then. Father Lange

handed Jesse Owens a drink. Father Sullivan asked Jesse Owens if he could paint his portrait sometime. Jesse Owens said he didn't know but he didn't think so. Father Lange began explaining Nietzshe's superman theory to Jesse Owens. Jesse Owens said that he's heard of it. Father Sullivan explained to Father Lange that Jesse Owens had pretty much destroyed that theory. Father Lange nodded his head and told Jesse Owens that he himself was a Kantian. He asked Jesse Owens if he'd ever been to Konigsberg. Jesse Owens said no, just Munich. Father Sullivan asked Jesse Owens if he could paint his portrait sometime. Father Whalen walked over to Jesse Owens and handed him a check. My mother told everyone now to just let Jesse Owens be. She took him into the kitchen to make him something to eat.

As my mother opened the refrigerator door a bizarre blue light poured out over her and Jesse Owens. They both backed up a step and, as the refrigerator door swung wide, the bluelight arced throughout the kitchen. Inside, it looked like a sculpture. Like a honeycomb made out of bright blue ice. Five inch octagons stacked side by side, row upon row, filling up the entire appliance. Jesse Owens put his hands on his knees and bent over and stared into the refrigerator. "Judas Maude," he said.

My mother yelled out into the living room what in God's name was this in this refrigerator. Father Sullivan walked into the kitchen, stood and weaved in place a moment and said, oh that. He reached into the refrigerator between my mother and Jesse Owens and pulled out a bottle of Teacher's Scotch. He said that they were Father Lange's empties. He said that Father Lange didn't want the maid to know he drank. My mother began yelling out into the living room well for Christ's sake this is crazy someone come get Jesse Owens out of this godawful light. My father walked into the kitchen to try and calm my mother down. Take it easy, he told her, he'd get rid of the bottles. Father Lange heard this and followed him out into the kitchen. He told my father that if he was going to get rid of the bottles in the refrigerator he might as well take the ones in the closet and under the bed too.

They boxed up over a hundred bottles. It took my father and Jesse Owens two trips apiece to load them into the Oldsmobile. When they were done my father talked everyone into one last drink. Father Whalen fell asleep. Father Sullivan began

griping about the transcendental aesthetic, calling it a lot of horseshit to annoy Father Lange. Father Lange asked Jesse Owens if he'd ever been to Konigsberg. Jesse Owens asked Father Lange if that Teacher's was pretty good scotch.

The next morning Jesse Owens sat with his elbow on our kitchen table and his forehead resting in his hand. My mother cooked breakfast as my father woke us all up and called us into the kitchen to meet Jesse Owens. We each shook his hand as my father told us how Jesse Owens had defeated Hitler. Hitler, I said to myself. Hitler was the reason my Uncle Joe had a wooden leg. "You sure have a lot of children," said Jesse Owens as my brother crawled up onto his lap. Our mother told us to just leave Jesse Owens be.

Jesse Owens left everything on his plate but half a piece of toast. From our front window I watched him and my father talk by the car out in the driveway. We lived at the top of a hill in our neighborhood. Over the night it had rained and the boxes full of scotch bottles, stacked out on the curb, had collapsed and avalanched down the street. A few even rolled down as they spoke. I could see my father pointing them out to Jesse Owens as if to say see here how these bottles have spilled down the hill. It would be better for us I think if we were to instead drive up the hill and so avoid them. I watched Jesse Owens nod his head as they got into the car and did exactly that.

Geo

Everyone knows Geo. Everyone knows Geo came back from LA a success. He'd made enough money to buy his parents a home. He'd played guitar with Steely Dan, had dinner with Keith Richards. That's his name on the back of the Barbra Streisand album.

The Barbra Streisand sessions made Geo's father proud. Ninety-two, Carl. He'd repaired violins for something like fifty years. New York virtuosos sent him their Stradivariuses. He'd made enough money and established enough connections to land Geo an apprenticeship with Andre Segovia. Barbra Streisand was all right. Rock and roll Carl couldn't see for dirt.

Geo holds court at the bar. Local musicians tug at his elbow, shake his hand, give him their demo tapes to listen to. Musicians, lawyers, reporters, professors—he never buys a drink. Geo talks physics, digital interphase, floor tile, Rubens, sour mash, playing in San Clemente for Nixon, the origins of lipstick, Bach, the futures market, his idea for the third-world utilization of discarded American tires. I serve him his vodka and tonics across the bar. He winks, grabs my shoulder, and smiles. "What are you doing here?" he says. "Go home. Write your novel. You're a god."

Geo closes the bar with me at 4:30 and we walk to his house to eat. He fixes linguini in olive oil with red pepper and garlic. We eat with the dog in the kitchen among the violin necks, yesterday's breakfast, sheet music, medicine bottles, a fifth of gin. There are pepper flakes in his beard. His clothes are five days old. His Impala is on two wheels in the driveway. His eighty-seven year old mother Dorothy paints water colors in the living room. Carl walks naked into the kitchen. He holds out a roll of paper towels and asks for a knife. He wants to cut the roll in half. They are out of toilet paper.

Geo's girlfriend is pregnant. "She doesn't want a child, she wants Eric Clapton," says Geo and that's it. Instead he rants about Modern art, incompetent plumbers, the horrible local musicians, the horrible local restaurants, foreign movies, organized sports, the people who come into the bar and act like they're in foreign movies or organized sports.

The FBI, the IRS, MTV. Women. "How can you trust a creature who bleeds once a month and still lives," he yells. I watch him grab the edge of the bar, watch him hold his forehead, see him bend over, hear him howl. Actual tears run into his beard. He is Henry VIII eating his own leg. He is Santa Claus coming down his own chimney.

Dorothy catches pneumonia. Carl has a minor stroke. Geo's girlfriend has a baby girl. She goes back to her job at the radio station. She goes back to her cocaine. Geo takes a job in a country band. He plays and drinks all night. He comes to see me at the bar and drinks some more. The kid is crying all the time. I tell him to turn on a vacuum. Kids like it. It sounds like the womb. The sound of a vacuum. Geo downs his drink, rubs his stomach and says, "That kid should have heard the sound of a vacuum."

There's this guy who wants to kill me. Unemployed, a drunk, a crackhead. I'm sleeping with his wife. He gets up in his only suit, a brown three-piece, and comes into the bar asking questions about me. Tells everyone he's a detective. He's waiting for me when I get to work. The place is busier than hell. He yells at me for a Bud Lite. When I bring it to him he stands up on the foot rail. He leans over the bar and holds out his hand. "I just want to introduce myself," he says. "I'm Troy Hanson. Karla's husband."

I've never seen this guy in my life. His eyes are jiggling back and forth in his head. He's got these thick glasses, a little ponytail, a shitty beard. His lips are pulled back into his mouth. The jaw muscles underneath his ears are pulsing. I don't know what to do. I think of Geo. "How ya doin'," I say. I grab Troy Hanson's hand and pull him across the bar. "I think your wife is the best thing since sliced bread."

"Are you having an affair with my wife?" says Troy Hanson and I say no way man. "Then tell me what's going on with you two," he says and I tell him to look around at how busy I am. Troy Hanson's eyes start tearing up and he slams his fist down on the bar. "Well when can we talk about it!" he yells. I tell him anytime he wants. "Tomorrow noon, the Gas House," says Troy Hanson and I point a finger at him, pull my triggered thumb and tell him, "High noon."

Geo comes in after his gig and I tell him about the trouble I'm in. "The first thing you do," says Geo, "is show up." I tell Geo I'm planning on it but this guy is nuts. "Forget about it . . . ," says Geo, ". . . do you still pray?" I tell Geo yeah I still pray and Geo says, "Good. So before you show up tomorrow you go to church. You go to church and you pray to the baby Jesus to help you lie like a Persian rug. Forget about it. Do you think I'd let anything happen to you?" Geo is heading toward the door and he trips over a bar stool. I ask him if he's going to remember any of this tomorrow. "Listen," says Geo. "Before Carl takes a shit, he has to get out the plunger and plunge the water down because his balls are so heavy they hang into the water. And that's where I come from."

I go to church. I show up at the Gas House at five till noon. At the far end of the bar sits Geo. The sun shines behind his brown curls, his brown beard, the black sunglasses above his

fat cheeks, the smoke of his Camel rising above his head. He's got that green military sweater on, the Marine pin attached to it, the chained black boots. I stop dead at the top of the stairs and smile at him. He shakes his head and looks away. What he's telling me is that I'm screwing up everything. I keep on smiling. I can't help it. I can't move. He's so beautiful.

GJS

My father's dictionary is a Webster's Seventh, "Based on Webster's Third," it reads on the title page, like a symphony or some memoir posthumously inspired.

I've been stealing his things, old things he doesn't use anymore. His round army glasses and his flak jacket, an olive drab notebook that reads:

War Department Technical Manual
TM30-606
November 30, 1943
German Phrase Book

My father lost his innocence during basic training at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. He hated it. Hated the army, hated the South, hated the people. It's where he acquired his real-world bigotry. He doesn't know that he's a southern gentleman. That he's a war scholar, that his confidantes are common, that his companions are poor, are immigrants, are women, that his best friend is black.

While Andre and my father worked together, before the new administrator arrived, before Andre got fired, they would hang out together and drink. Andre would stand on our suburban porch and shout at our suburban neighbors, "Hah yahl. Hahr ya. Hah. I'm Andre. Andre! George's cousin from Deetroit."

The new administrator's name was Richard Reilly. He was a six-foot-five Boston Catholic by way of New Orleans son of a bitch full of immediate loudmouthed charm. He liked to drink, fuck, lie, and steal. The first three matters were none of my father's business.

My father is a financial cop and an honest one. The only thing he ever took that didn't belong to him were Hermann Goering's mug shots.

He won't talk about when he was a spy. He's mentioned once or twice the German girls he drank with, an intelligence babe from Baltimore, the barracks librarian who'd scout out Beethoven and Wagner, the gay MP he saw screwing beneath some jeep, Pious XII thanking him for fighting communism, and Hermann Goering.

Richard Reilly looked a little like Hermann Goering. My father chased down thirty thousand dollars until it landed on Richard Reilly's desk. It was for wine, Richard Reilly said, for the maternity ward. He fired my father the next day.

My father keeps Hermann Goering's mug shots in a box in the garage. This is where he is in the fall and winter, avoiding my mother. He fixes stuff in there, invents devices that make it easier to fix more stuff. Above his work bench hang his tools, his Loras College 25th year reunion plaque, a diffused WWII grenade, and a sign that reads:

You don't get it your way.
This is not Burger King.
You take it my way
Or you don't get the son of a bitch.

Richard Reilly died the other night at the age of 49. He drank, fucked, lied and stole himself to death.

When my father quit drinking, he didn't quit drinking—he kicked the shit out of it. He never talks about it. He finishes reading about Julius Streicher, has a bowl of ice cream, and goes to bed.

It's when he's asleep that I steal his stuff. He used the Webster's in college. On the inside cover, beneath his name, is a tombstone with his initials: GJS.

The hard facts of me father's dictionary are silent. He always wanted to write.

Jennifer King

She was the most beautiful boy in Sacred Heart. I remember her saying two words. They were "peace" and "prince."

And she said "man" a lot. When we were in the second grade I thought she was on drugs when all I knew about drugs was that they were the most awful and dangerous things in the

world and I hated them but I liked her. She would tilt her head back and off to the side. The lids of her eyes hung low as if she were squinting but she wasn't. She was strainless. She did not walk, she slid. She would not talk when she could nod or shake her head. Jennifer King was not on drugs.

In the third grade The Sting came out rated GP. Jennifer King loved the movie. My parents wouldn't let me see it so I read the book in several dozen visits to four or five drug stores. I bought a hat like the one I saw Robert Redford wear in the advertisement. Jennifer King bought the soundtrack and played the songs written by Scott Joplin and Marvin Hamlisch. She lowered the needle to a track called "Solace" and asked me if I knew what it meant. When I said no she whispered "Peace." She was just like Paul Newman.

We put on a Christmas play in the fourth grade. I couldn't sing or act. I was the narrator. On stage I took off my clip-on tie and unbuttoned the top two buttons of my shirt. I bent my left knee and shifted my weight onto my right leg. I stuck my hands in my pockets. "Herod was killing kids all over," I said and cocked my head and shook it. Jennifer King's mother was a beautiful woman who didn't have much to say to anyone but that night she introduced herself to my mother and got me out of trouble. I was very good. "Natural yet reverent."

Everyone played ball or talked ball. Jennifer King was a cheerleader for one year and never again. In the fall of fifth grade she went out for the football team. They wouldn't let her play so she entered the city's Punt, Pass and Kick competetion. She won. She beat everyone. Everyone in the whole city. Even seventh grader boys.

In the sixth grade I caught mono and was not allowed to play basketball for the whole season. I was only sick for three days but I was out of school for two weeks. Jennifer King went up to my mother in Sacred Heart's parking lot and told her not to worry. I would be fine. She'd had it. She was fine. She informed my mother that mono was the "kissing disease." I created a rumor in my mind. Fantastic, private gossip.

Jennifer King's father was a doctor. He was very tall and sent his kids all the way to Indiana to college to Notre Dame. On the way back from the state basketball championship his car stalled and he walked out onto the highway for help. He

was hit by a semi and his body was hurled over a bridge.Sacred Heart was packed at his funeral. Jennifer King had a twin sister that I hardly remember.

In the eighth grade, on the last day of school, the last day of Sacred Heart, everyone gathered in the gym for an assembly. The student body president called me out onto the gym floor over the microphone. I was supposed to arm wrestle. Not the president. Bridget Pfeifer. Bridget Pfeifer put the shot. With her arm. She was kind of cute. Like a Saint Bernard. I thought about giving up but I held on. For about four seconds. I whispered across the table, "C'mon Bridget. Have a heart." She slammed me. The school exploded. Bridget Pfeifer bowed. My best friend said I was a disgrace to my sex. Rumor was I was a homo. Jennifer King said sex didn't enter into it. I said hell. She said it couldn't. I said why. She said because I was a "prince." Like in history. She said to check it out.

The next year my family moved out of town and I started high school. I found out that Dr. King had a good heart when he was alive but that he wasn't a very good doctor. I found out that Mrs. King took her husband's death hard. She became an alcoholic. I found out that Jennifer had been cooking and laundering and more or less holding the family together.

In the twelfth grade, near South Bend, I was deep frying cod in a Long John Silver's. A girl who looked like Jennifer King slid through the store door and over the wood walk. She had a tape player with her and was listening to Springsteen's "Reason To Believe," singing every third or fourth word. She said "Hiya" and ordered and sat down at the table in the middle of the store. She looked off into the air, would bob her head, and look off again. She laughed once for no reason and pop came out her nose. She bobbed her head. She looked off. I tightened my apron. I said "Jenny" out loud. I loved her so much. I was on drugs.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

LOSS, LOVE, AND RENEWAL: ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

RONALD F. DORR

Loss, love, and renewal, I believe, are the great themes of life and literature. One of the small rituals addressing such universal themes is the letter of condolence, or sympathy. Writing letters of condolence, however, is difficult. The emotions of loss are often raw, intense, and conflicting. In reacting to death, people usually do not know what to say or how to express their feelings. For these reasons, rituals arise—to take us through emotions that are hard to acknowledge, express, and resolve. In the last two centuries, books have appeared, providing advice about grief and sympathy and offering specimen letters for different audiences. The danger in following such models, however, is obvious. The comfort and content are formulaic rather than genuine. To Isabel II, the queen of Spain, Abraham Lincoln wrote such a letter of condolence on February 15, 1862 (V, 133-134):

> To Her Majesty Dona Isabel II
> By the Grace of God and the Constitution
> of the Spanish Monarchy, Queen of Spain, &., &.
>
> Great and Good Friend:
> I have received the letter which Your Majesty was pleased to address to me on the 30th. of October, last, conveying the melancholy tidings of the decease of Her Royal Highness the Infanta Dona Maria de la Concepcion Your Majesty's beloved daughter.
> I participate in the grief occasioned by this sad event, and offer to Your Majesty my sincere condolence.
> May God have Your Majesty always in His safe and Holy keeping!
>
> Your Good Friend,
> Abraham Lincoln

On the same day, Lincoln had written to the same monarch, congratulating her on the occasion of the birth of a grandchild (V, 133). The salutation, the close, the last sentence, much of the second sentence, and nearly half of the first sentence of each letter were identical. Different sentiments—condolence and congratulation—were offered for different occasions, but the form of such communication to a foreign sovereign was the same. To many, Lincoln's sentiments especially in the second sentence sound pro forma rather than sincere.

Offering condolences to a royal family, Lincoln had written two weeks earlier, "is a customary ceremony, which has its good uses, though it is conventional, and may sometimes be even insincere" (V, 117). The President knew the dangers of the convention, yet in the letter to Queen Isabel II he seemed to follow the formula. His letter of condolence to King Christian IX of Denmark, written on May 11, 1864, differed from that addressed to Queen Isabel II on February 15, 1862, only in naming the person who died—"Her Royal Highness Madam the Landgrave Louise Charlotte of Hesse consort of His Highness the Landgrave William" (VII, 336-337).

In fact, 13 of the known 17 letters of sympathy written by Abraham Lincoln were formal, prosaic, and formulaic, occasioned by the deaths in royal families overseas. In four letters of condolence, however, Lincoln rose to the occasion, acknowledged the pain of loss, wrote compelling tributes to the loved one(s) lost, and affirmed the enduring theme of sacrificial love for liberty and Union that inspired thousands on the battlefield. These were his letters to Queen Victoria, to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth, to Fanny McCullough, and to Lydia Bixby. They are model letters of sympathy.

To one sovereign overseas, Lincoln broke through the conventional trapping, adding his own voice to the customary message, his own interpretation to the occasion, and his own sympathy to the bereft. On February 1, 1862, he wrote the following letter of condolence to Queen Victoria. He was lamenting the death of Prince Albert and also trying to prevent British recognition of the Confederacy. Here the appeal to the heart depends on the analysis directed to the mind (V. 117-118):

To Her Majesty Victoria,
Queen of the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Ireland,
&., &., &., Sendeth Greeting!

Great and Good Friend:

By a letter from your son, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, which has just been received, I am informed of the overwhelming affliction which has fallen upon Your Majesty, by the untimely death of His Royal Highness the late Prince Consort, Prince Albert, of Saxe Coburg.

The offer of condolence in such cases is a customary ceremony, which has its good uses, though it is conventional, and may sometimes be even insincere. But I would fain have Your Majesty apprehend, on this occasion, that real sympathy can exist, as real truthfulness can be practised, in the intercourse of Nations. The People of the United States are kindred of the People of Great Britain. With our distinct national interests, objects, and aspirations, we are conscious that our moral strength is largely derived from that relationship, and we think we do not deceive ourselves when we suppose that, by constantly cherishing cordial friendship and sympathy with the other branches of the family to which we belong, we impart to them not less strength than we derive from the same connection. Accidents, however, incidental to all States, and passions, common to all nations, often tend to disturb the harmony so necessary and so proper between the two countries, and to convert them into enemies. It was reserved for Your Majesty in sending your son, the Heir Apparent of the British Throne, on a visit among us to inaugurate a policy to counteract these injurious tendencies, as it has been Your Majesty's manifest endeavor, through a reign already of considerable length and of distinguished success, to cultivate the friendship on our part so earnestly desired. It is for this reason that you are honored on this side of the Atlantic as a friend of the American People. The late Prince Consort was with sufficient evidence regarded as your counsellor in the same friendly relation. The American People, therefore, deplore his death and sympathize in Your Majesty's irreparable bereavement with an unaffected sorrow. This condolence may not be altogether ineffectual, since we are sure it emanates from only virtuous motives and natural affection. I do not dwell upon it, however, because I know that the Divine hand that has wounded, is the only one that can heal: And so, commending Your Majesty

and the Prince Royal, the Heir Apparent, and all your afflicted family to the tender mercies of God. I remain

Your Good Friend,
Abraham Lincoln

This letter is both public and personal, both formal and intimate, both policy statement and note of sympathy. It speaks for Lincoln himself ("I would fain have Your Majesty apprehend") and for the American people in general by relying on "us" and "we," the more intimate group pained by the death of Prince Albert. The letter speaks of the common aims, interests, and spirit of two English-speaking people: "The People of the United States are kindred of the People of Great Britain." In Lincoln's mind, temporary incidents and outbursts of passion (such as the *Trent* affair in late 1861) would not stand in the way of "real sympathy" between the two nations. Indeed, "moral strength" has come from the natural connection between the two.

To these mystic chords of friendship, history, and community, Lincoln recalls the personal efforts of the British royal family to cultivate such warm ties. He praises Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and their son, the Prince of Wales. He makes them an integral part of the larger English kinship. Thus, in Albert's death, it is as if Lincoln and the American people have lost a loved member of their family, too. The sense of loss is keen. Only God—the one who wounds, the author of life and death, the source of "tender mercies"—can heal. Knowledge of such kindred spirits, however, also helps assuage the present affliction and offers comfort for the future. Acknowledging the cordial relationship and praising the royal family for its part in such kinship are another way of saying: "The Prince is dead! Long live the English-speaking people!" A keen sense of loss, "cordial friendship," and renewed vows to cultivate the natural ties between two great English-speaking peoples—the three themes of loss, love, and renewal are present in this letter of condolence.

Letters to monarchs, however, are not the best expression of Abraham Lincoln's heart and mind. The Civil War produced enough occasions for conveying genuine sympathy. During that conflict, Lincoln wrote three letters of condolence that are models of handling loss and grief. At first glance, the three letters are quite different. The occasion, the audience, the message, the tone—all vary. Yet the purpose, the effect, and Lincoln's faith are similar. Like letters of good advice, these expressions of condolence to the parents of Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, to Fanny McCullough, and to Lydia Bixby convey the right words to the right person at the right time.

Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, 24, was the first officer in the North to be killed in the Civil War. A young student formerly in Lincoln's law office, accompanying the presidential party to Washington, D. C., soliciting but not receiving a clerkship in the War Department, he had recruited companies of Zouaves, known for their bright uniforms and spirited drills. On May 24, 1861, he and a Zouave regiment stormed a hotel at Alexandria, Virginia, which was flying a Confederate flag that could be seen by spyglass from the White House. Ellsworth cut down the Stars and Bars. The owner of the hotel, however, killed the youthful officer and friend of Lincoln before Ellsworth could return safely (Sandburg, I, 264).

The next day, President Lincoln wrote the following letter of condolence to Ephraim D. and Phoebe Ellsworth (IV, 385-386):

My dear Sir and Madam,

In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here, is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one's country, and of bright hopes for one's self and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed, as in his fall. In size, in years, and in youthful appearance, a boy only, his power to command men, was surpassingly great. This power, combined with a fine intellect, an indomitable energy, and a taste altogether military, constituted in him, as seemed to me, the best natural talent, in that department, I ever knew. And yet he was singularly modest and deferential in social intercourse. My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago; yet through the latter half of the intervening period, it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages, and my engrossing engagements, would permit. To me, he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes; and I never heard him utter a profane, or an intemperate word. What was conclusive of his good heart, he never forgot his parents. The honors he labored for so laudably, and, in the sad end, so gallantly gave his life, he meant for them, no less than for himself.

In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute

to the memory of my young friend, and your brave and early fallen child.

May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power. Sincerely your friend in a common affliction—

A. Lincoln

Lincoln's letter contains the essentials of condolence: (1) acknowledging the sting and sadness of loss; (2) remembering the life and character of the dead person, and (3) expressing sympathy for the bereaved. Because his own loss and pain are great, the President can sympathize naturally even intimately, with the Ellsworths. He begins and ends the letter with the bonds of "untimely loss": "our affliction here, is scarcely less than your own." "Sincerely your friend in a common affliction—A. Lincoln" Not only the youthful life of Elmer Ellsworth has ended but also the promise of this young man—service to his country, "bright hopes" held by family and friends, military talent and modesty mixed in such an unusual way. That great promise had been clear to Lincoln even though he had known Ellsworth less than two years.

Feeling pain and expressing sympathetic sorrow, Lincoln nevertheless focuses on the character of Colonel Ellsworth. Despite his young age, he combined "a fine intellect, an indomitable energy," a "power to command," and a military aptitude that was, according the Lincoln, "the best natural talent" he had seen. The young man's character was exemplary. Neither self-indulgent nor intemperate, he sought to serve his country. "What was conclusive of his good heart," Lincoln continued, "he never forgot his parents." His courage and honors reflected nobly upon his mother and father.

Here Lincoln's primary purpose is to praise, and his mode is elegiac. He focuses on the past, the character of what has been lost, and the common thread of grief felt by the correspondents. He does not name the cause for which Ellsworth "so gallantly gave his life." But he does infuse sacrificial death with a religious quality, bringing together the painful loss, the noble life, and the intimacy and sympathy of sorrow. "In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend, and your brave and early fallen child." Then he concludes: "May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power."

No parent could ever forget or find fault with such a letter from the President of the United States. No parent would pay attention to the mistakes in grammar and punctuation in this letter. In shaking hands with sorrow, Lincoln has assuaged the grief of the parents, Ephraim and Phoebe Ellsworth. On June 19, 1861, Ephraim D. Ellsworth expressed to Lincoln his "grateful thanks for your kindness to and interest you have shown in our beloved son" (*ibid.*, 386).

On December 5, 1862, Lieutenant Colonel William M. McCullough lost his life, fighting with the Fourth Cavalry of Illinois near Coffeeville, Mississippi. Making his way back to Grant's army, tired after a day of "feeling out" the Confederate forces of John Pemberton. McCullough and his troops were ambushed in a sloped woods. "Halt! Get down and surrender!" the enemy cried out. Colonel McCullough turned around, faced his men, and replied: "Fourth Cavalry! Left front into line! Charge!" Confederate rifles mowed him down—but no one else. His regiment escaped the trap. "His men said he had saved them at his own cost. Six days later under a flag of truce his body was brought through the enemy lines and taken home to Bloomington with an escort of of officers" (Sandburg, I, 617-618).

Lincoln had known the soldier and friend, McCullough, well. Forty-nine, without the use of one eye and one arm, McCullough had been a veteran of the Black Hawk War, a clerk of the Circuit Court at Bloomington, sheriff of McClean County, and member of the Republican Party, who helped organize and lead the Fourth Illinois Cavalry. Lincoln used to hold the man's daughters, Fanny and Nanny, on his knees.

On December 23, 1862, President Lincoln wrote to Fanny McCullough in Bloomington (VI, 16-17):

Dear Fanny

It is with deep grief that I learn of the death of your kind and brave Father; and, especially, that it is affecting your young heart beyond what is common in such cases. In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all; and, to the young, it comes with bitterest agony, because it takes them unawares. The older have learned to ever expect it. I am anxious to afford some alleviation of your present distress. Perfect relief is not possible, except

> with time. You can not now realize that you will ever feel better. Is not this so? And yet it is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have had experience enough to know what I say; and you need only to believe it, to feel better at once. The memory of your dear Father, instead of an agony, will yet be a sad sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer, and holier sort than you have known before.
>
> Please present my kind regards to your afflicted mother.
>
> Your sincere friend A. Lincoln

Here Lincoln is addressing a young person who has lost a parent instead of parents who have lost a young person.

In this letter, like the one to the Ellsworths, Abraham Lincoln acknowledges his "deep grief" over the loss of a friend, alludes to the "kind and brave" character of the fallen one, and extends his sincere sympathy to Fanny and her mother. But he does not focus on Fanny McCullough's father. Instead, he tells her the truth: "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all." He further dissects that truth: while older people have come to expect sadness in life, sorrow comes "with bitterest agony" to the young "because it takes them unawares."

The purpose of Lincoln's letter to Fanny McCullough is to alleviate such distress. He does not deny the sting of death or the present state of Fanny's mind. Yet he believes that all this shall pass. Time heals wounds. But knowledge of the present and the future also helps. "You are sure to be happy again. To know this . . . will make you some less miserable now." Lincoln reinforces his point with personal authority, claiming "experience enough to know what I say." Recognizing her mistaken impression will make her "feel better at once." Such insight will lead to a more elevated emotion, charged with morality and religion: "The memory of your dear Father, instead of an agony, will yet be a sad sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer, and holier sort than you have known before." Paradoxically Fanny's grief, properly felt and properly understood, will become deeper and more mature love.

This letter is filled with subdued contrasts. The most important are those of the young and old, despair and holiness, present affliction and the healing power of time, the innocence and inexperience of Fanny McCullough and the experience of

Lincoln proved on his pulse. Like the letter to the Ellsworths, this note of condolence does not articulate the cause for which so many Ellsworths and McCulloughs would give their lives. Instead, Lincoln takes seriously the grief of Fanny McCullough, brings his own authority and his experience of sorrow to bear, and combines insight with emotional impact to form felt knowledge, or an understanding heart. The result is synthesis of a high order: "sad sweet feeling . . . of a purer, and holier sort." In admitting his own experience, in feeling for as well as feeling with Fanny McCullough, in being open to new insight as it affects the emotions of life, Lincoln is able to transcend the vivid present. He is taking Fanny beyond her troubles. Just as he was able to transcend the present in his Farewell Address of February 11, 1861, he is already thinking of the future and the meaning with which the death of William McCullough and thousands like it will be cherished.

On November 21, 1864, Abraham Lincoln provides such meaning to Lydia Bixby, the mother of five sons allegedly lost in the Civil War. The correspondence is both a letter of condolence and a public statement. According to Edgar Jackson, it is an exemplary piece of condolence (285):

> For the personal note or letter [of condolence] perhaps nothing surpasses the model for real feeling and completeness with brevity that is contained in the letter Abraham Lincoln wrote [to Lydia Bixby. It is] a model for brevity and clarity. It is honest and direct. Yet it is rich in its inspiration and its personal tribute.

This letter of sympathy to Lydia Bixby is also the Gettysburg Address personalized.

Earlier, in September, 1864, Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts, informed by his State Adjutant General of a widow living in Boston who had given five sons to the cause of the Union, had sent a memorandum to the War Department: "This is a case so remarkable that I really wish a letter might be written her by the President of the United States, such as a noble mother of five dead sons so well deserves" (Sandburg, III, 665). In mid-October, William Schouler, the Adjutant General of Massachusetts, sent Lincoln a document confirming the deaths of five Bixby sons. It does not matter that only two sons actually

were killed; of the other three, one deserted and went to sea, another was captured and joined the enemy, and a third was taken prisoner, exchanged, and returned home. What matters is Lincoln's genuine sympathy and symbolic use of this woman's woe (VIII, 116-117):

> Dear Madam,
>
> I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts, that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle.
>
> I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save.
>
> I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom.
>
> Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,
> A. Lincoln

Lincoln gave the letter to Schouler, who delivered it to Lydia Bixby and who turned a copy over to the Boston newspapers. Within days, it was reprinted nationally.

As he had done for the Ellsworths and Fanny McCullough, President Lincoln acknowledges the "overwhelming" loss in the Bixby family, alludes to the glorious yet costly nobility of character of these young men, and expresses sympathy for the widow's grief. He admits how feeble his words of consolation may be. He points to a higher source of comfort and power: "the thanks of the Republic they died to save." In fact, the sources of consolation are several: Lincoln's own words, the Republic itself, God ("Our Heavenly Father"), "the cherished memory of the loved and lost," the pride of a parent who has sacrificed so much, and the noble cause of freedom ("the altar of Freedom"). Words, images, memories, emotions, all are meant to assuage Bixby's grief—and to give meaning to such a sacrifice.

This letter is a remarkable combination of intimacy and formality. The subject of each sentence, indeed the first word of three of the four sentences, is "I." Lincoln addresses Lydia

Bixby as "you" in all four sentences, includes "your" and "yours" in the last sentence, and concludes, "Yours, very sincerely and respectfully." Such pronouns make the tone as well as the correspondents personal. Yet sentence structure and length are highly formal. Grammatically, all of the patterns are complex sentences. The first sentence is 36 words long, the second 26, the third 24, and the fourth 45. The average length of each sentence is 33 words. Yet the command of the prose, like that in the Gettysburg Address, overshadows the length. Because Lincoln does not know Mrs. Bixby personally, he does not extol the character of her sons (as he did to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth); he does not give advice to the widow (as he did to Fanny McCullough). Instead, he names the cause to which he and the Bixbys are devoted. As if it were an act of worship, Lincoln brings their life and labor to the altar. The glorious deaths on the battlefield are offerings to the Republic, a "sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom." Here Lincoln fuses religion and nationalism, as he does in the Gettysburg Address and the second Inaugural Address. The connecting link is renewal—that mysterious linkage of life and death and rebirth.

What Lincoln had done for the nation at Gettysburg, he does now for Lydia Bixby. According to Roy Basler (42), at Gettysburg Lincoln

> took the theme dearest to his audience, honor for the heroic dead sons and fathers, and combined it with the theme nearest to his own heart, the preservation of democracy. Out of this double theme grew his poetic metaphor of birth, death, and spiritual rebirth, of the life of man and the life of the nation. To it he brought the fervor of devoutly religious belief. Democracy was to Lincoln a religion, and he wanted it to be in a real sense the religion of his audience. Thus he combined an elegiac theme with a patriotic theme, skillfully blending the hope of eternal life with the hope of eternal democracy.

The message in the letter to Bixby is similar to that in the letter to Queen Victoria: "The Bixby boys are dead. Long live the American Republic!" In renewing a mother's hope of eternal life for her sons, Lincoln is also renewing the nation's faith in liberty and Union. The specific political issue may be the preservation of the American experiment in self-government. The

great human theme for the loved and lost, however, is rebirth, or regeneration.

The rhetorical structure of this letter is similar to that in the Gettysburg Address. Both pieces begin with a statement of the occasion and the necessary historical background. Then the President acknowledges his (and the American people's) inadequacy to appreciate and to duplicate the pain and sacrifice of those who gave their lives. Then he moves from the past to the present and future. Here Lincoln tries to assuage the loss and grief: calling upon the bereft to take comfort in the noble cause to which their loved ones were committed. He is asking the nation, the audience at Gettysburg, and Lydia Bixby to keep the faith. Re-membering "the loved and lost"—tying them to the Federal Union and to republican freedom—making them members of a renewed nation—are the proud task of those dedicated to the ideals for which they fought. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln is explicit, in the letter to Lydia Bixby implicit, but the intent is the same: cherish the memory, take pride in the dead, honor the purpose for which they died, and, above all, live out their cause so that their death will have meaning. And that meaning is the climactic symbol at the end of each work of art: "so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom" and "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom" (VII, 23). Using this symbol at the end of both works, Lincoln shows that all the preceding sentiments—the sacrifice, the dedication, the pride, the perseverance in spite of grief—all come together in the ultimate purpose: maintaining the premium gift of the American republic, the gift of freedom. Past and present and future are united. The Gettysburg Address is more elaborate and detailed; the letter to Lydia Bixby is the Address made personal.

To speak personally in a letter of condolence is difficult. To speak for the public in such a letter is even more rare. To do both is literary genuis. The letter to Lydia Bixby is everything Edgar Jackson claims it is: brief yet complete, direct and emotional, honest and laudatory, personal and inspiring, simple and yet rich. It does nearly everything Lynn Caine says a letter of condolence should do—praise, provide comfort and sympathy, give strength, express faith, help handle emotions, and impart understanding as well as wisdom (60-63). It is the right word said at the right time. It is "nothing less than pain . . . changed

into, or let us say, charged with exaltation" (Hamilton, 165). It is excellence personified.

Four of Abraham Lincoln's 17 letters of condolence are models of what to write in moments of loss and grief. Such expressions were appropriate in his time, and they are fitting and proper now.

Thomas *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms: A Guide to Correct Writing* went through numerous editions in the second half of the 19th century. Here is what Hill said about writing letters of sympathy, or "expressions of condolence" (95):

> A letter of sympathy and condolence, though unpleasant to write. may afford inexpressible comfort to a friend in the hour of affliction.
>
> Make your letter as brief, but earnest and sincere, as possible. Do not commit the mistake of insinuating that the misfortune is the fault of your friend. Better leave the letter unwritten.
>
> Admit the loss. Do not attempt to make light of it. If you are satisfied that it will eventuate in a blessing, you may gently point the way, but with a full admission of the present deep affliction.

Lincoln's letters of condolence follow both the spirit and the letter of these suggestions, even using the same language that Hill does. The President always acknowledges the deep loss. He does not use humor in any of these letters. He becomes briefer in each letter, using 201 words in the text to the Ellsworths, 188 to Fanny McCullough, and only 131 to Lydia Bixby. He is earnest and sincere. He does not say, as some newspapers did, that Elmer Ellsworth was too impetuous, contributing to his own death. He does not say what he allegedly did at the White House, upon seeing the body of Ellsworth: "My boy! My boy! Was it necessary this sacrifice should be made?" (Sandburg, I, 266)

But he does point the way, guiding Fanny McCullough to a higher truth than the present moment holds and giving meaning (for parents such as the Ellsworths and Lydia Bixby) to the thousands of deaths from 1861 to 1865. "To many," Carl Sandburg has written, Elmer Ellsworth "was the image of youth moving to drums and banners for the sake of emblems and mystic, inexplicable courses. . . . His grave foreshadowed a long row of the graves of comrade youths lying alongside, each of them

taken off in an eyeblink" (*ibid.*, 268). Ephraim Ellsworth's gracious reply to the President, plus the immediate reproduction of the letter to Bixby in several newspapers, tells us that Lincoln's letters of condolence had the desired effect.

They were the right words written to the right person at the right time.

To some, it may seem strange that Abraham Lincoln wrote only three letters of condolence to those bereaving the loss of life during the Civil War. In fact, more than 600,000 men and women died because of that terrible conflict. Lincoln, however, was no stranger to death and sorrow. One of his sons died during the war, another had died a decade earlier, Lincoln had lost one of his best friends, Edward Baker, early in the war, and several of his wife's relatives were casualties. Surely the death of his mother, Nancy, when Lincoln was still a boy, had affected him deeply. In 1844, a visit to his old home prompted a poem, "My Childhood-Home I See Again," which is saturated with feelings of loss and death.

Lincoln's sensitivity to these subjects was consistent, and the three letters of condolence written during the Civil War were his mature reaction to loss and grief. It is amazing how closely Lincoln mirrors contemporary thought on loss, grief, and renewal. In *Finding My Way: Healing and Transformation Through Loss and Grief*, psychologist John Schneider focuses on three phases of the process: (1) discovering what is lost—the beginning of grief, (2) discovering what is left—the limits of loss, and (3) discovering what is possible—moving toward transformation (66-74). Each of the three letters of condolence analyzed above fits one or more of these categories. The letter to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth, in particular, states what has been lost, the letter to Fanny McCullough addresses the limits of loss and grief, and the letter to Lydia Bixby transforms the grief over the loved lost into profound religious and patriotic meaning.

Throughout his life, Abraham Lincoln had also tasted political defeat, notably in his very first try for office in 1832 and in his campaign for the Senate against Stephen Douglas in 1858. After that loss to Douglas, Lincoln wrote more than a dozen letters to friends. They reveal Lincoln's thinking about loss and renewal. For Lincoln stressed four kinds of renewal: (1) common sense resumption of activities, both natural and human, (2) starting afresh—Lincoln's organic blending of the past, present, and future, (3) psychological reviving, in which Lincoln rejuvenated others and others revived him, and (4) religious rebirth, regeneration, and resurrection. Both the letters written after the loss to Douglas in 1858 and the letters of condolence written during the Civil War reveal a characteristic pattern of psychological recharging and religious affirmation in the midst of painful loss.

But they also reveal Lincoln's philosophy of time. The most original element in Lincoln's theory of loss and renewal, I submit, is his organic blending of past, present, and future. This interrelationship is most noticeable in a sentence about free labor, written in 1859 (III, 462): "The hired laborer of yesterday, labors on his own account to-day: and will hire others to labor for him to-morrow." It is present as early as in an address before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield on January 27, 1838 (I, 108, 112, 115): "let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own and his children's liberty. . . . This task of gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to posterity," and, in a phrase moving backwards, "this state of feeling *must fade, is fading, has faded.*" This trinity of time is present in the Farewell Address (IV, 190): "Here I have lived. . . . I now leave. . . . let us confidently hope." It is present, like a crescendo, in the Gettysburg Address (VII, 73): "Fourscore and seven years ago" (paragraph one), "Now we are engaged" (paragraph two), and "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us" (paragraph three). And it is present in the Second Inaugural Address (VIII, 332-333): Lincoln's explanation of the cause of the Civil War ("four years ago"), the meditation about the present ("The Almighty has His own purposes"), and the words of renewal and reconciliation ("to finish the work we are in"). In short, this trinity of time is sometimes compressed in one sentence and is sometimes used to unify an entire address. It is a seed in the letter to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth, it is the emotional content of the letter to Fanny McCullough, and it is the heart and governing force of the letter to Lydia Bixby.

"I am rather a poor correspondent," Abraham Lincoln wrote on more than one occasion (I, 320, 420). He considered some of his letters dull, silly, and of little value (I, 74; II, 153). Most of his letter writing was functional, pursuing the practical ends

of work and politics. Such correspondence, however, may have been Lincoln's apprenticeship in writing. Like his thinking, his letter writing matured. It honed his morality, stretched and disciplined his mind, forced him to be concise, and contributed to his plain style. It was an outlet for business, humor, inquiry, and some risktaking. Corresponding with others also renewed his spirit. Lincoln's rhetoric itself was regenerating. Along with his speeches, his letters were a creative and constructive agent of renewal.

As Lincoln aged, his letters increased in range, stature, and elegance. Lincoln's audience grew as his sense of community deepened and his mastery of words, emotions, and other people grew. His rhetoric increasingly varied, became more imaginative and not just functional, took on more emotion, and, in certain letters of advice, condolence, and policy, turned into poetic prose, imparting wisdom and moving others. In letter writing, Abraham Lincoln was attentive to the daily commonplaces of work and politics. But he was also faithful to the great issues of life such as death, loss, and grief. In some letters, he rose to the occasion and wrote gems. In the letters to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth, to Fanny McCullough, and to Lydia Bixby, he transcended himself, his audience, and the time. In them, he wrote words of wisdom, which can regenerate us all.

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MIDAMERICA: THE SECOND DECADE

MARCIA NOE

In *MidAmerica X* Roger Bresnahan reviewed the published work of members of this society in a ten-year retrospective, characterizing their work as "elaborating the context, establishing the canon, and discovering the rich veins of inquiry" of Midwestern Literature (9). During the past decade, members of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature have continued this work. Many of the articles published in *MidAmericas XI-XX*, like those in earlier volumes, are traditional studies of authors and texts, with Sherwood Anderson weighing in as the writer most frequently examined, followed by Saul Bellow, Ernest Hemingway and Edgar Lee Masters. However, poststructuralist thinking has left its mark on the second decade of *MidAmerica* essays, for well over half of them employ a perspective that is political, historicist, or feminist.

New historicism is seen in William Barillas's examination of how the Federal Land Acts established a system of rectangular land survey and sale which turned the Northwest Territory into a region of small farms that later became the heart of the Midwest, and also in Kenneth Robb's analysis of the way that Mary Hartwell Catherwood's Beaver Island stories were shaped by the conflicts between a religious sect and the larger community. Ellen Serlen Uffen's discussion of the way that postbellum social history informs Helen Hooven Santmeyer's ". . . *And Ladies of the Club*," Douglas Noverr's study of the Depression as a shaping force in James Thurber's *My Life and Hard Times*, and Robert Narveson's discussion of the ways Lincoln-Caesar analogies in literature reflect the political attitudes of the writers are also historicist in approach.

The influence of feminist criticism is seen in the large number of articles that focus on female authors: six on Ruth Suckow, five

on Willa Cather, two each on Janet Ayer Fairbank, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sara Paretsky and Jane Smiley, as well as articles which discuss Gene Stratton Porter, Sarah T. Barrett Bolton, Mary Hartwell Catherwood, Elia W. Peattie, Helen Hooven Santmeyer, Harriette Arnow, Vera Caspary, Edith Thomas, and Susan Taylor Chehak. Laura Niesen de Abruna's use of feminist theory in her analysis of Dreiser's treatment of Carrie Meeber and Ellen Serlen Uffen's discussion of the female characters in Wright Morris's *Plains Song for Female Voices* also reflect this trend.

But while the influence of the new is evident, the influence of the traditional is equally strong. Many of the scholars writing in *MidAmerica* during the past ten years have continued to focus on the three defining questions that were posed at the very first meeting of the Society: What is the Midwest? What are its literary and geographical dimensions? What are the characteristics and dynamics of Midwestern literature?

Since none of us has answered any of these questions definitively, we will probably continue to find it rewarding to puzzle over them in print and at the conference lectern for a long time to come. But if there are those who find it disconcerting that after twenty-five years, we are still debating whether or not we exist, they can be reassured by the fact that our colleagues who study the literature of the American South, arguably a more distinctive regional entity, seem to be no less preoccupied with the same kind of questions.

Richard Gray, in *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region*, begins by saying that "anyone who chooses to write about the American South is almost immediately confronted with a problem. Is there such a thing as the South, a coherent region and an identifiable culture that can be sharply differentiated from the rest of the United States?" (xi). John Shelton Reed, a sociologist from Chapel Hill who has made the study of the Southern regional identity his life's work, asks in his latest book, *My Tears Spoiled My Aim and Other Reflections on Southern Culture*, "So where is the South? Well, that depends on which South you're talking about. Some places are Southern by anybody's reckoning, to be sure, but at the edges it's hard to say where the South is because people have different ideas about *what* it is" (25). And Philip Castille and William Osborne preface the essays they've collected in *Southern Literature in*

Transition: Heritage and Promise with a series of questions: "If there is a literary heritage that deserves definition as 'southern,' does it yet hold promise for a literature recognizably regional? Does there even persist in the 1980s a sectional awareness on the part of southern writers? Have we exchanged New Souths for Old, and Newer Souths for these? Who are the 'authentic' southern voices, which perhaps may be, in the dispersion of time, more resonant now than before? What do they tell us about their complex milieu, loving it or hating it, living it or leaving it? Can their documents and destinies really be considered special after all? Or, are matters of southerness only parochial at best, subsumed under greater headings of history and society, class and race, sex and self hood?" (viii).

Like the aforementioned scholars of Southern literature, many Society members have pursued lines of inquiry that focus on the unique attributes that define their region. A number of essays explore the mythic dimensions of the Midwest and the recurring images of the region as reflected in its literature. Leland Krauth, in "A Visioned End: Edgar Lee Masters and William Stafford," delineates the contributions of both poets to the image of the Midwest as a cultural desert; this image is also emphasized in Bruce Baker's discussion of the short stories of Willa Gather and in Richard Shereikis's study of William Maxwell's Midwestern adolescents. Elizabeth Raymond, in "Learning the Land: The Development of a Sense of Place in the Prairie Midwest," surveys a range of Midwestern writers and finds that a struggle with the land, common to all regional writing, manifests itself in a myth of abundance in Midwestern literature. In "Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson, Saul Bellow, and the Territories of the Spirit," David D. Anderson notes the central role of movement in Midwestern literature as well as the equation of movement with progress and fulfillment in the *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Winesburg, Ohio*, and *The Adventures of Augie March*.

Several scholars have traced the changes in and challenges to the myth of the Midwest. In several articles David D. Anderson traces the dissolution of the old Jeffersonian dream of self-sufficiency and democracy in the Garden of the World and its replacement by the Hamiltonian ethic of materialism and economic oligarchy through Sherwood Anderson's fictions of failure

and frustration in the Midwest's newly born cities, a theme that Roger Bresnahan echoes in his discussion of the small town in the work of Anderson and Louis Bromfield. Similarly, Jane Bakerman shows how Susan Taylor Chehak's novels debunk the myth of the innocent Midwestern heartland and how David Michael's *A Blow to the the Head* reflects the collapse of the Midwestern dream, while Philip Greasley explores the way Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg, through their poetry, created a new Midwestern mythos, valorizing both individualism and collective action, to replace 19th century ideals which vanished with the Industrial Revolution.

Two essays published during *MidAmerica's* second decade attempt definitions of Midwestern poetry. In "Humility and Midwestern Literature: Is There a Plains Style?" Jeffrey Gundy describes the Midwestern voice as one characterized by "verbal simplicity, understated emotional resonance, and the movement of attention away from the anxious ego and toward the ground-level particulars of the plains landscape" (19). Robert Ward, writing of the poetry of Paul Engle, extrapolates from that poet's work to identify eight characteristics of Midwestern poetry: a sense of isolation, a strong sense of place, a sense of intense awareness of the land, continuity with traditional poetic form, lack of sentimentality, use of the American vernacular, a sense of the poet as moral force and the ability to transcend the merely local to express the universal. While Ward admits that many of these characteristics can be found in the poetry of other regions; he asserts that it is the combination of these traits within a work that render it uniquely Midwestern.

Those essays that identify a number of salient characteristics of Midwestern literature recall those published in the Castille and Osborne volume that attempt to zero in on what is Southern about Southern literature. In "Southern Literature: The Past, History, and the Timeless," Cleanth Brooks discusses three topics that he believes can be considered truly Southern: "a sense of place; a special conception of time that would take account of the past and of the timeless; and an interest and an aptitude for narrative that includes a vigorous oral tradition as well as formal narration in stories and novels" (5). In "The Southern Literary Pieties," Noel Polk quotes the moderator of a conference session on Southern literature who identified its unique characteristics

as the oral tradition, the stable agrarian culture, the family, the sense of history, the experience of defeat, and the tragic and comic sense of life (30). C. Hugh Holman quotes himself in an earlier essay which listed several characteristics of Southern literature: "a sense of evil, a pessimism about man's potential, a tragic sense of life, a deep-rooted sense of the interplay of past and present, a peculiar sensitivity to time as a complex element in narrative art, a sense of place as a dramatic dimension, and a thoroughgoing belief in the intrinsic value of art as an end in itself" (123).

Holman, however, offers an important caveat to scholars who work with regional literatures. "We all suffer from a common human tendency to seek the controlling unity, the essential principle, the shaping archetype in everything we study," he states in an essay called "No More Monoliths, Please: Continuities in the Multi-Souths" (xiii). Holman cautions scholars against seeking a totalizing definition of Southern literature that conveniently deals with works that fit the definition and ignores those that don't. He states that scholars who operate in this fashion will develop a definition of Southern literature that is simplistic and limited, reminding them that variety and diversity are much more significant in Southern writing than the similarities that these works share.

Despite Holman's advice to avoid the trap of essentialism when working with regional literature, I find many the essays of *MidAmerica's* second decade sounding two dominant notes that suggest some enduring preoccupations, if not unique characteristics, of Midwestern literature. One is a theme noted by Bresnahan in his review of *MidAmerica's* first decade: Midwestern discontinuities. James R. Shortridge, in *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture*, discusses this notion at some length:

> Dorothy, Toto, Aunt Em and Uncle Henry from L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* are among the most enduring characters in American fiction. One reason is symbolic, for they encapsulate values and flavor from America's heartland, a paradoxical place known as the Middle West. The region has intrigued writers from its inception. It was a mixing ground for Yankees and Southerners, its experience has been tied closely to that of America in general, and it frequently is proclaimed to be the nation's real birthplace and cultural core. Such powerful associa-

> tions ought to have produced a clear regional identity, but none exists. To some the Middle West is a place of idealism and democratic temperament, but to others it is bland, materialistic, and conservative. The overall enigmatic and contradictory regional character remains largely unexplored (1).

Many of the essays of *MidAmerica's* second decade explore this double vision that informs much of Midwestern literature, portraying a Midwest that is both destination and point of departure, abundant Garden of the West and unweeded garden of dispossession, a place of hope and despair, rejuvenation and stultification. Margaret Stuhr's "The Safe Middle West" is an especially perceptive analysis of the source of these dichotomies, noting an ambivalence about the Midwest on the part of its authors that finds its expression in writing that both idealizes and vilifies the region. Stuhr calls this ambivalence the "mythology of the safe Middle West" (18), noting that the Middle West connotes both the security of wholesome, land-based values and the stagnation of an unchanging ethic that is hostile to new ideas and ten years behind national trends. From this mythology, Stuhr argues, has come the departure/return motif so prevalent in Midwestern fiction. Another essay that focuses on Midwestern discontinuities is William Barillas's "To Sustain the Bioregion: Michigan Poets of Place," which first defines the state as a bioregion in terms of its abundance of fresh water, glacially informed terrain, and deciduous and coniferous forests before discussing how the work of several Michigan poets reflects the tensions of the bioregion. Along this same line of inquiry, Bernard Engel explores the dualities of Midwestern literature in his study of the way that Edith Thomas and Hamlin Garland represent the Midwest as promised land and as beleaguered paradise respectively, Roger Bresnahan surveys the fiction of two Filipino writers who emigrated to the region, noting that their ambivalence about community is characteristic of the Midwest, where community is both sought and shunned, and Ronald Grosh discusses the ambivalence of the prairie realists toward their region.

Reflective of the polarities of Midwestern life is one pattern of development in *MidAmerica's* second decade: essays which tend to center either on the village experience or on life in the big city. Several of the former affirm the complexity of small

town life in their treatment of authors whose representations of Midwestern small town living eschew the stereotypes of safe haven or stifling burg, such as William Maxwell's portrayal of Draperville/Logan [Lincoln], Illinois; Garrison Keillor's treatment of Lake Wobegon [Anoka], Minnesota, and James Purdy's depiction of Rainbow Center [Bowling Green], Ohio. However, Laurel Bush and R. Craig Sautter discuss how fictional energy in William Gass's "In the Heart of the Heart of the County" and in Curt Johnson's *Hobbledehoy's Hero* derives from small-town Midwestern stereotypes.

The urban Midwest is also a dominant presence in *MidAmerica* essays of the past ten years. Most of these essays focus on the use of Chicago as literary terrain in the works of Nelson Algren, Saul Bellow, Norbert Blei, David Mamet, James T. Farrell, Sherwood Anderson, James Maitland, Hobart Chatfield-Taylor, Elia W. Peattie, Charles Sheldon, Henry Kitchell Webster, Clara Laughlin, Willard Motley, Vera Caspary, Sara Paretsky, Scott Turow, E. P. Roe, and Henry Blake Fuller. Several scholars emphasize the way the city functions symbolically to reflect the paradoxical quality of the Midwest, a city that Guy Szuberla sees as representing both chaotic Tower of Babel and visionary New Jerusalem in early Chicago fiction, and that Jane Bakerman identifies as a place of offering both fulfillment and confusion in Vera Caspary's novels.

Another enduring preoccupation of Midwestern literature is what Leland Krauth calls "the familiar vein of Midwestern protest" (96), the strong spirit of resistance and protest that inspires and informs many of its best works. Donald T. Critchlow, in the introduction to his *Socialism in the Heartland*, says that "socialism seemed to draw strength from the Midwestern environment, its culture and industrial economy. Although novelists such as Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis portrayed Midwestern culture, especially that of the small town, as staid and defensive, the region produced an exciting array of writers, social scientists, and other intellectuals" (7). James Seaton, in "Midwestern Muckrakers," echoes Critchlow, when he calls muckraking "an old Midwestern tradition," noting that "a good many of the muckraking journalists had Midwestern roots, such as Ray Stannard Baker, Charles Edward Russell, and David Graham Phillips, from Michigan, Iowa and Indiana respectively, while Midwest-

ern novelists like] Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis (and Phillips as well) extended the muckraking spirit into fiction" (203).

Many of the essays published in *MidAmerica* over the past ten years explore this spirit of protest and resistance. Typical of these is Jane Bakerman's analysis of *A Thousand Acres,* Jane Smiley's Pulitzer Prize-winning story of the disintegration of an Iowa farm family. Bakerman shows how Smiley exposes the heartland ethic that valorizes keeping up the appearance of having successfully realized the American Dream while unresolved problems fester under the surface. She also points out that Smiley uses the motif of poison as the nexus of a dysfunctional family and an abused environment to critique the lust for power that results in exploitative farming practices and abusive family relationships. Another scholar who focuses on Midwestern politics is Bernard Engel, who traces the response patterns of Midwestern writers to the Spanish-American War, finding that the most of the popular poets supported the war while literary lions such as Twain, Masters, Moody, and Howells opposed it.

Echoing Engel's discussion of the Midwestern tradition of protest and reform are Douglas Wixson's examination of the way that two Midwestern little magazines of the early '30s provided a voice for the dispossessed and Ronald Grosh's analysis of David Ross Locke's two reform novels, as well as his account of the Midwestern matrix of early American literary realism. In the same vein are Doris Grover's discussion of populist Midwestern writers, James Lewin's studies of Nelson Algren's role as the conscience of Chicago, James Seaton's essay on Irving Babbitt as cultural critic, Dennis Walsh's study of religious opposition to the arts in early nineteenth century Cincinnati, David Newquist's argument that the skewed geography of the song "The Rock Island Line" suggests its real function as an underground railroad song, Roger Bresnahan's essay on four Filipino writers who use the Midwest as a metaphor for alienation, and James Marshall's delineation of the countermyth of dispossession that prairie realists such as James Kirkland, Ignatius Donnelly, and Hamlin Garland expose in their fiction.

What lies ahead for *MidAmerica's* third decade? Many scholars will continue the important work of defining the canon of Midwestern literature by discussing works by little-known

Midwestern authors of the past or contemporary Midwesterners whose work is now coming into full flower. Among the latter group, Jane Smiley, Jonis Agee, Jane Hamilton, Robert James Waller, Jim Harrison, Sara Paretsky, Garrison Keillor, and Jon Hassler, (to name only a few) will be likely to grace the pages of *MidAmerica* in the years to come. My hope is that we will also continue to focus our scholarship on the way that the region has shaped its literature and the way that Midwestern literature reflects the region to debunk Glenway Wescott's statement that the Midwest is "a state of mind of people born where they do not like to live" (quoted in Shortridge, 69) and affirm the truth of Flannery O'Connor's belief that "the best American fiction has always been regional" (58).

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THE SPIRIT OF PLACE AS A USABLE PAST IN WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT'S "THE PRAIRIES"

KEITH FYNAARDT

In May of 1832 William Cullen Bryant made the first of several visits to his brothers John and Arthur who had moved from New York to the Illinois frontier. While in Illinois, William and his brother John, a clerk in Jacksonville, spent several days on horseback under the open sky exploring nearly one hundred miles of the scattered settlements, woods, rivers, and broad expanses of tall-grass prairie that lay between Jacksonville and Springfield. In a letter back to New York, Bryant declared that this remarkable experience should be treated in his poetry because, he said, the poetic idiom was "the only form of expression in which it [the experience] could be properly uttered" (Godwin I, 286). The resulting expression was the poem "The Prairies," that appeared in *Knickerbocker* magazine in December of 1833.[1] This poem is one of the earliest distinctive poetic treatments of the Midwestern prairies, and it is instructive when read as an attempt of an early American writer striving to connect with a usable past through his western-most experience.

For the most part the poem is a reverie about a vanished culture—that of the Mound Builders.[2] For 125 lines of blank verse Bryant sustains a pastoral in the elegiac mode. The poem opens with the familiar expression of the prairies as "Gardens of the Desert," and then spends the first thirty-four lines developing the Edenic quality of the land and its likeness to a great ocean. The poet rides out on horseback into the prairie with his "heart swelling" and admires the vastness of the grass and sky. As the poet's eyes sweep over the majestic scene, he wonders who might have gone before him on this land—"upon whose rest [does he] trample?" The answer comes in a kind of visionary dream as the mounds tell the poet of the sad history

of the Mound Builders. They were a "disciplined and populous race," and the poet compares them to the Golden-Age Greeks. Then the "red men" came "warlike and fierce" and destroyed all of them but one. The one survivor is allowed life with the Indian tribe, but he remembers his wife and children, "butchered, amid their shrieks, with all his race." But, says the poet, as the Mound Builders passed on into history so too must the Indians, and they too are followed in turn by the "advancing multitude" of white settlers. But as the poet dreams of all these, the vision is suddenly cut short by a "fresher wind" and the poet is left "in the wilderness alone."

The search for a usable past was a common struggle for writers in the early republic. It was widely agreed, both in Europe and America, that this new country had no literature or storied past accessible as myth and metaphor. In the well-known sketch "The Author's Account of Himself," Washington Irving established what have become standard associations for describing the lack of a usable past in early American literature and in the American landscape:

> My native country was full of youthful promise, but Europe held forth the charms of storied and poetical association. Europe was rich in the accumulated treasures of her age. Her ruins told the history of times gone by, and every moldering stone was a chronicle. I longed to wander over the scene of renowned achievement—to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity—to loiter about the ruined castle—to meditate on the falling tower—to escape, in short, from the commonplace realities of the present, and to lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past. (809)

The assumption that America had no native traditions, which underlies Irving's lament, is heard in Robert Frost's poem, "The Gift Outright," where the poet echoes Irving's view of the American cultural landscape as one that was "unstoried, artless, unenhanced" before the settlement of Europeans. The only American past that was available to European settlers, one that the tradition from Irving to Frost ignored, was that of native Indian cultures. How the accumulated traditions and oral stories of these cultures could have been used by white settlers to adapt to their new place will never be known. It is known that the native traditions were not viewed as a source of cultural

history, and in the case of Bryant's poem, prior scholarship has demonstrated that it was Bryant's political views on Indian policy, his apparent disregard of historical events involving the Indians contemporary with his writing of this poem, as well as his view of Indians as a human manifestation of the repulsion felt by a white settler to the landscape which prevent him from establishing a link with an Indian past in "The Prairies."

Bryant's political views on Indian policy have been interpreted through his poetic expression by Jules Zanger in "The Premature Elegy: Bryant's 'The Prairies' as Political Poem." Zanger contends that if "The Prairies" is read in the context of Bryant's editorial support of the Indian Removal Act, then the poem reveals an uncharacteristic political opinion and an uncharacteristic use of his poetry as political rhetoric (15). Zanger cites Bryant's editorials from the New York *Evening Post,* wherein Bryant advocated nearly every liberal, humanitarian movement of the nineteenth century, including the abolition of slavery, the right of workers to organize, and the freedom of the press with the exception that Bryant supported the forced removal of Indians who had been granted lands on which they had settled—the Indian Removal Act. Zanger suggests that Bryant's loyalty to President Jackson and to the Jeffersonian Republican Party contributed to his support of the Act (14). In short, Zanger argues that "the distance between Jackson's political rhetoric and Bryant's poetic rhetoric seems very small" (16).

Zanger's argument hinges on comparisons made among several of Bryant's poems including "The Prairies" and President Jackson's Second Inaugural Address. In the Inaugural Address Jackson summed up the rationalization for Indian removal stating that "one by one have many powerful tribes disappeared from the earth. To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflection. But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for the another . . ." (qtd in Zanger, 16). Zanger explains that Bryant's "The Prairies" justifies Indian removal in a similar fashion. The fact that Bryant laments the passing of an imaginary ancient culture, a race that he distinguishes from the Indians, who happen to have the same agrarian virtues as the white settlers; that he makes the Indians guilty of the genocide of this

hypothetical race; that he falsifies contemporary history saying that the Indians have voluntarily left their land for hunting ground further west; that he shows the prairies as empty, waiting to be filled—this all justifies the notion that the white farmer who comes to settle and improve has more right to the land than the hunter-gatherer who moves from place to place with game and the seasons. Zanger also cites Bryant's poems "A Walk at Sunset," "Monument Mountain," "The Disinterred Warrior," "The Indian Girl's Lament," and the short story "The Indian Spring," to provide similar supporting evidence which proves, in Zanger's final analysis, that for Bryant, "the only good Indian was a dead Indian" (19). Interestingly, Zanger fails to consider what seems the most obvious parallel between the words of Jackson and Bryant. Choosing instead to rely on Bryant's other works, Zanger overlooks these lines from "The Prairies" that are essentially a paraphrase of Jackson's speech: "Thus change the forms of being. Thus arise / Races of living things, glorious in strength, / And perish, as quickening breath of God / Fills them, or is withdrawn." Although Zanger misses this important passage, his argument is well made and has a great deal of bearing on the present question of a usable history. It seems obvious that Bryant could not match these political views with a view of Indian history as a source of myth and positive connection to a new land, and it is made clear that Bryant's misinterpretation of history regarding the Mound Builder culture and his blatantly false explanation that the Indians had already moved West was merely wish fulfillment for his own political views, making it impossible for him to see the Indians as a usable past.

Connected to this issue is Bryant's seeming disregard of relevant historical circumstances regarding the Sauk and Fox Indians that coincided with his trip west to Illinois. In letters to his wife, Bryant said that he had heard talk of Indian attacks which made it impossible for him to travel over-land to Chicago after leaving Jacksonville as planned. Instead he would return on the same route he came—back down the Illinois River to St. Louis and then up the Ohio River. These attacks were led by Chief Black Hawk who was attempting to lead his tribes back east across the Mississippi River to plant crops on their traditional lands along the Rock River in Illinois.[3] However, in "The Prairies" Bryant chose to ignore these events. After his rationalization of

the removal of one culture for another, he says, "The red man too— / Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so long, / And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought a wilder hunting ground." Zanger reads these lines as a yea-saying of the Removal Act, but Bryant is also clearly overlooking what he knew to be the reality of the Indian situation, in particular the actions of the Sauk and Fox. These tribes had no intention of voluntarily moving west, and Bryant also doubtless understood that the tribes of Cherokee, Choctaw, and Seminole had consented to a more settled lifestyle on the land they were given in Georgia—a lifestyle more like that of the white settlers. Neither of these two responses by Indian tribes to white settlement, one of fighting for traditional lands, the other of concession to live within determined boundaries, is present in Bryant's poetic treatment of the Indians.

Similarly, Stephen Fender suggests on examination of several nineteenth century writings including "The Prairies," that in the letters, journals, and memoirs of American settlers there are great many telling similarities in the descriptions of their first impressions of the landscape. He exhibits a number of writings that show a sensation of "dislocation, fear, and repulsion at the scaleless, unscaleable wilderness" (52). He also points out another characteristic response was that the writer would create some kind of "fantasy culture" to populate this foreboding landscape (52). Fender explains that Bryant's "The Prairies" illustrates this dislocation and Bryant's Mound Builders are obviously the projection of a fantasy culture. Given this evidence Fender simply claims that Bryant's only choice was a connection with his European history as a usable past. But this solution does not allow consideration of the question as to a writer's connection to the American landscape, nor does it resolve the problem in "The Prairies" where Bryant is clearly trying to work out some kind of "American" past—albeit with a sense of repulsion and the fabrication of a fantasy people—without considering European origins.

In light of all this evidence, it is quite clear that Bryant could not realize any link with an American past through the Indians. Yet there remains one possible way of reading the poem that may indicate a connection to a native past. Although the textual evidence is slim, a reading of "The Prairies" using D. H. Lawrence's notion of "spirit of place" and Max Westbrook's idea of "sacrality" adds another dimension to the poem, as well as demonstrates the possibility that Bryant may have made the most tentative of connections with a usable past.

In the first chapter of *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence explains his belief that "every continent has its own great spirit of place," that "different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars" (12). He says that these fundamental differences within the landscape produce their respective and completely distinct peoples and cultures. He demonstrates through James Fenimore Cooper's novels and other early American writings, that the history of the American land can be understood only through the indigenous Indian culture, that any understanding of America through transplanted European culture is not an understanding of America but only an understanding of the European *response* to American land. The response has been one of great fear of the land because to the European, says Lawrence:

> When you are actually *in* America, America hurts, because it has a powerful disintegrative influence on the white psyche. It is full of grinning unappeased aboriginal demons, too, ghosts, and it persecutes the white men, like some Eumenides, until the white men give up their absolute whiteness. . . . Yet one day the demons of America must be placated, the ghosts must be appeased, the Spirit of Place atoned for. Then the true passionate love for the American soil will appear. (56)

Concurrent with the belief in a spirit of place is Max Westbrook's idea of sacrality. Westbrook defines sacrality as a distinguishing feature of western writing in the twentieth century. It may seem odd to link Bryant's poem with such a genre, but the idea of the West was projected onto whatever region happened to be the frontier, and in Bryant's time it was Illinois. Because "The Prairies" was a description of the West at Bryant's time, the poem can be seen in that sense as western literature. Westbrook's sacrality relics heavily on D. H. Lawrence from whom he paraphrases some basic tenets of sacrality. In his book *Apocalypse*, Lawrence says that: 1) man's collective self is more basic than man's individuality; 2) all men may be considered equal under a political or ethical ideal, but they are simply not

equal before the impersonal power of desert, mountain, land, space; and 3) the primordial gods of the universe must be distinguished from the intellectualized and idealized God of the Bible; the primordial gods do not represent reality; they, in the form of energy, are reality (in Westbrook 137). Westbrook shows, through the work of such western writers as Vardis Fisher, Frederick Manfred, and Frank Waters, how each of these writers has explored humanity's relationship to their place and the practical spirit of a place. Manfred in fact says that a writer does not choose to write about a place but that the spirit of a place might instead chose him to work out its own need to express itself (Conversations, 40). Indeed, Manfred feels he has been chosen by such a Spirit of the Midwest. Considering this idea with regard to "The Prairies," one may wonder if a writer like Bryant, who was unaware of this idea of such a spirit of place, would then be unknowingly controlled, or must a writer first be open to such a spirit before he can be a spokesman for it?

In any case, reading Bryant's "The Prairies" in this manner, we see the spirit of place most powerfully in the final lines when the poet is shocked from his daydream by a "fresher wind." Although the lines have been read as quite the opposite—"The dream allows the narrator to be caught off-guard, thus heightening and underscoring the essential alienation of the narrator from his environment" (Koppenhaver, 188)—if we see the reverie as something genuine, not as something superimposed for effect, as Koppenhaver suggests, then the experience of the poet brought on by the wind—the thoughts of an ancient Indian culture—accounts for some kind of communion with a spirit of place. This also results in quite the opposite of Koppenhaver's findings; that is, perhaps unknowingly, the poet is essentially harmonized with his environment. Also, the very celebration of the Edenic qualities of the prairie seems to be informed by a passionate spirit. Of course this passion has been taken to be "a sentimental expression in a sentimental time" (Zanger, 20), but again it is a point of question; was Bryant manipulating his experience for effect, or did the prairies have an uncontrollably glorious effect on him? Was he perhaps consciously working the sentiment but at the same time the spirit of the prairies was controlling him? Similarly, the way in which the whole dream occurs can also be subject to this same line of questioning. The

poet is first *thinking* "of those upon whose rest he tramples," but then the rational thought process is supplanted by a kind of supernatural voice from the mounds speaking in the "soft wind." This voice, however, is interrupted by the very verse paragraph (on cultures passing so that others may exist) that was cited to evince Bryant's anti-Indian political views. Its tone is such a switch from the reverie that it does not fit the tone of the preceding and following passages. This would support Zanger's argument that the poem expressed Bryant's pro-removal stance, but it also suggests that the actual dream sequence was less under his control than this passage.

Perhaps this kind of reading of "The Prairies" is wish fulfillment on the part of modern readers. In our reconsideration and revaluing of native cultures, we want to see early American writers connecting with them. Certainly the spiritual-connection type of reading must be done with a concentrated effort at ignoring Bryant's political leanings as well as his views on Indian history. But it at least it broadens our understanding of the poem and of the power that the spirit of the American West/Midwest had on its early writers. Bryant did not find a direct connection to a usable history here, but possibly he expressed a latent native history accessible only through the spirits of place.

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NOTES

1. David J. Baxter contends that Parke Godwin's "notoriously sloppy" editing of Bryant's letters has caused scholars to assume that Bryant's trip to Illinois was the only motivation for the composition of the poem, and on the basis of a new edition of Bryant's correspondence edited by William Cullen Bryant II and Thomas G. Voss, Baxter argues that letters written a year and a half after Bryant's trip—soon before the publication of the poem—show that Timothy Flint, the prominent Cincinnati editor, may have had "more direct influence" on Bryant's composition of the poem than his outing on horseback (52). While it is clear that Baxter has revealed the problematic nature of Godwin's editorial practices, it would be unwise to make such an either or conjecture but instead allow that both Bryant's physical experience on the prairie and his meeting and correspondence with Flint provided impetus and material for the poem.
2. It was a common nineteenth century assumption that the giant earthen mounds found around the Ohio River valley and other parts of the Midwest, including Illinois, were surviving monuments of great cultures that pre-dated the Indians. Bryant had even co-written a popular history in 1876 that devoted an entire chapter to the Mound Builders. Modern archaeological projects, including the Koster Site on the Illinois River, have also revealed evidence that the very Indian tribes who were Bryant's contemporaries were descendants of a people dating back at least 8,500 years—the "Mound Builders" (Booher note 26).

3. Black Hawk's people had been forcibly removed from Illinois not long before, and upon their return the Illinois militia and Federal troops were marshalled to remove them. Black Hawk, who had only five hundred warriors with him, attempted to deliberate under a flag of truce, but the undisciplined militiamen fired on the messengers. The whole of Black Hawk's party was eventually trapped and slaughtered as they attempted to cross the Mississippi heading west (Booher 16).

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MARK TWAIN AMONG THE INDIANS

DAVID L. NEWQUIST

The last two sentences of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* act as a lightening rod which conducts the voltage from the roiling clouds of scholarly judgment and literary theory into the text. Sometimes, the result is illuminating; sometimes incendiary; and sometimes just very noisy. The novel raises many questions of race, and the last sentences direct attention to Twain's perception of the American West and to the American Indian. Those sentences are:

> But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.

These sentences seem to carry implications that young Huck is rejecting the domestic life and feminine culture; that he is blithely decamping from any moral ground for the games played by him and Tom Sawyer at the expense of Jim; that he is repudiating the cultural and moral values he seemed to have acquired during the course of the novel; and that he is headed to the Territory to participate in the dispossession of the American Indians. Probably no passage in Twain's work has provoked more examinations of his work for evidence of racism, sexism, and other defects of authorial character.

Twain's few depictions of American Indians are not flattering. His characterization of the half-blood Injun Joe in *Tom Sawyer* does not represent a racial characterization, but it does portray a depravity of character which resonates with racial attitudes from the frontier. His mention of the "Goshoots" in *Roughing It* (1872) is harshly denunciatory and intense in its portrait of debased humanity. That same fervor and the same perspective is repeated about Indians in general in a scathing

column written for *Galaxy* magazine in 1878 titled "The Noble Red Man." His most extensive depiction of Indian characters is in the unfinished manuscript titled *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians.* With the geographical and ethnological depictions based largely on a book by a military officer, Richard Irving Dodge, *Our Wild Indians* (1883), the manuscript, as far as it goes, sets up actions which convey a scheming amiability and a violent malevolence in the Indians encountered by Huck and Tom.

They meet up with a prairie frontier character who, teasingly, resembles in concept the character of Paul Hover, the bee-hunter in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie,* who advises Huck and Tom about the realities of life on the prairie frontier. After an initiation by event, Huck says: "Tom was putting the Injuns below the devils, now. You see, he had about got it through his noddle, by this time, that book Injuns and real Injuns is different" (79). This fragment of manuscript raises questions of whether the book was intended to satirize further James Fenimore Cooper's "literary offenses" which, along with Scott's, formed Tom Sawyer's knowledge base, or whether Twain was going to pursue the moral development of Huck Finn in some confrontations with western realities.

The portrayals seem to project a racial attitude. However, that attitude is mitigated by later treatments of American Indian materials, principally in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) in which Twain reproduces and comments upon some Indian oral literature. Twain's handling of Native American characterizations are provocative enough to require an examination of the basis and literature purpose of the portrayals. Twain's overall handling of racial themes provides a context for probing whether his portrayals of Indians venture across the borders of literary creation into stereotype, or whether they limn a more essential imagery of cultural encounters.

Cultural criticism inevitably leads to assessments and judgments about cultural matters. The intricate, complex, and potent forces of cultural interchange are a dynamic which redistributes cultural materials and practices in ways which sometimes create a higher estate for humankind, and which sometimes provide the mechanisms for new debasements and the devolution of the human species. However, when cultural patterns become associated with a particular group, the examination of those practices as a characteristic of a particular group is easy to interpret as racism, sexism, or one of the forms of ethnic and cultural hatred. Popular culture, in particular, is befuddled by the discernments required of our syntactic language and has great difficulty with the verb *to discriminate* as an act of making distinctions and as an act of discriminating against otherness on the basis of those distinctions. As America's best-known and, perhaps most incisive, literary examiner of cultural assumptions, Twain has offended those who associate themselves with cultural practices that were the targets of his ridicule. Ultimately, Twain developed a cynicism about the ability of humankind to transcend a tendency toward meanness. But the fact of human history which was the persistent object of his most volatile observations and commentary was feudalism.

Twain went beyond Jefferson's observation that slavery was the ultimate debasement of both slave and master: he saw that the cultural and historical basis for slavery was in the human fealities and designations of rank of imposed by feudalism and by the mindless perpetuation of those ranks and roles. Twain understood that democracy, equality, and even the efficacy of a language capable of sustaining those qualities are matters of human will, not accrued history and tendency. The literary genius involved in the creation of Huck Finn rests upon the portrayal of an intelligence which possessed the ability to discern between the basic humane morality of Jim and those accretions of human culture on which his bondage was based. While Twain portrays the absurd dementia of feudalism in *The Prince and the Pauper* and *The Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* his most illuminating examination of it in the American context is in the feud between the Shepardsons and Grangerfords in the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* The description of the Grangerford household full of kitsch and ritual, the loss of memory and the failure to question the origin and the reasons for the feud, and the presence of a slave culture which functions on a moral and humane level are memorable literary portrayal and incisive cultural criticism. The novel takes an important step in the business of democracy as a viable elevation of the human condition by, in Whitman's words, surmounting the gorgeous history of feudalism.

As *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* reached its centennial year, denouncements of any claim it made as a contribution to the democratic culture intensified. Based largely upon the frequent inclusion of the word "nigger," an educational administrator and some like-minded colleagues wanted the novel banned as "racist trash." The portrayal of Jim as uneducated and superstitious was regarded as stereotyping and further incited the movement to ban the novel from public school curricula. American education and the literary profession reached a bleak moment in its intellectual history. The First Amendment was piously invoked, but the harsh fact is that scholars and intelligent readers of literature were confronted by arguments against the book posed by people who, if they had read the book at all, made severely unintelligent and irresponsibly selective readings of it. The very failures of mind and intellectual morality against which Twain railed were major threats to the book. At the time of this controversy, deconstruction and its sophistries about the indeterminability of the language and text were the vogue of literary theory, and so the charges of racism against the book were met with a shrug of the academic shoulders and an acceptance that some readers would reconstruct the text as a racist document. People who had banned the book previously because Huck Finn seemed to endorse acts of delinquency, not the least of which was his friendship and loyalty with a black man who became his moral father, had found strange allies in their quest for suppression of this still-troubling book.

The frustration of defending the book from invalid criticisms deeply grounded in ignorance and racial resentments has been compounded by accusations that Twain's work is inherently immoral because its author's racial, sexual, and cultural identities are inherently defective. Julius Lester says that Huck Finn's rejection of civilization at the end of the novel is a moral failure on Mark Twain's part because it celebrates a male protagonist who represents what male-kind would choose to be without the restraints and responsibilities imposed by civilization and women (quoted in Nicol 67). Lester claims that, because of the book's cultural provenance, he has not bothered to read it: the cultural values it represents are perpetuated and that is a moral failure on Twain's part (Nicol 67).

Literary scholarship and criticism have been thoroughly penetrated by a social activism predicated on the Marxist version of the Hegelian dialectic. That predication has been, also, a reductive process through which redeeming subtleties of the identification and examination of contradictions have been supplanted by the imperative, in Amiri Baraka's words to "Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked" (728). Recent world history has provided evidence which leads to a questioning of whether the dialectical model for change in fact works. When the Iron Curtain was lifted from various countries, the world found that conciliating changes had not occurred during its time. Rather, it found that old animosities had been preserved, perpetuated, and even intensified, not moderated or mutated into new cultural norms. Yet, much literary theory and criticism is based upon the notion of literature as part of a dialectical process. Racial, sexual, religious, and political stances have worked their way into a literature that conceives itself as antithesis and in which the antithesis is the articulation of those who conceive their literature as a literature of victims (Baraka 728). In Baraka's view, the victims conceptualize their opponents as odious stereotypes and the literature is "a weapon to help in the slaughter of these dimwitted fatbellied white guys who somehow believe that the rest of the world is here for them to slobber on" (728). This language does not surmount the racial injustices, the defamations, and the violence inflicted upon minorities; in its own stereotyping and defamation, it merely hurls another scurrility which will provide cause for offense, a reason for its targets to feel victimized, and thus a cause for retaliating in kind. The Marxist-modeled dialectic is an adversarial, not a conciliatory process; it separates people into enemy camps, and creates the conditions for segregation. Rather than provide the conditions for "moderating faction," as Madison envisioned in the Tenth Federalist Paper, it aggravates faction into an imperative rancor for which the logical result is violence. The rhetoric of the material dialectic ignores the demonstrable, cognitive principles of rhetoric.

The literature and criticism modeled after the two-valued, either/or dialectic are designed to change circumstances through intellectual and physical warfare, if necessary, both of which run on the energy of hatred. Conseqently, much critical com-

mentary which follows the dialetical pattern is in effect hate propaganda, not rhetoric to exchange experience and change minds. Semanticists have for most of this century decried the either/or mentality of the thesis/antithesis dialectic, have warned that its essential function is to create oppositions, and have criticized it as a gross perversion of logic and empirical knowledge. The influence of this dialectic on the language itself is that it throws words into a one-sided orientation of right or wrong, good or evil, so that many people, including some literary scholars, define racism only as an attitude that white people hold against people of color, and define sexism only as an attitude men hold against women. The result of this simplistic, semantic shift has been to obscure the obvious contradictions, the recognition of which establishes some means for a more scrupulous use of language, and to encourage the reductive readings of literature according to a formula in which some archetypal, malevolent predator connives the victimization of a vulnerable innocent. The result is a social movement and a literary commentary based upon the notion that one form of bigotry, prejudice, and violence can be countered by adopting another. Particularities are subsumed by gross generalities; subtleties of discernment and distinction are obliterated into crass stereotypes. Authors and their works become battlegrounds of entity and contention.

The contention that *Adventures of Huckleberry* is a racist and sexist work cannot rationally be countered by more definitive readings and assessments of its accomplishment, because the either/or praise forecloses discourse. This impossibility of dialogue between those who hold a single interest in an author and his or her work and those who regard literature as the object of transcendent purposes has been explained cogently by semanticist Alfred Korzybski. An essential semantic error of insisting upon a two-valued paradigm for a dialectic in a multivalue universe and ignorance of rhetorical effects precludes communication. A huge irony of American intellectual history, perhaps anti-intellectual history, is that out of the discussion of multi-culturalism and cultural diversity comes the epithet "dead white men" as the designation of the enemy who hold some franchise on the literary canon. The pejoration of the term is in its use as a racist and sexist label. Much of the negative criticism

directed at Twain is based upon his whiteness, his maleness, and even his being dead.

One, then, broaches the subject of Twain's portrayal of American Indians with circumspection. There is the possibility that one will become involved, however unwillingly, in the reductive and pointless popular controversies. However, there is also the possibility of finding a higher cause for the literary profession, a cause which might save the profession and the language itself. The starkly negative comments and portrayals regarding American Indians in Twain's work seem to contradict his elaborate exposures and satires concerning the injustices and prejudice faced by blacks, Jews, Chinese, and others. Edward Wagenknecht suggests that in general Twain presents a somewhat naive, benign, but culturally critical view of all races (220). An examination of the apparent contradictions in Twain's racial attitudes leads to a critical perspective which avoids the inductive temerities of psycho-biography and focuses on the problems that cultural issues had on the literary aesthetics which Twain pursued.

In his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," William James, who grappled mightily with the indeterminacy of language, proposes a strategy of imagination which transcends the efficacies of militancy. He acknowledges that the rhetoric of militarism contains formidable aesthetic and ethical appeal, and that the rhetoric of pacificism and conciliation is feckless in its effect and ultimate result. Much like Twain, he recognizes in the feudal stream which courses through even American society the scorn of inferiority as the "keynote of the military temper" (667). ". . . taking human nature as a whole, its wars are its best protection against its weaker and more cowardly self," he states (666). His solution for transcending this gorgeous pageantry of militance is rhetorical and literary. James says that rhetoricians must first "enter more deeply into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of their opponents . . . *then move the point* and your opponent will follow" (666). This aesthetic and ethical strategy is precisely what Mark Twain used with the character of Huckleberry Finn: he beguiles the reader to enter the point of view of a child born to accept the laws and the culture of a slave-holding society, and then, in putting that social product on the raft with Jim, he moves the point. We, as readers, are cut

loose from cultural moorings, and we drift with the raft and a mutating aesthetic and ethical point of view into a new perspective. Through this perspective we see the absurdity of a vestigial but controlling feudalism, the moral cowardice and intellectual bankruptcy of the frontier village, and the life-scheme of crude pretense and betrayal which chart the only courses of action open to Pap Finn, the Duke, and Dauphin, those perpetuators of mindless self-interest. When Huck says he wants to light out for the Indian Territory, he is not escaping merely the domestic proprieties of civilization as it is portrayed along the banks of the southern Mississippi River, but he is shifting the moral point of view further away from the romantic inanities of Tom Sawyer and the cultural impoverishment of the agrarian South. In *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,* Huck says the reason that drove Tom, Jim, and him to seek adventure in the Territory was because, "Well, there's liver places than a hemp farm, there ain't no use to deny it, and some people don't take to them." Tom Sawyer represents that mindset transmitted down through the feudal images of the courtly love tradition in which, in the words of William James, the destinies of humankind must be "decided quickly, thrillingly, and tragically, by force" through the militarily-imagined "supreme theatre of human strenuousness" (666). Twain's literary strategy in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* serves to heighten the question of his insistence on the inferiority of the Indians in his early accounts of them. That question may find an answer looking beyond the social criticism Twain obviously intended.

In the view of John Kouwenhoven, Twain's literary aesthetic represents a major defining event in the evolving culture of diversity. Kouwenhoven finds that the distinguishing feature of American culture is that it refuses to be contained by formalist beginnings and endings. He cites the skyscraper as a development which can go as high as people can conceive of stacking its component cages. He cites the jazz solo, emanating from a coherent rhythmic ensemble, extending as far as the musician's imagination and creative drive want to take it. And he finds that Twain's writing, deeply grounded in an oral tradition, has nothing to do with traditional exposition, climax, or resolution (687). He states that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "is not a novel of escape; if it were, it would be Jim's novel, not Huck's"

(687). Rather, he, like William James, identifies with Emerson's aesthetic premise of an aspirational evolution and sees it as a novel about the process of becoming (688). To be in nature and to be human is to always be in the state of becoming something other, said Emerson. When Huck, Tom, and Jim finally do light out for the Territory, they head into a mythic West. But what they meet on the frontier, as did Twain himself, is a human race which does not rise above its propensities for greed, hypocrisy, cruelty, and predation.

Twain's diatribe against the Indians in his essay "The Noble Red Man" is the most troubling. While the purpose of the essay is to debunk the romantic notion of towering nobility conveyed in books, particularly Cooper's, he generalizes about Indians with unrelenting sarcasm. Point by point, he counters the claims for Indians being impressive of stature, eloquent in speech, adept at the hunt, trustworthy in word and deed, brave in battle, or devoted to the higher human affections. He portrays them as filthy, depraved, dishonest, and thoroughly deserving of any abuse inflicted upon them by their guardians of state. Twain claims that his observations are based upon personal experience, not second-hand reports from books. However, the only evidence of intense first-hand encounters comes from his time in Nevada. In the essay "The Noble Redskin," Twain cites a book by a Dr. Keim as a verifying source, and scholars have found ample attribution to Dodge's *Our Wild Indians* as the source of information regarding the Oglala Sioux in *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians.* Fred W. Lorch points out that official accounts of the Goshoot Indians shortly after the time Twain encountered them are much more favorable than Twain's. The evidence suggests that Twain, too, was dependent upon books and the general attitudes held about Indians as his sources of information. Apparently, there were just some books, those of the romanticizing strain, to which he objected.

Twain's objection to the idealization of James Fenimore Cooper's Indians is that the near-prissy renderings are not even wrong; they are too foolish. A critical objection to Twain's portrayals is that, in his disapproval, he seems as vulnerable to notion as Cooper. As a journalist, Twain places a premium on first-hand observations, and his observations of the Goshoots in Nevada, which he reported in *Roughing It,* seem to have lin-

gered in his mind. He seems to make a refutation, also, of Washington Irving's essay on "The Character of the Indian" which stresses an essential nobility, much in the nature of a monologue Tom Sawyer makes about them in the unfinished manuscript of *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians.* In trying to convince Huck and Jim to accompany him and to counter Jim's statement that he heard that the Indians were "powerful ornery," Tom says:

> *Injuns* ornery! It's the most ignorant idea that ever—why, Jim, they're the noblest human beings that's ever been in the world. If a white man tells you a think do you know it's true? No, you don't; because generally it's a lie. But if an Injun tells you a thing, you can bet on it every time for the petrified fact; because you can't get an Indian to lie, he would cut his tongue out first. If you trust to a white man's honor, you better look out; but you trust to an Injun's honor, and nothing in the world can make him betray you—he would die first and be glad to. An Injun is *all* honor. It's what they're *made* of. You ask a white man to divide his property with you—will he do it? I think I *see* him at it; but you go to an Injun, and he'll give you everything he's got in the world. It's just the difference between an Injun and a white man. . . . And brave? Why, they ain't afraid of anything . . . Death?—an Injun don't care shucks for death. They prefer it. They *sing* when they're dying—sing their death-song. You take an Injun and stick him full of arrows and splinters, and hack him up with a hatchet, and skin him, and start a slow fire under him, and do you reckon he minds it? Not sir; he will just set there in the hot ashes, perfectly comfortable, and same as if he was on salary. (35-36)

Tom convinces Huck and Jim not to avoid the grandeur of character they are sure to meet in the Territory. The prospect elicits their consent to make the trip, and Tom's eloquent performance does indeed resonate with Irving's commentary on Indian character.

However, Irving's essay also stresses the degree of depravity brought to the Indians by their contact with white people. Twain's doubts about the human race stemmed from his observations that all humanity bore the tendency for cruelty, dishonesty, and mindless self-interest. His basic argument in "The Noble Red Man" is that society concerns itself so much with the

"poor abused Indian" that it ignores the cruelties Indians have inflicted on others.

While Twain did not hesitate to portray characters with many less-than-admirable and often laughable traits, he did so even handedly. If Jim seems ignorant and superstitious at times, he has much company among the cross-section of frontier society which Twain represents in his fictions. Twain's Indians seem shaped out of the confrontations they had with white settlers, reported with great relish and bias by the press. In Twain's time, the most notable battles were the Sioux uprising of the early 1860s and the Battle of Little Big Horn, for which Brevet General George Custer was a tragic hero in the popular mind. The Sioux were involved in both of these incidents. When Huck, Tom, and Jim go to the Territory, the Indians which at first befriend and then betray the band of pioneers which Huck and his companions join are "Ogillallah" Sioux. In popular history, this branch of the Lakota nation had earned a reputation for prosecuting its claim on the land with ferocity.

A part of the undeveloped plot in the manuscript of this adventure is that Peggy, the daughter of the pioneers and the betrothed to Brace Johnson, was given a knife by Brace to use on herself in case she was ever taken captive by the Indians. Twain makes clear that suicide was far preferable to the sexual violence which would be visited upon her. Twain's revulsion of violence seems to be in large measure the reason for his disapproval of Indians. However, there is a factor in the plot which given vivid foreshadowing, but is not fully explained by the time Twain abandoned the manuscript. That factor is that Brace realizes that the sudden turning on the white settlers by the small band of "Ogillallahs" has to do with revenge for white wrongs and that certain rules of vengeance appear to insure the safety of the captives the Indians took alive. Just what ethnological idea Twain intended to explore and from what perspective is not known. The manuscript may signal a change in Twain's attitude that became evident in later writing.

Elizabeth Hanson cites a later essay, "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" (1902), in which Twain echoes Washington Irving's view that the depredations of whites are the root cause of the depraved conditions of life which could be witnessed among the Indians. In this piece Twain acknowledges the effect

of white settlement on the Indian people and culture, but he also sees that settlement as efficacious for the immigrants (Hanson 12). Lynn Denton finds that Twain's early prejudice "eventually changed to toleration and then to idealism" (1). Denton cites an 1881 speech in which Twain said, "My first American ancestor, gentlemen, was an Indian—an early Indian. Your ancestors skinned him alive, and I am an orphan" (3).

In rising above his early prejudices and ignorance, Twain seems to have entered the point of view of the Indians and to have been moved by it. His vision is not limited by the ordinary intellectual or literary forms or formulas. His emergent sympathy seems to fit that pattern of always becoming something other. It is in the tradition of Samuel Sewall's recantation of his role in the Salem Witch Trials. Sewall appears to have realized his error when his young daughter began to suffer bouts of hysteria from the turmoil caused in her mind by the idea of predestination. Perhaps an instance more germane to Twain's is Jefferson's. In "Notes on the State of Virginia," Jefferson admits to the belief that there was a racial factor in the inabilities of the slaves to prepare for possible freedom. A Henry Gregoire apparently sent Jefferson some samples of literature written by Afro-Americans as evidence that they had as much cultural genius as whites. Jefferson states his observations were of blacks in a state of slavery, and that he realizes an error in not understanding what a cultural debilitation slavery was. In Jefferson's case, it took decades for his empirical sense to reach the level of his moral stance. And so it may have been with Twain.

The one place where Twain celebrates Indian culture is at the end of *Life on the Mississippi.* He has a great deal of fun with an excursion lecturer's recitations of Indian legends as the boat Twain is on cruises the upper Mississippi River. Twain rips apart "The Legend of White Bear Lake" as it appears in a tourist's guidebook. The version of the legend is an incoherent bit of promotional puffery, which Twain thoroughly deflates. However, the lecturer refers Twain to Schoolcraft's *Algic Researches* in order to enlarge Twain's "respect for the Indian imagination." Twain read the book and says the lecturer was right. He notes that one of the legends, "Peboan and Seegwun, An Allegory of the Seasons," is used by Longfellow in "Hiawatha," but says "it is worth reading in the original form, if only

that one may see how effective a genuine poem can be without the helps and graces of poetic measure and rhythm." After this dig at Longfellow's poesy, Twain reprints the tale without further comment. He also includes in the appendix a story called "The Undying Head," also printed verbatim from Schoolcraft. He warns that the tale is rather long, but "it makes up in weird conceits, fairy-tale prodigies, variety of incident, and energy of movement, for what it lacks in brevity" (280). He makes no further comment; just offers it for the reader's consideration.

No apologetics can explain away Twain's early attitude toward Indians. His revulsion against violence and the depraved tendencies of human nature is not directed only at Indians, but his early encounters with them and their general reputations seem to have inspired near-bitterness. However, it was in their literature that he found his greatest appreciation of them, and it was their literature through which he entered their point of view and appears to have been beguiled. Ultimately, Twain was a literary man, and literature moved him to a higher plane of human perception. Twain did not find ideal humans in his excursions to the Territories; he found depravity, as he did in all parts of human society, and he found humans struggling to free themselves of the old bondages that they devised for himself. Just like Huck Finn led our literature to a higher plane of human perception, a few Indian tales seem to have done that for Twain.

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MARK TWAIN, SHERWOOD ANDERSON, AND MIDWESTERN MODERNISM

DAVID D. ANDERSON

In the more than a century since the Concord, Massachusetts, Library Committee declared Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to be "rough, coarse, inelegant, more suitable to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people . . ." and dismissed it as "veritable trash," the novel has never been out of print nor far from the controversy that greeted its publication, both in the bowdlerized initial American publication in installments in *Century* magazine in 1885, and in its initial book publication in the United States later that year. Regularly removed from high school reading lists, it is almost as regularly discovered and denounced by public library committees, religious groups, and political action committees of various kinds. In its centennial year a symposium of black Americanists from leading colleges and universities unanimously admitted the uneasiness or worse that the novel caused in each of them.

Yet, in spite of the denigration, denunciation, disgust, and discomfort that the novel has engendered in its readers—and some who admit to never having read the novel—it not only continues to be read, taught, pondered, discussed, and emulated, but its influence is as strong in its second century as it was in its first. Its central role in the evolution of American literature is as evident in the works as in the words of such writers central to American modernism as Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner. To Anderson, "Huckleberry Finn is the first American novel;" to Hemingway, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn;*" to Faulkner, responding to a question about Anderson's place in modern literary history, "He (Anderson) was the father of my generation of American writers and the

tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on. . . . Dreiser is his older brother and Mark Twain the father of them both."

That these three writers, each of them central to the development of American modernism, have acknowledged the formative role of Mark Twain and *Huckleberry Finn* in influencing their own work and that of their contemporaries is no accident, nor is the fact that two of them are products of, and, in turn, influenced by the Midwest in which they were born and matured, and where they developed their literary aspirations, while the third was formed largely by the South.

As Sculley Bradley has commented, "The foreground of *[Huckleberry Finn]* was the Mid-American continental culture during the early life of Mark Twain." Through Twain and *Huckleberry Finn,* that culture, in all its complexity in spite of its apparent simplicity, fused with the equally complex late nineteenth century Midwestern village culture of Sherwood Anderson. Through *Winesburg, Ohio,* that merger gave form, direction, character, language and style to Hemingway and Faulkner, and, through them, to the Modernism that dominates American writing in our time. Of equal importance it gave, particularly but not exclusively, to Midwestern moderns a structure and an attitude that combine to direct their people toward lives not of stability but of movement, of a search, a search for an ever-elusive freedom, for an equally elusive self-knowledge, and for the fulfillment that their ancestors had sought as they crossed the mountains, went up and down the rivers, sojourned, and moved on in a search that gave substance and direction to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and to countless American lives in Twain's time and many lives and much fiction in the century that followed.

Twain's contributions to Midwestern and American modernism are most evident in the characters and the language that through Sherwood Anderson have come to dominate midcentury modernism. Pap Finn, Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, the King and the Duke, old Boggs, Colonel Sherburn, and the Grangerfords, each made what he or she is by the forces of faith and conviction, fear and uncertainty, each oddly human and hence engendering a measure of sympathy if not respect,

are the fathers and mothers, the brothers and sisters of those whom Anderson later called "grotesques."

These are the people of Winesburg who, distorted by circumstance, become, like the twisted apples in the orchards outside Winesburg, somehow sweeter, more human in their grotesquery. And from Winesburg, Ohio, further distorted by materialism, by greed, by violence, their sons and daughters move on—to the city, most notoriously, Chicago, to Northern Michigan, to Paris and Pamplona, to East Egg and West Egg, to Mexico, Paris, San Francisco, and often back to their origins in memory or imagination if not in fact. At the same time their counterparts, their Southern cousins, expand from a country as real and as imaginary as St. Petersburg and Winesburg to people a South in rapid transition, those who inhabit Carson McCullers' sad cafe or Flannery O'Connor's Georgia countryside, either of which might have been a few miles down Trunnion Pike from Winesburg.

If this modern character type were all that Mark Twain had contributed to the twentieth-century mainstream, it would have been formidable, but equally evident is his contribution to a literary language drawn directly from the living language of the time and place, In drawing upon the language of the time and place of his youth, satirically defined as a linguistic exercise in a prefatory explanatory note, Mark Twain introduces to the literary mainstream the American vernacular in sound, in rhythm, in syntax, in usage that had come over the mountains and down and up the rivers two generations earlier, that had become a language of functions remote from the literary circles of Concord, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and that had by Mark Twain's time become the language that united and gave voice to the rapidly settling region from Appalachians to Rockies, from the Ohio-Missouri-Platte basin to the Canadian border, and that, through Anderson and his successors, has become as close to an American vernacular as perhaps is possible. But to Twain as to Anderson it became the language of literature because it was the language of life.

Important to Twain, also, as it was to Anderson and his successors were matters of form and structure, and in each Twain through Anderson has contributed to the nature of Midwestern and American modernism. In his first note prefatory to the novel, Twain warns with psuedo solemnity that "persons

attempting to find a plot in *[Huckleberry Finn]* will be shot." Here Twain foreshadows Anderson's later insistence that there are no plots in human life, yet Twain, and Anderson a generation later, finds the structure of his novel in the place where he found his language, in the day-to-day lives of his people.

The structure of the novel was made up of the series of human events, the flow of the river, and the elements of chance—of encounters, of fog, of circumstances—that determine the course of the novel and make its people what they are. Echoes of that intricate series of events, contrived, circumscribed, predetermined, or the product of the vagaries of chance, reverberate in the lives of the people of Winesburg and of Northern Michigan, Paris, Pamplona, and the neighborhoods of Chicago.

But the absence of the classic intricacies of human action and the emphasis on the flow of the river of chance and human life enable Huck and Jim to evade or escape or think they evade or escape most of those shore-bound grotesques, whether Pap Finn or Miss Watson, marking the extremes of frontier MidAmerican society, or the vast range of human types in between as the river carries them toward what appears to be freedom and then becomes the illusion of freedom itself. "There warn't no home like a raft," Huck insists, but that raft is subject to encounters with fog, other rafts, skiffs, steamboats, and the wide variety of MidAmerican types—MidAmerican grotesques—they inevitably encounter ashore.

The river's freedom is as transient as it is illusory, and the ultimate end of that transcience, of that illusion, becomes imminent and potentially horrible as they float deeper, from encounter to encounter, toward the heart of the slave empire and the inevitable end of the river, toward a potential fate that neither Jim nor Huck, in their innocence, can anticipate or comprehend. In Pikesville, Arkansas, the downriver recreation of St. Petersburg, the journey comes unexpectedly but abruptly to an end, and Huck gains a measure of self-knowledge as he realizes that "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another," and as he learns that hell may indeed be preferable to conventional respectability. But Jim is a free man through Miss Watson's deathbed conversion, and Huck is threatened by the civilization he had temporarily escaped; the journey, for all practical purposes, has been futile. If Huck is determined to escape—but is he?

Can he?—he must turn West on the American path toward freedom, fulfillment, enlightenment for Americans in his time and for many Americans in our own.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is indeed a novel of movement—along the American path of destiny that had already seen the disgrace of Aaron Burr, the impoverishment of Harmon Blennerhassett, and, beyond the emerging illusion of a new American gentility, the rise of an institution as dehumanizing and degrading as any in human history as it denied the very principles upon which that society insisted it had been built, an institution that could only be destroyed by an equally monstrous horror. For Huck, for Americans of his generation, the river is ultimately seen as the illusion, the romantic fraud, that we know that it was, and the journey an interval in what may become a lifelong search—if Huckleberry Finn, his contemporaries, and his descendents have the strength, the determination, and the wisdom to pursue it—and if their innocence endures.

When Mark Twain decided after prolonged indecision to make the novel something other than a tale of escape in the traditional sense through traditional means by which generations of young white and black Americans had sought physical freedom in the fluidity of the Old Northwestern frontier, he turned it instead into a metaphor for the American search, whether for freedom, for cheap land, an open society, or literal or symbolic fulfillment. In so doing, he recreated the literal central fact of the lives of the Americans he knew in Hannibal, in his own life and among his contemporaries, and of the people who settled and moved on in the course of their perennial searches. Simultaneously, he provided the substance, the central direction, the controlling idea, the dominant myth that underlies the bulk of the literature that came out of the Midwest to direct American modernism in this century.

Central to the fiction and to the lives of Sherwood Anderson, and, after him, of Ernest Hemingway, of F. Scott Fitzgerald, of Saul Bellow, of Willa Cather, of Richard Wright, and others is the reality of movement, of a search, like Mark Twain's and Huckleberry Finn's, that is rooted in experience but increasingly, ultimately metaphoric. Huck Finn's journey ends before the onset of adolescence; at that point he faces the choice of returning to St. Petersburg, remaining in Pikesville, or returning to the

river—all of them inevitably resulting in his loss of innocence as surely as his loss of freedom, or, conversely, lighting out for the territories—turning West, as Natty Bumpo and other natural people had done before him. But the question remains: will he light out, indeed, can he, or will he settle for an adult destiny? In Huck's speculation at the end, Mark Twain lets his readers construct his or her own concluding romance or reality.

Nevertheless, Mark Twain's and Huckleberry Finn's descendents—Sherwood Anderson's Sam McPherson in *Windy McPherson's Son,* Theodore Dreiser's Carrie Meeber of *Sister Carrie;* Ernest Hemingway's Nick Adams in all his incarnations from the stories of *In Our Time* through *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms;* F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby;* Willa Cather's Jim Burden in *My Antonia;* Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas in *Native Son;* and Saul Bellow's Augie March in the *Adventures* of the same name—all begin their individual searches where Huck Finn left off. The territories for which each of them departs are neither geographic nor mythic. These young people are firmly rooted in a modern American reality reflective of a new age that seeks a new kind of freedom. Where Huck's journey ended—at river's end and a new realization at the onset of adolescence—each of the others begins his search at the beginning of adulthood, but each, ultimately, like Huck, comes to a new realization at a new material river's end, and each, like Huck, must choose—if, again, as in Huck's case, that choice is indeed possible.

Each of the protagonists chooses a new manifestation of Huck's river—for Sam McPherson it is the railroad to Chicago, and the fulfillment he seeks is the material promise of the new industrial American; for Nick Adams in all his *personae* it is the new path of romance to adventure in war and fulfillment in love; for Carrie Meeber it is the bright promise of Chicago; for Nick Carroway and Jay Gatsby it is to the mythic towers in the East, where all things are possible; for Jim Burden, like Abraham Lincoln before him, it is in the law that will bring order to an America in transition; for Bigger Thomas it is the promise of human dignity; for Augie March the journey is longer and infinitely more varied as Augie seeks freedom, seeks love, seeks success, in each of which he pursues not absorption or fulfillment but the opposition to convention that he, like Huck Finn

before him, knows that he has in him. Each of these successors to the search defined by Mark Twain and personified by Huck Finn's journey down the river of romance, is, like Huck, simultaneously fleeing from whatever it is that denies his freedom and going toward whatever it is that he is convinced will affirm it, even as it makes possible fulfillment that freedom inevitably entails. For many of the people—post adolescents—of the new age at the end of the nineteenth century, fulfillment is easily and obviously translated into material success in the cities—Chicago and New York—that most clearly symbolize and celebrate that success. But in each case the end of the dream and the recognition of the failure either to escape what limits them or to find the object of their search are as abrupt for them as for Huckleberry, and become in most cases an awareness of the need to turn in new directions.

But that new search may or may not materialize, and if it does, it may or may not produce whatever it is that lies beyond materialism. For Sam McPherson, the wealth that he attains in the munitions industry becomes meaningless, and he sets off in aimless wandering across the Midwestern countryside in search of a selfless, sexless love; for Carrie Meeber, moving mindlessly in place in her rocking chair in the middle of her career, there is continued yearning for what she neither understands nor can pursue; for Jim Burden, successful lawyer, both the dream and the place where it might have become real are gone, and he can only continue the life that he knows is as enslaving as it is empty.

For the next generation of Midwestern writers, the literary grandchildren of Mark Twain and the children of Sherwood Anderson, the dream, the goal, and the journey become infinitely more complex, as the pursuit of material success is at best a means to an end rather than the end that the earlier generation had tried and found meaningless. Whatever lies beyond is forever out of reach; thus, Jay Gatsby dies still believing in the attainability of the green light that, he believes, a perverted material success has brought within his reach, while Nick Carraway can only return to St. Paul and ponder on the failure of all our dreams. Nick Adams, in his various guises, having pursued not things or money but the romantic goals of an earlier age—adventure, a cause, enduring love—and found those, too, transient and elusive, can only observe and comment ironically on

what might have been with Jake Barnes or wander aimlessly out into the rain with Frederic Henry.

The fourth generation of Midwestern writers appeared as the nation emerged from the Depression of the 1930s and at the same time faced participation in the most violent and bloodiest event in human history. For both Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas and Saul Bellow's Augie March, the pursuit of material success is irrelevent, impossible for the former in the black slums of Chicago and a side issue at best for the latter, a product of the ethnic working class neighborhoods of the city's North Side. Bigger Thomas seeks something beyond either material or social fulfillment, but violence becomes the means by which he can become in his own awareness a human being.

Bigger's journey into the most obscure regions of the human psyche is as doomed as Augie March's attempt to escape into love or time or geography. From Chicago to Mexico to war and through the debris-strewn wreckage of postwar Europe, Augie ranges, willing to tolerate the means that may ultimately make possible the end, knowing, too, that the search is twisting, often random, that, like Huck Finn, the search is not merely from something but to something. At the end, still optimistic, speaking for Huck as well as himself, but, ironically, not for most of the countless young men and women of the previous hundred years of Midwestern literary life, Augie proclaims, "I may well be a flop at this line of endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America."

At the end of *The Adventures of Augie March* it is as clear as it was at the end of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that the search is simultaneously escape from something that Huck calls civilizing, that clearly is both dehumanizing and depersonalizing, and to something that Huck calls freedom but that can be as intangible as love or self-awareness or fulfillment, or, for Augie as for Huck, the search itself.

But equally clear at the end of each novel is the promise that if the search has an end, it is beyond either the comprehension or the grasp of the young people who seek it. Consequently, it is evident that whatever meaning can be found must be found in the search itself. The territories, the America that four generations of the creations of four generations of Midwestern writers

sought and still younger generations continue to seek, may, indeed, exist in objective geographical fact as well as in the spirit of the seekers. But the search—that is, the river, the road, the ocean, even the airways as well as the trackless wilderness of the territories to which each generation has turned—becomes the only reality that he or she can know. As each young person turns from the metaphorical river to what lies beyond he or she turns to a new level of the search, where all roads run West, where the setting sun becomes the ultimate unattainable promise. At this point it becomes clear that, as Sherwood Anderson wrote at the end of his life and had inscribed on his tombstone, "Life, not death, is the great adventure." At the heart of Midwestern fiction in all its manifestations, it is also, clearly, the only reality.

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MERIDEL LE SUEUR, "CORN VILLAGE," AND LITERARY PRAGMATISM

JAMES M. BOEHNLEIN

Out of the subversive, critical temper which shaped many social realist texts during the thirties, there developed a type of writing which sought to capture the immediacy of the Depression while critiquing existing institutions or ideologies. Documentary reportage, or imaginative non-fiction, emerged as an important genre during the thirties as it provided social realists of the decade a means by which an aesthetic could merge with a critical sociopolitical commentary. Its power lay in its ability not only to inform people, but to move people to action.

Meridel Le Sueur's use of reportage during the thirties is of singular importance. Her texts foreground gender and class issues in a language that privileges both social and cognitive dynamics. As for many writers, the thirties were years of intensely satisfying work for Le Sueur. Exposed to the Midwestern tradition of radical dissent through both her mother and father, she responded to this unprecedented economic crisis, believing that radical change a real possibility. She wrote for organizations of the Left, including the John Reed clubs, the *New Masses, Midwest Magazine,* the Workers Alliance, and the Writers Project of the WPA. Consequently, she wrote a good deal of reportage; she employed this "journalism with a perspective" and "three-dimensional reporting" to make the reader see and feel the event. Adopting elements of fiction and emphasizing character, setting, carefully selected detail, imagery, and narrative line, Le Sueur's reportage evoked class debate by using a rhetoric which emphasized the pragmatic features of discourse.

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that has been influenced by Anglo-American philosophy of language, studies the use of language in context. A rhetoric that comes out of Pragmatics

deals with not only the representational features of language, but the dynamics of goal-directed speech situations. Pragmatics provides a framework by which a genre like reportage can be analyzed since reportage links representational aspects of language with its goal-directed purposes. For reportage by social realists, like Le Sueur, language collapses the agency/ideology opposition, which often precludes emancipation and egalitarianism.

The fundamental claim of this project, then, is that Pragmatics can assist in explaining the goal-directed nature of Le Sueur's documentary reportage. Central to this study of the pragmatic features of her texts is the notion that it invites its audience to both contemplation and action, that the rhetoric of reportage integrates the social, historical, and immediate rhetorical situation with the ontological states of knowledge making. Consequently, the social and the cognitive components of her texts are mutually inclusive. As a display text, "Corn Village," first published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1931, provides a unique example of Le Sueur's sociocognitive rhetoric[1] as it seeks to make its audience see and feel the events it describes.

In order to capture the dignity of actuality so prevalent in the majority of thirties reportage, writers, like Le Sueur, employed a rhetoric which, according to Kenneth Burke, was a mode of appeal essential for bridging the conditions of estrangement natural to society *(A Rhetoric of Motives).* Burke's observations about the ubiquity of rhetoric in human situations explains why reportage offered a unique glimpse into thirties America. Burke argues that division within any community gives rise to a universal communicative situation, and that rhetoric as such is found in all communicative situations. The more complex a situation is, the greater is the need for rhetorical devices when that situation is communicated. Rhetoric is not merely a calculated use of language and linguistic resources. It is also a means of achieving social cohesion (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 146).

Social cohesion and solidarity—all concerns of the social realists of the decade—found expression in documentary reportage. Like their male colleagues, many female journalists in the thirties practiced a variety of documentary journalism. For many of these female writers, the basic technique was "to

describe an individual who was representative of a larger group, and thereby draw larger conclusions from the particular facts of the individual" (Stott 172). Indeed, for many women journalists it became an effective form of writing about the Depression. As Nekola and Rabinowitz argue, "It was a time, without the distortions or excess of bourgeois individualistic fiction; it used the individual in the service of the mass; it raised political consciousness by linking one person with larger political movements; it replaced private despair with mass action" (194). Because of its socio-political dimensions, reportage provided other genres with its conventions. Proletarian novels, for example, would employ the interjections of news headlines and statistics and the mixture of documentary collage with fictional vignettes, as in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.*

Reportage by women demonstrated the weight and scope of their own observations.[2] Likewise, as Stott points out, the connection of informant narrative—reportage composed completely of quotations or commentary from the subject—offered the opportunity for disenfranchised individuals, male and female, to speak in their own voices (191, 193). Both radical and mainstream publications of the period used the conventions of reportage to record the complex relationships among class, race, and gender in a language of immediacy.[3]

When "Corn Village" was first published in 1931, it was awarded *Scribner's* prize for "personal experience of observation at first hand concerned with an aspect of American life." This distinction was for Le Sueur a timely one as she had struggled throughout the twenties to find both a voice and an audience. The editors of *Scribner's* wanted "to encourage the spirit of seeking what is true and valid in our own culture and in our own land." Their selection of Le Sueur's "Corn Village" began a validating experience for her. Her emerging sensibility as a social critic and emancipator began to take shape, as she says in "Corn Village," "in the mid-center of America."

Le Sueur's use of the "participant observer" technique in "Corn Village" was the most common sort of documentary reportage in the thirties. She shared in the events she reported and bared her feelings and attitudes to influence the reader's own. This approach responded to the appetite of the people of the time for lived, firsthand experience, and to their particular

trust in the truth of such experience. This form of engagement also moved beyond the fiction of the day which, for many people, was incapable of social realism. The "escapist" nature of much fiction of the time left much to be desired. People of America during the thirties hungered for truth and justice.

Le Sueur's use of the "informant narrative" also made the same experiential claim as "participant observer." Here she mixed quotes culled from her association with people with whom she had lived and worked. Informant documentary was especially effective for it captured the direct and often brutal realities of life in the very words these people chose to describe them. Le Sueur, like Labov, was quick to recognize the aesthetic quality of the "natural narratives"; they etched out of experience and pain a people's struggle for understanding and truth.

Both documentary techniques combined then with the lyrical quality of "Corn Village" to make it one of Le Sueur's most effective pieces of reportage. Coming as it does at the beginning of the Depression and at the start of Le Sueur's most prolific period as a social critic and writer, "Corn Village" demonstrates Le Sueur's emerging sensibility as a committed and involved rhetorician of the time and of the Midwest.

"Corn Village:" An Emerging Sensibility

As reportage, "Corn Village" is a composite of techniques which Le Sueur later refines and develops in shorter, less detailed pieces. Its use, however, of an engaging lyrical tone and raw reality anticipates James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and even surpasses some of his technique for its own brilliance and complexity. Like much of her best work, Le Sueur begins "Corn Village" by recalling her past, a past which she shares with countless Americans:

> Like many Americans, I will never recover from my sparse childhood in Kansas. The blackness, weight and terror of childhood in mid-America strike deep into the stem of life. Like desert flowers we learned to crouch near the earth, fearful that we would die before the rains, cunning, waiting the season of good growth. Those who survived without psychic mutilation have a life cunning, to keep the stem tight and spare, withholding the deep blossom, letting it sour rather than bloom and be blighted. (133)

Like a Walker Evans photograph, this introduction to "Corn Village" establishes the tone of desperation which Le Sueur maintains throughout this piece. Its power lies in her use of the flower image which haunts her and cautions her against any premature expression of beauty and truth. Like a desert flower, her childhood was both nourished and blighted by the capricious conditions of the land.

Her language takes on an even stronger sense of naturalism as she shifts to the first person plural in the second paragraph:

> Looking for nourishment, we saw the dreary villages, the frail wooden houses, the prairies ravished, everything impermanent as if it were not meant to last the span of one man's life, a husk through which human life poured, leaving nothing behind, not even memory, and every man going a lonely way in a kind of void, all shouting to each other and unheard, all frightfully alone and solitary. (133)

Le Sueur's acute sense of the visual dominates this scene as she describes "a husk through which human life poured." The immediacy of her language engages both the emotional and intellectual domains as this "kind of void" prompts questions of how and why. To be sure, this is not merely an exercise in exposition or description. Le Sueur here expects a response from her readers so that the "fear everywhere on the streets in the gray winter of the land, and the curious death in the air, the bright surface activity of the pioneer town and the curious air dissipating powers of fear and hate" do not become neutral and impersonal. Rather, Le Sueur grips her audience.

This sense of engagement dominates "Corn Village" as it draws its audience into its impressionistic "dream" or "unreality." The land and its people struggle against one another, not for dominance but for some sense of understanding:

> I am filled with terror when I think of the emptiness and ghostliness of mid-America. The rigors of conquest have made us spiritually insulated against human values. No fund of instinct and experience has been accumulated, and each generation seems to be more impoverished than the last. (134)

Le Sueur's commentary here, however, suggests that no understanding will ever come about, that the land's curious hold upon the lives and imaginations of its people precludes the possibility

of mutual trust. The "communal solidarity" which Le Sueur sought her entire life is in "Corn Village" rendered lifeless, a vain attempt at stemming the personal and private pain and anxiety of mid-America.

Like an Eliotic "waste land," Le Sueur's mid-America becomes a "winter madness" with "dark fields jagged and turned to the cold." Its "terrifying beauty" mutes its harsh realities that sting unprotected flesh: "The white earth sloping and still, the leaden sky, all things closed, no vistas, no shaking out, no revelation." Le Sueur's concern is her audience's concern; her pain and fear are theirs:

> What does an American think about the land, what dreams come from the sight of it, what painful dreaming? Are they only money dreams, power dreams? Is that why the land lies desolate like a loved woman who has been forgotten? Has she been misused through dreams of power and conquest? (135)

Here Le Sueur's description of the harsh landscape and its impoverished people takes on more telling concerns. Her use of rhetorical questions, like her first-person commentary, enlightens and distills her descriptions into a knowing response to humanity.

Le Sueur's reflections shift to a character sketch of John Simonsons, one of many mid-Americans who populate her reportage. This set-piece description, like others by Le Sueur, rests upon both the physicality of the man as well as his mystical qualities. Simonsons' "Yankee body, angular disjointed" reminds her of Lincoln's. But it is not a body to admire; it is a body that is "hard and bitter and stubborn, always lanky and ill nourished, surviving bitterly." Her "bottom dog" description of Simonsons shifts to a stream-of-consciousness reflection. Like Faulkner, Le Sueur here tries to capture the dominant impression that Simonsons left. Again, she sees him like Lincoln

> the loose frame, the slight droop, the acrid, bitter power and tenuosity, the sense of hanging on in bad season, the despondency from lack of nourishment, that well-known Yankee form and the mystery of it, the strong, deep, lanky chest, so powerful but so withdrawn. . . . (135)

As they speak, Simonsons' "sepulchral voice" haunts her. His loneliness against the "black land" creates a vacuum—"tumbling

buildings so temporary and lost" serve as a final outpost where people like Simonsons see "no North Star, no guide."

Simonsons' loneliness gives way to Le Sueur's commentary on the groups of people with whom she lived and whom she observed daily. The Irish family and the Polish woman, who kept a "house," retain the same cruel desolation as Simonsons. Yet, Le Sueur claims that she is "baffled to know the meaning of people in the Midwest towns." Even Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson "have left out a great deal":

> I was hungering then, a-hunger and a-thirst. So were others. The whole communal organism suffered perhaps. One individual is only an articulated sensitive point for the great herd suffering. I went about the streets looking and looking, and what I saw seemed to be without pith or meaning, dark and spectral. (137)

These scenes of orientation which make up the first part of "Corn Village" are marked by Le Sueur's "intrusions": evaluative comments which raise the settings and the people above their suffering, privileging them with integrity and pride. She links the awful physicality with a certain transcendence, almost hidden but for Le Sueur's ability to capture its evanescence.

The disruption of violence startles these people out of their ennui. The "excitement of cyclones" and "even death, a real death" break through and touch the people, "erupting the awful lethargy." A couple's death and joint funeral become a catharsis:

> The town is woven in this lovely dream. The children, round-eyed, whisper together. The women gather. The men gather. Men and women draw closer to each other in the night. Love awakens in the town. Every one is drawn into the ways of myth. (138)

Le Sueur's sense of corporate sensibility contrasts with the individual loneliness evident in the earlier sections of "Corn Village." Suddenly, the violent complications of death impart "the air . . . rich with meaning."

Another kind of "epiphany" greets these mid-Americans in the form of a revival. Here Le Sueur's description of her Puritanical grandmother captures the "coldness and severity" of her life. Like Simonsons, Le Sueur's grandmother portrays the awful physicality of life which only highlights "the mid continent vacuum." The revival as another form of violence leaves an

"obscure and terrible ecstasy over the town." Like the funerals, the revival is but a temporary respite from the harsh, grim realities that engulf mid-America.

Le Sueur's coda in "Corn Village" yields final insight into the complexity of the people and the land. Her description of these people and their land engages her audience in a kind of "creation spirituality," one which recognizes the transcendent and the truth in reality:

> Oh, Kansas, I know all your little trees. I have watched them thaw and bud and the pools of winter frozen over, the silos and the corn-blue sky, the wagon-tracked road with the prints of hoofs, going where? (140)

The "dignity of actuality" coupled with Le Sueur's intense, personal, and emotional lyrical style helps her audience experience the violence which punctuates the cold vacuum. Le Sueur's use of the sociological dimensions of art serves to ground the myths of mid-American Kansas in reality. The "social" art form allows for the movement from particulars to implications beyond. She addresses Kansas, fearful of and intrigued by its power to draw her and others into its chaos:

> I have come from you mysteriously wounded. I have waked from my adolescence to find a wound inflicted on the deep heart. And have seen it in others too, in disabled men and sour women made ugly by ambition, mortified in the flesh and wounded in love. (140)

The diversity and incongruity which "Corn Village" portrays give rise to a "universal communicative situation," as Kenneth Burke argues. Le Sueur's descriptions of individuals point up their participation in a divided human community. Also, the complexity of these scenes and events in "Corn Village" requires rhetorical devices by which social cohesion can be achieved. Rhetoric is the mode of appeal essential for bridging the conditions of estrangement natural to society. Le Sueur appeals to her audience by moving them beyond the conditions she describes to a response which at once sees "communal sensibility" as a viable corrective.

The Sociocognitive Appeal

Le Sueur's use of "sociocognitive rhetoric"—a form of language which addresses both social and intellectural needs of its audiences—in reportage like "Corn Village" moves her cultural critique beyond pure utterance to communicative action. This pragmatic nature of her use of language breaks through conventional margins of discourse by recognizing the emancipatory and goal-directed functions of her language and thought. Influenced by the Literary Left of the thirties, Le Sueur's reportage became sites of intersection where social and cultural issues converged with communistic and collective ideologies. Consequently, "Corn Village" employs a rhetoric which recognizes these contingencies "achieving certain effect while remaining overt in intention and communicative in its aims" (Bohman 195).

An analysis of the social variables (audience and context) of "Corn Village" recognizes the reader-oriented perspective. Because "Corn Village" as reportage seeks to blend traditional fictional and non-fictional categories, its interface with an audience or reader becomes problematic. However, reportage as utterance denies any privilege that literary and ordinary language might claim. A reader's response to reportage recognizes that both the literary and natural narrative coalesce to form the basis of response.

Wolfgang Iser bears this out as he argues that interpretation is "total" whereas art is "partial." In other words, meaning as such is dependent upon the reader, not the text. This "reader-oriented perspective" becomes highly congruent with the purpose behind Le Sueur's reportage, namely, to enact change. To do this, her "Corn Village" must engage her reader in the language and context; its rhetoric must be pragmatic in nature and purpose.

As Iser suggests, "the pragmatic nature of a text can only come to full fruition by way of the complete range of contexts which the text absorbs, collects, and stores" (55). With this in mind, consideration of reader response as a heuristic guideline supports the notion that the written utterance continually transcends the margins of discourse "in order to bring the addressee into contact with nontextual realities" (Iser 55).

Iser's distinction between the "theme" and "horizon" in a text provides a strategy by which reader response (audience response to "Corn Village") can be assessed:

> As perspectives are continually interweaving and interacting, it is not possible for the reader to embrace all perspectives at once, and so the view he is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him the 'theme.' This, however, always stands before the 'horizon' of the other perspective segments in which he had previously been situated. The horizon is that which includes and embraces everything that is visible from one point. (Iser 97)

Theme and horizon organize the attitudes of the reader and at the same time build up the perspective system of the text. Moreover, the structure of theme and horizon constitutes the vital link between text and reader, because it actively involves the reader in the process of synthesizing constantly shifting viewpoints.

In "Corn Village" the structure of theme and horizon and its variations provide an understanding of how it affects audience. Le Sueur's work comes out of a tradition of reportage favored by the Literary Left as a means of capturing social reality. The horizon to her text "Corn Village" is specified further as she describes the people and events which make up this mid-American vacuum. Her horizon interacts with the theme or perspective so that the actuality of this text is an aesthetic gesture in itself. The theme and horizon here evince a counterbalancing arrangement of perspectives often found in didactic or propagandistic literature. Its function is not to produce an aesthetic object that will rival the thought system of the social world, but to offer a compensation for specific deficiencies in specific thought systems. Because "Corn Village" is primarily exposition, the reader needs to infer the "compensation."

In like manner, the theme and horizon of "Corn Village" offer an oppositional arrangement. Again, the opposing norms show up the deficiencies of each other. When the reader relates these opposing norms to one another, he or she produces a kind of "reciprocal negation," with theme and horizon in continual conflict. The reader of "Corn Village" switches perspectives by removing the norms from their pragmatic setting and therefore

begins to see them for what they are. This oppositional arrangement allows the reader to experience a "consciousness raising." The opposition between the theme, the reality of "Corn Village," and horizon, man's inhumanity, helps the reader understand the influence of the text on real life.

This interplay between text and reader comes about then as "the text establishes itself as a correlative in the reader's consciousness" (Iser 107). This goal of reader-response theory enlightens the goal of the social variables of Le Sueur's rhetoric in "Corn Village." The nature and purpose of her reportage is to effect social change. The counterbalancing and oppositional arrangements of theme and horizon open her text to her audience.

The cognitive opposite to audience, Le Sueur as writer of reportage, is responsible for the initial vision which informed "Corn Village." Again, the "social" aesthetic advocated by the Literary Left finds expression in "Corn Village," although not as directly as in later pieces of Le Sueur's reportage. It is evident that, when contrasted with later works, "Corn Village" is perhaps a more self-conscious reflection than a radical leftist manifesto. However this may be true, "Corn Village" evokes the telling and knowing descriptive power which is evident in Le Sueur as writer, recorder of social ills. Moreover, "Corn Village" demonstrates Le Sueur's organicism as a writer; she refuses to impose a critique; she allows the people and events to speak for themselves.

The context-word tension in "Corn Village" sheds further light upon the audience-writer variable. Together they illustrate how the sociocognitive dynamic merges strategy and understanding. Also, the antifoundationalists inform the nature of context-dependency as evident in "Corn Village." According to Kenneth Bruffee, there appear to be three primary claims linked to the antifoundationalists position. Stuart Greene assesses them in the following manner:

> First, these theorists argue that what a community knows can never exist apart from it own discourse, a discourse that reflects a community's values, habits of mind, and its cultural and historical situation. This view suggests that language constitutes reality. Though Bruffee sidesteps the political or ideological implications of such a view, he points to the intertextual or dialogic quality of discourse, heightening our awareness that language is ideologically charged. . . . Secondly, knowledge, from a social constructionist's perspective, is intersubjective, resulting from decisions and action made in response to specific situations, issues, and problems shaped by historical and social forces. . . . The final claim is that logic and demonstration as a means for establishing truth, knowledge, and authority are replaced by what a number of theorists call epistemic rhetoric. . . . A relativistic or intersubjective conception of knowledge . . . is not without its historical and philosophical antecedents. (157-8)

The cultural and historical situation which Le Sueur describes in "Corn Village" is a country in the grips of physical and spiritual malaise. Despite the cathartic value of the so-called scenes of "violence" which Le Sueur employs, the dominant lethargy of the piece continually returns. Her "Corn Village" is indeed a response to a specific situation; it is a relativistic or intersubjective form of knowledge-making because its words, its language, "exist in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions" (Bakhtin 293-94). Her language is neither neutral nor impersonal.

Richard Rorty and other theorists hold this antifoundationalist claim, namely that one cannot account for the validity of beliefs by examining the relationship between ideas represented "clearly and distinctly" in the mind and their objects; in the world. Le Sueur's "Corn Village" makes sense as a social critique precisely because it holds that "justification of belief is a social process, an ongoing conversation whereby one negotiates and renegotiates knowledge claims in an effort to solve the problems a community confronts" (Rorty, "Hermeneutics"). Knowledge results from acknowledgement and mutual agreement among knowledgeable peers, a view that places faith in the power of reason and dialogue as a basis for community life (Greene 155). This perspective is evident in Le Sueur's ideological critique of capitalistic society and the institutional infrastructures that disempower and marginalize mid-American poor. Her allusions to Lincoln, Lewis, and Anderson are meant to demythologize these icons of mid-American infrastructure, for they have failed in their support of the marginalized. Even family, her reference to her grandmother, and religious rituals, funerals and revival, offer no lasting sustenance of prevailing meaning. Only the "terrible" and the "awful" realities are there to remind. This kind of

acknowledgement of truth is not based solely on intellectual assent; rather it is founded upon Le Sueur's ability to confront the reality she sees and to render it in words that capture its "terrible beauty" and fear. As a Marxist, Le Sueur realized that change does not occur through "individual will, consciousness, and intention," but through negotiations of truth that exist independent of individual consciousness. This fundamental principle of the Marxist aesthetic allows reportage like "Corn Village" so grounded in reality to become the "class weapon" which Michael Gold, editor of *New Masses*, implored of his writers at the time Le Sueur wrote "Corn Village."

This contextual variable of Le Sueur's sociocognitive rhetoric broadens and deepens its impact on reportage like "Corn Village" when analyzed in conjunction with the word qua word. The cognitive dimensions of the word "underscores the individual construction of meaning within a discourse tradition, speculating that language is also accented as 'individual utterance' and 'intentional expression' through an act of appropriation" (Bakhtin 293). From this perspective, a sociocognitive variable like context-dependency "may very well account for volition and personal authority" (Greene 158) within a text. This tension then between context and word becomes especially relevant to reportage because of its hybrid nature: the author's imaginative expression qua text blending with the historical and social forces which shape that imaginative assent.

Scenes of engagement coupled with scenes of self-reflection and description provide the sociocognitive rhetoric the emancipatory texture within which Le Sueur as social critic makes claims of understanding and success. The direct engagement of audience lends immediacy to her text. Thus, when Le Sueur asks,

> What does an American think about the land, what dreams come from the sight of it, what painful dreaming? Are they only money dreams, power dreams? Is that why the land lies desolate like a loved woman who has been forgotten? Has she been misused through dreams of power and conquest? (135)

she goes beyond mere intellectual or cognitive assent; she expects her audience to respond to the absurdity and injustice of this life. Moreover, this image of a woman wasted suggests

other subtexts which find further expression in her reportage of the mid-thirties.

In the most moving section of "Corn Village" Le Sueur exclaims,

> I have seen the spring like an idiotic lost peasant come over your [Kansas's] prairies scattering those incredibly tiny flowers, and the frozen earth thaw to black mud, and a mist of greening come on the thickets, and the birds coming from the South, black in the sky, and farmers coming to the village through the black mud.
>
> I have seen your beauty and your terror and your evil. (140)

Le Sueur captures the "dignity of actuality" in these few lines. Both the "terror" and "beauty" of Kansas remain in memory. She speaks here in a voice at once personal and intimate nowhere else evident in other parts of "Corn Village." By so doing, Le Sueur demonstrates another dimension of her language which links understanding with strategy. This type of dynamic becomes a more prominent feature in later reportage of the thirties. Its use here, however, is further evidence of Le Sueur's emerging sensibility as a social critic fulfilling the role of enlightened practitioner.

Conclusion

Reportage, therefore, became the ideal form of writing for the revolutionary and proletarian writer. Its use of both journalistic and literary devices engaged its reader in fact-based incidents while underscoring the triumphs and tragedies of depression America. Writers of reportage employed a language that was both informative and persuasive; they analyzed the sociocognitive dynamics of class, gender, and race issues. Indeed, their use of sociocognitive rhetoric critiqued the current order while seeking the truth about specific events.

Reportage's unique combination, then, of literary and documentary techniques recommends itself especially to issues of class, gender, and race. Its sociocognitive rhetoric transcends so-called objective journalism often provoking its readers to change attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. Reportage of the thirties "used a specific case to sabotage the general claims, the proud boasts, of those in power" (Stott 172).

"Corn Village" establishes a pattern in Le Sueur's thirties reportage of social critique tempered by a lyrical but forceful use of language. Her highly individualistic vision coupled with the reality she so detested creates imaginative non-fiction unsurpassed in thirties documentary expression. Its original publication in *Scribner's*, a mainstream magazine, is noteworthy because it suggests that at this early date (1931) Le Sueur's audience was bourgeois for the most part. Her later reportage will find expression in more subversive publications like *New Masses* and *Anvil*, which suggest that as the radical climate of the thirties developed, so did Le Sueur's need to find a more receptive audience to her Leftist orientation. "I Was Marching" (1934) and "They Follow Us Girls" (1935) are quite different from "Corn Village."

As a display text, however, "Corn Village" provides a point of departure from which later reportage will develop their respective visions of reality and their use of sociocognitive rhetoric. The goal-directed pragmatics of "Corn Village" becomes more evident as the decade unfolds and as social and gender issues figure more prominently in the Leftist ideology which Le Sueur embraced.

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NOTES

1. Sociocognitive rhetoric is also based upon the writings of speech-act theorists J. L. Austin, H. P. Grice, John Searle, and P. F. Strawson. More recently, its background finds expression in works by philosopher Richard Rorty and rhetoricians Patricia Bizzell, Stuart Greene, Michael Corter, Carol Berkenkotter, and Kenneth Bruffee, who have challenged the Foundationalists' notion of the rhetorical enterprise.
2. For further study of women revolutionary writers of the thirties, see *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers* by Charlotte Nekola and Paula Rabinowitz, and Barbara Foley's "Women and the Left in the 1930's." *American Literary History.* 2 (1990):150-169.
3. See Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery* and Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations* for insightful analyses of depression-era texts and publications like *New Masses.*

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HEMINGWAY'S POSTHUMOUS FICTION: FROM BRIMMING VAULT TO BARE CUPBOARD

PAUL W. MILLER

Though Hemingway himself has not come back to life since he blew his brains out on July 2, 1961, his posthumous works of fiction have appeared with such regularity since then as to make one think he has been writing from beyond the grave. From 1961 to 1987, no less than five works of Hemingway's fiction have appeared, consisting entirely or partly of previously unpublished works. If there has been any change over the years in the criteria for publication of Hemingway's posthumous works, none has been admitted. As Philip Young noted in 1972, the first principle governing publication of these works was that nothing be published which would "risk reduction of the author's stature" (Young and Mann IX). In 1976 Mrs. Hemingway clarified this principle by stating that "whatever the temptations or persuasions, Charles Scribner's Sons and I would publish nothing we jointly considered to be of quality inferior to the work published during Ernest's lifetime as approved by him" (*How It Was* 520). The second rule, alluded to by Mrs. Hemingway in her notes to *A Moveable Feast* and *Islands in the Stream*, was that although cuts were permissible in revised as well as unrevised manuscripts, nothing was to be added to Hemingway's text (Young and Man IX).

Threatening to undermine these high-minded principles, as Mrs. Hemingway was well aware, was the existence of more than 3000 pages of unpublished manuscript material of uneven quality, most of it fiction, whose publication was eagerly awaited by hordes of readers, critics, scholars and Hemingway fans. Even such a veteran Hemingway researcher as Philip Young, who in 1966 first saw the bank vault containing Hemingway's unpublished word hoard, did not realize till the day in 1972

when he published his inventory of the manuscripts, how great was the American public's interest in the contents of the vault. On that day the story of the manuscripts was on the front page of the *New York Times;* the follow-up for Young himself was not one but two interviews on the "Today" show ("Hemingway's Manuscripts" 5). With so many eager to buy almost any new work of fiction written by the legendary Hemingway, the pressure to empty the vault of its contents by publishing first the more or less finished items and then, as necessary, moving on to the early drafts, the fragments, and the more trivial items, must have been immense.

Even with the purest intentions in the world, Mrs. Hemingway's task in supervising publication of the posthumous works was formidable. However laudable her first principle of publication may have been, it was hard to apply judiciously because it was so subjective, and because the financial rewards of publishing even incomplete or inferior works were almost guaranteed to be great. The second rule, appearing to be equally unexceptionable, also lent itself to abuse, since deep cuts in a manuscript, even if no words are added, can produce a work almost unrecognizable as the author's original composition. Though Mrs. Hemingway seems to have been quite sincere in not wanting to damage her late husband's reputation by ill-advised posthumous publication, the question of how judicious and disinterested she and Scribner's were in applying these principles has been insistently raised since 1980, when the Hemingway manuscript collection at the Kennedy Library was opened to scholars, and more urgently since 1986, when *The Garden of Eden* was published.

In the remainder of this paper I mean to trace briefly the history of Hemingway's posthumous publication by Scribner's and the growing conviction of reviewers, critics and scholars that there have been serious violations of Mrs. Hemingway's stated principles of publication, apparently for commercial exploitation of the Hemingway legend and the brimming vault, now almost bare of fiction. Also, over the years, some have suggested that violation of the first principle may have actually reduced Hemingway's stature as an artist, as Mrs. Hemingway feared it might, and that injudicious application of the second principle, involving extreme cutting tantamount to butchery of

manuscripts in the editorial struggle to obtain successful trade publications, may have transformed some of Hemingway's fiction into works he would scarcely recognize as his own. Finally, some scholars have raised questions about whether Mrs. Hemingway and Scribner's have been as scrupulous in following Hemingway's exact words and intentions in the manuscripts as they have professed to be (Beegel 5).

Let me now summarize the facts of Hemingway's posthumously published fiction. The first work, *A Moveable Feast,* which Hemingway described as fiction although it dealt with actual, named people, appeared in 1964, in a first printing of almost 85,000 copies (Baker 413). The second, *Islands in the Stream,* was published six years later in a first printing of 75,000, followed by *The Nick Adams Stories* (1972) with 25,000 copies (Baker 413). The latter volume added to the sixteen Nick Adams stories already published, eight previously unpublished items. These comprise five sketches or undeveloped short stories, one apparently completed short story ("Summer People"), and pages from two abandoned novels, "Along with Youth" and "The Last Good Country." Then, in 1986, drum beats of publicity heralded Scribner's long awaited release of 100,000 copies of *The Garden of Eden,* which sold out in a week (Lynn 541). As everyone now knows, this autobiographical novel revealed a new, androgynous Hemingway far removed from the hairy-chested, macho Hemingway of the early novels. The most recent additions to Hemingway's posthumous fiction came at the end of the 1987 edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway,* which according to Charles Scribner III sold 20,000-25,000 copies the first year. These additions, seven in all, consist according to the publisher of four completed short stories and three scenes from two more unpublished, uncompleted novels (*The Complete Short Stories,* xvii).[1]

If Hemingway had works ready, or almost ready, to go to press at the time of his death, one might expect that his publisher, with Mrs. Hemingway's approval, would have issued them promptly to take commercial advantage of the lurid publicity attending his suicide. As Mrs. Hemingway explained, however, she could not at once bring herself to deal with the typescript of *A Moveable Feast* she found after his death (Baker 354; Mary Welsh Hemingway, *How It Was* 513). Not until 1963 did she

authorize its publication. Because in her note to *A Moveable Feast* she maintained that the novel was finished in 1960 (as Hemingway's preface to the novel, dated 1960, also seemed to indicate), she reportedly confined her editing, assisted by Scribner's L. H. Brague, to correcting spelling and punctuation, making some cuts, and "switching about a couple of chapters for continuity's sake," but "no one added any word to the book" (Mary Welsh Hemingway, "The Making" 27).

Following publication of *A Moveable Feast* in May, 1964, all the reviewers I have read were content to let Mrs. Hemingway's claims of minimal editing go unchallenged. Though some were put off by the book's egregious display of Hemingway's venom toward his erstwhile friends, the enthusiastic tone of Charles Poore in the *New York Times* was more typical: "Here is Hemingway at his best. No one has ever written about Paris in the nineteen-twenties as well as Hemingway" (41). However, a sour note was struck by Geoffrey Wagner in *Commonweal:*

> Judging by this memoir, it would seem that the Hemingway estate is prepared to dribble out some very small beer indeed in the name of the master. This book was apparently completed in Cuba in 1960 and, for all the good it is likely to do Hemingway's reputation, it could very well have stayed there—permanently. . . . *A Moveable Feast* is a set of short—who-knows-how-accurate—literary reminiscences of the era. (302)

It was not till 1982 that Gerry Brenner, after comparing the manuscript of *A Moveable Feast* with the published text, argued convincingly that Mary Hemingway had made far more significant changes than she admitted. Among these changes he noted her apparent collation and partial creation of Hemingway's preface, suspiciously missing in holograph and lacking Ernest's signature in the typescript copy—a preface that seems to bolster her claim, otherwise undocumented, that he finished the novel in Cuba, in 1960. Furthermore, Brenner argued that the changes she made in Hemingway's typescripts are so significant as to force the conclusion that she, not Hemingway, finished the novel. According to Brenner, she changed chapters around in order to obscure patterns in the novel that involved despotic women, added material that showed Hemingway in a bad light or Hadley, his first wife, in a too favorable light, and added a

chapter, "Birth of a New School," which Hemingway had written in holograph but not included in his "final" typescript. Brenner's criticism is not so much directed against the changes Mrs. Hemingway made, many of which were judicious, but against her duplicity in not admitting the full extent of changes made in an unfinished manuscript which she represented as finished (528-44). Calling the novel as issued "a bastard text," Brenner raised the question of whether Scribner's should issue a revised text representing "more accurately the book that Ernest Hemingway, not his widow, had prepared for publication," a book fit for scholars to use in the classroom as an accurate reflection of Hemingway's intentions (Brenner 529).

Following the commercial success of *A Moveable Feast*, *Islands in the Stream* was published in 1970. Projected as a three-part sea novel to be unified by its protagonist, a painter named Thomas Hudson in a Caribbean setting, it was composed at intervals from 1946 to 1951; in 1951 it turned into a tetralogy from which *The Old Man and the Sea* was spun off and published in 1952. The remaining three parts, more or less complete, were put in a vault in Havana as part of the hoard of unpublished manuscripts Hemingway referred to as his "life insurance policy" (Beegel 4). Having rescued these manuscripts from Cuba in 1961, Mrs. Hemingway decided in the winter of 1969-70 to edit the sea novel with the help of Carlos Baker and Charles Scribner, Jr., a process that led to extensive cutting. Because Hemingway had considered naming Part I, set in Bimini, "The Island and the Stream," Mrs. Hemingway suggested using a variant of that title for the entire work, involving other islands than Bimini—hence the published title, *Islands in the Stream* (Baker 384; Meyers 484).[2]

In her disingenuous note to *Islands in the Stream*, Mrs. Hemingway once again took for granted that changes made in preparing the manuscript for publication were so obviously necessary and yet so minor as to require no detailed accounting; also, as in her note to *Feast*, she made no mention of working with an editor, except insofar as the publisher himself had played a collaborative editorial role with her on the manuscript. I quote here in its entirety her note to the reader:

> Charles Scribner, Jr. and I worked together preparing this book for publication from Ernest's original manuscript. Beyond the routine chores of correcting spelling and punctuation, we made some cuts in the manuscript, I feeling that Ernest would surely have made them himself. We have added nothing to it.

By following, or at least seeming to follow, her stated editorial policy, she and Scribner obtained a trade publication that would sell 100,000 copies in the first three months and be on the best-seller list for half a year, following *A Moveable Feast's* almost equally brilliant commercial success in 1964 (Meyers 484). Perhaps by minimizing in her notes to *Feast* and *Islands* the changes she had made in Hemingway's manuscripts, she was attempting to disarm scholars and critics who might argue that the texts of Hemingway's unfinished manuscripts, if published at all, should not be tampered with by editors but published as written, with appropriate scholarly apparatus to accompany them, as Edmund Wilson had done with Fitzgerald's *The Crack-Up*. At any rate, the effect of her brief note to *Islands* was once again to persuade the innocent reader that one was getting the "true gen," as it flowed from Hemingway's pen.

The reviewers of *Islands* were more divided on the merits of the novel than they had been with *Feast*, but most were glad it had been published, if only for some brilliant, isolated passages in Part I ("Bimini") and for its autobiographical revelation of the aging, disintegrating Hemingway portrayed by his persona in the novel, Thomas Hudson. Rejecting John Barth's view that only a writer's completed work should be published after his death, Edmund Wilson may have spoken for the majority of reviewers when he wrote: "I do not agree with those who have thought it a disservice to Hemingway's memory to publish this uncompleted book." We can't blame Hemingway for its defects, since he didn't choose to publish it, nor can we blame his editors for making it "more coherent if the editing has been done with good judgement." In conclusion, Wilson encouraged Mrs. Hemingway to go ahead and publish more manuscripts (59-62).

John Updike, representing the minority viewpoint, argued that *Islands* needed an introduction beyond the very terse, uninformative note by Mary to the American edition. Mrs. Hemingway should have made clear from what stage of Hemingway's tormented later career the book was salvaged, what its design might have been, and what editorial choices were made in preparing it. "Rather, a gallant wreck of a novel is paraded as

the real thing, as if the public are such fools as to imagine a great writer's ghost is handing down books intact from Heaven." In reality, Updike said, the work consists of fragments crudely unified by the Caribbean setting and the nominal presence of Thomas Hudson (489). Without squarely facing the question of whether *Islands* should have been published at all, Updike, in contrast to Wilson, maintained that once an editor assumes the responsibility of bringing an author's incomplete work before the public, she also incurs a moral obligation to justify its publication, to establish its context in the author's life, and to specify the editorial procedures (not just the principles) followed in bringing it to press. Clearly Updike felt that Mrs. Hemingway had violated the obligation of any reputable editor who makes bold to publish an author's incomplete, posthumous work.

In his brief preface to *The Nick Adams Stories*, the next volume containing Hemingway's previously unpublished fiction, editor Philip Young had nothing to say about the quality of the eight previously unpublished Nick Adams items he included. However, in an article he originally intended to publish as an introduction to this volume, he complained as follows about the publisher's decision to publish every Nick Adams manuscript found, even such trivial pieces as "Crossing the Mississippi" and such rejected, false starts to stories as "Three Shots": "The notion that We Must Have It All—every scrap that turned up and had Nick in it—has prevailed, which is to say that the trade publisher has out-pedanticked the academy" ("Big World" 5). Unable to defend the quality of some of the Nick Adams pieces he had been co-opted into publishing, Young ignored the subject of quality in his three-page preface to the stories, concentrating instead on the book's contribution to our understanding of Nick Adams's character and of Hemingway's life and work.

Young's chronological arrangement of the stories from Nick's boyhood to young manhood, and the addition of eight previously unpublished sketches to the canon, struck a responsive chord with many but by no means all reviewers. Among those who found Young's approach viable and appealing were critics who viewed Nick as a barely disguised representation of young Hemingway. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., for example, wrote: "This is a fascinating collection. The fragmentary nature of the new pieces does not really interfere seriously with one's enjoyment.

What we have here is a more complete view of Hemingway as Nick Adams" (C-6).

Others, like Young himself, were disturbed by the publisher's eagerness to publish anything by Hemingway, regardless of quality or of the author's manifest intentions. Thus John Skow wrote: "There can be no pretense that the fragments are anything but rejects. Judged against the author's other work, none are much better than mediocre, and most are worse than that. They were written, and then written off, at the beginning of Hemingway's career. If he had wanted to change his mind about them, he had 30 or more years to do so" (81-82). Professor Quentin Anderson was even harsher in his indictment of Young's becoming a party to Mrs. Hemingway's and Scribner's latest Hemingway publishing venture, here interpreted as a desperate attempt to pick the carcass clean:

> The publication of *The Nick Adams Stories* is a case of insatiability pushed to the limit of insatiable greed. [Philip] Young has interspersed eight unpublished Nick Adams pieces among those taken from three earlier collections. . . . In two instances [the "lopped-off" ending of "Big Two-Hearted River" and the "rejected opening" of "Indian Camp"] the result is even worse than printing what Hemingway clearly did not wish to bring out; it is an undoing of what the author has done. (15)

In sum, one notes that while some reviewers still thought the vault was yielding treasure, others, on the evidence of the Nick stories published, concluded that the cupboard must be bare.

After waiting more than a decade, Scribner's proceeded in 1986, the year of Mrs. Hemingway's death, to publish a novel based on another unfinished manuscript by Hemingway. This was the work that Young in 1974 described as "a very long and tedious novel called *Garden of Eden*, none of which has yet been thought good enough to print (though Malcolm Cowley, who looked at it, thinks a little of it could be salvaged)" ["Hemingway's Manuscripts" 8].

In a very brief, high-minded publisher's note recalling Mrs. Hemingway's notes to *A Moveable Feast* and *Islands in the Stream*, Scribner's conceded that *The Garden of Eden* was "not in finished form" at the time of Hemingway's death, then gave the following account of the publisher's editorial policy and procedures:

"In preparing the book for publication we have made some cuts in the manuscript and some routine copy-editing corrections. Beyond a very small number of minor interpolations for clarity and consistency, nothing has been added. In every significant respect the work is all the author's." What Scribner's neglected to mention, and what became clear following reviewers' quick consultation of the now open Hemingway manuscript collection, was that editor Tom Jenks had cut the manuscript from 200,000 to 70,000 words, in the process eliminating a subplot and three characters providing an essential counterpoint to the main plot. Also eliminated was any reference to Rodin's *Metamorphosis*, a statue of two androgynous lovers symbolically linking the two plots, serving as the novel's central image of the fall of mankind, and adding a metaphysical dimension to the novel as a modern reenactment of the loss of paradise alluded to in the title but largely ignored in Jenks's surprisingly readable but inauthentic text (Peters 17-18). Perhaps even more disturbing was the omission of Hemingway's "provisional ending" to the novel, an appropriately tragic ending written in May, 1958 when Hemingway thought that "something might happen *before* book could be finished" (Young and Mann 14-15). In this ending the protagonist David Bourne's androgynous sexual experiments with his wife Catherine and his adultery with the new, bisexual girl in their lives, Marita, has led to David's loss of creativity as a writer, to Catherine's madness, and ultimately to a suicide pact between David and Catherine, in case she once again lapses into the madness from which she seems to have partially recovered.

In place of this ending, Jenks inserted a chapter that may have been intended as penultimate, but almost certainly not final, in which David abandons Catherine. Replacing her in his life is Marita, who has apparently given up her lesbian ways in favor of a thoroughly submissive, heterosexual relationship with David, whose extinguished creative powers as a writer once again begin to flourish—a tragicomic ending shockingly at odds with the tragic overtones of the rest of the novel, and especially with Nick's violent death and Barbara's suicide in the omitted counterplot.

Whereas it took three months to sell 100,000 copies of *Islands*, the first printing of 100,000 copies of *The Garden of Eden* sold in a week (Moreland 162). Once again the publisher

had succeeded, with the aid of an editor working behind the scenes, in turning the tangled, confused manuscript of an unfinished Hemingway story into a blockbuster of a novel based on the illusion that although "unfinished in form," it was essentially complete, at least in plot and content, requiring only "some cuts . . . and some routine copy-editing corrections." The editor chosen for this hapless but one hopes lucrative task was Tom Jenks, who at the MLA meeting in 1986 echoed the Publisher's Note that "in every significant respect the work is all the author's." "All I really did," Jenks maintained, "was to cut away the excesses that once removed would let the story show" (Jenks 33). Though he turned the job down twice before reluctantly agreeing to edit the manuscript, Jenks hoped, after finally accepting the assignment, to be able to complete it in decent obscurity, as had been the lot of earlier Scribner's editors of Hemingway. Instead, the novel, and its editing, gave rise to a firestorm of publicity and controversy that blew his cover as one of Scribner's invisible editors, and he himself become a minor celebrity. So disagreeable to Jenks was this unwanted celebrity bordering on notoriety, that although sales of the book were strong, he "wished [it] had not existed or had not fallen to [him]." What he must have found especially painful was the great gulf opening up between what Scribner's had said or implied about the book as still another nearly finished masterpiece by Hemingway, and the reality of its 1500 pages in the Kennedy Library, seventy percent in heavily edited holograph and only thirty percent in "typescripts of various chapters also found in holograph and edited by Hemingway and some other person (probably a typist)." Before Jenks succeeded in making a more or less coherent book out of this jumble, several other editors, including Malcolm Cowley and Charles Scribner, Jr., had attempted the task and failed, for reasons not hard to grasp (Peters 17). Having succeeded in producing from Hemingway's manuscript a commercially successful book for the general reader, "a book that would stand up for a reader who had never heard of Hemingway," Jenks seems to have been genuinely astonished by the emerging critical perception that the reader was not getting pure, unadulterated Hemingway, but getting Hemingway filtered

through Jenks, or as one critic has aptly put it, Hemingway "confected" by Jenks (Jenks 30, 33; Kennedy 206).

As with *Islands,* reviewers, critics and scholars were divided between those who justified Jenks's edition because of the insights it provided into the author's life, and those who attacked it for its excessive cuts and its cavalier violation of Hemingway's intentions, revealed by its various drafts. Thus Stephen Spender, writing in the British *Sunday Telegraph,* summed up the biographical defense of Jenks's editing as follows: "This novel, though fatally flawed, is nevertheless very revealing as a thinly veiled autobiography" (16). Among American reviewers, Barbara Probst Solomon, after comparing Hemingway's manuscript with the published text, was probably most direct in her indictment of Jenks's version: "With all its disfigurements and omissions, its heightening of the trivial and its diminishment of the significant, its vulgarization of the great themes of Hemingway's final years, this volume is a travesty" (31). English reviewer David Holloway was more succinct, referring to Jenks's editing of the book as "more than a hatchet-job; it was a chain-saw massacre" (9).

After the publication of *The Garden of Eden,* the Hemingway cupboard, once referred to by Young as a vault containing inestimable treasure, must have been almost bare of fiction. The proof is that in the 1987 Finca Vigia edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway,* the canon of Hemingway's published short stories was extended by only four, oddly supplemented by three excerpts from unpublished, uncompleted novels. In the words of founding president of the Hemingway Society Paul Smith, the items presented as short stories "were neither intended as stories nor meant to be published—indeed some were never meant to be read" (396). The first two passages from longer works are "A Train Trip" and "The Porter," apparently from "Jimmy Breen, or A New-Slain Knight," a novel begun in 1927 but soon abandoned; the third is from a rejected version of *Islands in the Sun* that was begun in 1946 (Lynn 368; Meyers 483). The fact that Scribner's has seen fit to publish two excerpts from the twenty chapter, 40,000 word manuscript of "Jimmy Breen," far from signifying that we have seen the last of Hemingway's posthumous fiction, may instead signify that the rest of "Jimmy Breen" or some other unpublished manuscript will soon be published. The only certainty is that the end of

Hemingway's posthumously published fiction is not yet in sight, as Tom Jenks wryly indicated by quoting *Newsweek*'s "Predictions for 1987": "The absolutely final bits of Ernest Hemingway's oeuvre will be published. No, there are no more manuscripts lying around, but computer enhancement of Papa's desk blotter will yield a slim volume of miscellaneous jottings such as 'Bear left on Fillmore and go three blocks and it will be good. They are the third house on right and you will know that their directions were fine'" (32).

In retrospect, the emptying of the vault without regard for the author's wishes or for the completeness and quality of the work published, seems to have been all but inevitable. Part of the pressure to publish, to be sure, was engendered by the Hemingway legend itself, and by the interests of heirs and a trade publisher eager to capitalize on this legend. Beyond such obvious considerations was pressure from scholars eager to advance their careers by preparing Hemingway manuscripts for publication, and from biographical critics eager to mine new, published fragments of rejected manuscripts for autobiographical significance. One must also recognize a certain pressure to publish from the admirers of Hemingway's art. Illustrating the triumph of hope over experience, they have convinced themselves despite repeated disappointments that the *next* manuscript to be posthumously published will prove to be a long-lost diamond as big as the Ritz, found in the rubble near the bottom of the vault. At the risk of being accused of tacking a "pious-hope" ending onto my essay, let me quote Jill Neville sourly reviewing *The Garden of Eden* in the *Independent* of February 12, 1987: "There should be a law against rooting around in a writer's desk after his death. He should be buried or burned along with all those honourable experiments that didn't quite jell" (13, quoted from Simmonds 15). Since no such law is apt to be passed, and since, as John Barth noted, "death may not give enough advance notice for putting [a writer's] literary affairs in order" by destroying his unfinished drafts, a celebrated dead writer's only recourse may be what Hemingway's has been—to submit ignominiously to posterity's emptying of the vault till it's bare (Earth quoted by Young and Mann X).

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NOTES

1. In addition to these works of fiction, *The Dangerous Summer,* a non-fiction manuscript describing Hemingway's 1959 summer attending bullfights in Spain, was published in 1985, in a severely cut version; part of the text had been published previously in *Life,* September 4, 12, 19, 1960. Susan Beegel suggests that among the unpublished non-fiction manuscripts, the "African Book" may next be published. It recounts in 850 pages the author's experience as a volunteer ranger "at the Masai game preserve at foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro in late 1953" (Beegel, 4; Young and Mann 6).

   Contrary to his expressed wishes, some of Hemingway's letters were also published, in Baker's edition of 1989 [1981]; *The Complete Poems,* edited in a revised edition by Nicholas Gerogiannis, were published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1992.
2. Oddly enough, though both Jeffrey Meyers and Charles Scribner III have mentioned that Baker worked with Mrs. Hemingway on the book, Baker himself took no credit for editing *Islands* in his 1972 account of how the book came to press (384).

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"THE DARKNESS OF THE WOMEN:" TWO SHORT STORIES BY RUTH SUCKOW

MARY JEAN DEMARR

Though she is best known for her novels about rural and small town Iowa in the 1920s and 1930s, Ruth Suckow was also a prolific writer of short stories, which were published in such reputable magazines as *The Midland, Smart Set, The Century Magazine, The American Mercury, The Bookman, Harper's Monthly Magazine,* and *Scribner's Magazine.* She began, in fact, as a writer of short fiction and concentrated especially heavily in that genre during the 1920s, although she continued to publish short fiction throughout her career.

Suckow's short stories complement her longer works, with many of the same themes, characters, and situations. Her concentration on the lives of women and families appears in works in both forms, and the issues and problems faced by her unpretentious characters are similar in both genres. One dilemma confronting many of her women, especially her young unmarried women, is what to do with their lives, a question often expressed in a conflict between their desires to do something and be somebody on their own and their needs to be nurturing and to find love and tenderness. Such characters as Marjorie in *Odyssey of a Nice Girl* (1925), Cora in the novel of the same name (published 1929), and Georgie in *The Kramer Girls* (1930) are young women who face just such problems—and who resolve them in various ways. However, despite the differences between these characters and their final resolutions of their problems, one conclusion is stark: in Suckow's fiction, talented women are always left unsatisfied, for they cannot fulfill their dreams of independence and self-sufficiency and also have rich personal lives. They must choose, and generally, like Marjorie, they choose domesticity—even while knowing the choice is a betrayal of a

part of themselves. Cora must settle for independence and self sufficiency after her marriage fails, but she is left lonely. Georgie never has the opportunity for marriage and family, and when she is able to pursue her professional dream, she finds that even it does not fulfill her.

Suckow's short fiction is no more hopeful about the fate of modern Iowa women. Here too she sympathetically depicts young women of talents and energies which ultimately will be wasted, young women whose lives will be less than they should. Like Sinclair Lewis's Carol Kennicott, they confront "the darkness of the women" that afflicts wives and mothers and stenographers and "girl college-graduates" (197). For Carol that "darkness" is created by women's "lik[ing] to do things for men" which is "so pitifully deep in us" (356) in conflict with the need to discover "what my work is" (404). That conflict confronts characters in varied ways; the naturally conventionally "feminine" woman must face it differently from the "mannish" type and the bright and talented young woman differently from her less gifted sister.

Several of Suckow's short stories present this conflict quite directly in terms of female independence and self sufficiency. The woman who does not meet her society's expectations of feminine role-playing is challenged by the woman's dilemma in a very particular way. The short story most overtly characterizing the independent woman is "A Great Mollie," which Andrews points out was also one of Suckow's personal favorites (*Omnibus* xiii). Initially published under the revealing title, "Strong as a Man" in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in April, 1929, it has been reprinted in *Children and Older People* (1931), in *Carry-Over* (1936), and in *A Ruth Suckow Omnibus* (1988).

A clear example of her adherence to the "slice of life" theory of short fiction, this tale recounts the activities of a single day on which Mollie Schumacher, a door-to-door underwear salesperson, calls upon Frank and Mate Bell, a farm couple, in order to make a delivery and ends up having dinner and spending the afternoon with them. In the course of the visit, she helps them with a number of chores and reveals her varied competences in a number of ways: removing a splinter from the paw of a dog which had been limping for some time, gathering eggs for Mate, tinkering with Frank on an old cider press, and so on. Her zest

for life is abundantly apparent in her comradeship with her friends, in her sympathy for the animals about the farm, in her energy at and delight in various farm tasks. The very joy with which she gives up all the selling calls she had intended to make that afternoon indicates her enthusiasm; as Suckow says, "She threw away her afternoon with splendid recklessness" (*Omnibus* 225). Exulting in physical strength and energy as well as in a sensitive appreciation for beauty, Mollie is an interesting character who exemplifies familiar stereotypes but combines them with unexpected traits that make her come truly alive.

The story is rife with comments on Mollie's mannishness; like Georgie in *The Kramer Girls*, she is defined primarily by her masculine qualities, though unlike Georgie she is also defined by that zest for life already mentioned (Georgie's other salient characteristics are her deep love for her younger sister and the ambition to make something of her life that leads her finally to become a chiropractor). Kissane suggests that Suckow "deliberately makes Mollie as mannish as possible in order to show that all women have that quality of femininity at the very heart of their being" (89). In her first conversation with Mate, Mollie tells her friend how she had just helped a stranded motorist get his automobile going again: her more conventionally womanly friend says, "'You ought to have been a man,' . . . admiring, yet disapproving" (212). And a bit later, Frank thinks, "She was a strong woman, all right, and a mighty capable one in a lot of ways, about as much so as a man" (218). These and other comments on Mollie's interests, capabilities, and behavior strongly emphasize qualities unconventional to her sex which make her an oddity in her time and place.

But Suckow indicates that mannishness and womanliness are not necessarily to be equated with competence and incompetence, respectively; an important passage analyzes Mate's differences from Mollie: Mate

> had always disapproved of Mollie for not thinking more about her clothes, although—when they were off together after nuts or elderberries—she depended upon Mollie to shake the trees and find a way of getting over fences. Mate herself had never learned to drive their car and had to wait to go to town until Frank could take her. She regarded the car as beyond both her management and her comprehension, just as she did some of the farm implements—and this although she had been brought up on a farm, had known how to milk since she was an infant, and would have no help with either her stove or her washing machine. (213)

As this happy afternoon is described, we learn a bit about Mollie's life and her dreams. Her prosaic life consists of watching over the adult brother and sister for whom she feels responsible (unnecessarily, according to Frank and Mate) and of making her rounds selling union suits and corselettes to farmers and their wives. She yearns for a richer life, however, and we learn that she has from time to time adopted unexpected goals. She has pursued schemes for growing violets, for establishing a goldfish farm, and for breeding skunks for their fur. Frank, presumably speaking for his practical community, finds these ideas ludicrous and is especially amused by the idea of raising skunks (219). Mate, on the other hand, doesn't find Mollie's ideas in the least funny:

> Mollie's schemes neither impressed her nor gave her any amusement. If Mollie had any real sense about things, she'd marry some farmer around here—a widower, somebody who needed a good, strong wife and would be glad to have her . . . —or else she'd make up her mind to settle down where she was . . . and attend to things at home. (19)

Here as elsewhere Mate's attitudes epitomize the narrowing of female goals imposed by the codes of this society and assumed to be inherent in the female lot.

Now, we learn, Mollie has a new idea which differs from the others in two important respects: it would take her away from her home in White Oak and it seems to have prospects of success. She has received an offer of a business partnership in Chicago, a beauty parlor for which a friend has a financial backer. And Mollie seems inclined to grasp the opportunity. But the woman's dilemma is ever-present. Immediately after she expresses "vigorously" her new goal, a "warm mist filled her dark eyes" as she mentions her concern about leaving her brother and sister (222). The conversation ends inconclusively, and Mollie and her friends continue the activities which fill their time together—gathering eggs, tinkering with the cider press, and so on.

When she departs, after several hours, the Bells are left to discuss her and her life. Frank at first, knowing Mollie's energy, enthusiasm, and strength as well as her contempt for those afraid of change, is sure she will leave. But Mate, more perceptive than he, simply says that Mollie will not go. Pressed for a reason, she simply repeats, "Because I know she won't" (229). And Frank remembers Mollie's moment of nearly crying and appears to accept Mate's wisdom. Or perhaps he simply retreats to the stereotypes with which he and Mate are comfortable. "Yes, sir, Mollie was a woman!" he thinks.

> After all, she was unaccountable. She could do anything for anybody but herself. Then Frank said, as if in defense of his own statements:
>
> "Well, anyway, Mollie gets a darned good time out of it!"
>
> Mate still had her look of small, calm, satisfied wisdom. (229-230)

The ending of the story thus undercuts Mollie's independence. Though the "slice of life" approach precludes giving the readers a definitive conclusion, it seems clear that the Bells, in their acceptance of the basic womanliness which will keep Mollie trapped in a life she scorns even while she finds zest in its details, speak for Suckow. As for many other Suckow women, Mollie's yearning for independence, to do something in life, to make experience count for something, must yield to nurturing qualities and, perhaps more disturbing, to an inability to act—ultimately, perhaps, to cowardice.

The tone of the story's ending supports this conclusion. Just after the brief discussion in which Frank and Mate agree that Mollie will not break free, the narration pulls back and presents an overview of the scene:

> The last far-away rattle and hum of [Mollie's] car was lost, now, in the hugeness of the evening, and the crickets took up the sound in a thin, shrill, minor chorus. (230)

That "minor chorus" of the crickets sums up Mollie and her life. She may be, as Frank has said, a "great Mollie" (229), but her energy, her enthusiasm, her sensitivity, her zest for life, her friendliness—all the wonderful qualities that make her a good friend to her neighbors and an appealing character—will not

allow her to strive to make what she impetuously wishes to of her life. Like other Suckow female characters, she will settle for what she knows and for what is safe.

A more complex story about a very different woman of independence is "Susan and the Doctor," first published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in December, 1929, and reprinted in *Children and Older People* and in *A Ruth Suckow Omnibus*. Andrews comments of this story that it has "a touch of the meretricious," an odd comment considering the sympathy with which the protagonist is depicted and the discretion with which the sexual aspects of the story are narrated; his comment does, however, suggest something of the complexity of the central character and of the story's relative sexual frankness for its time.

Susan's independence is quite unlike Mollie's. She is a successful businesswoman, an exemplary employee of the bank, dressed and groomed impeccably, and financially self-sufficient. However, to the town, she is defined simply by the fact of her long-standing affair with "the Doctor." People cannot look at her, cannot see her capably doing her job or observe her attractiveness, without immediately thinking of the Doctor and the affair. In fact, much as in a poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson or a story by William Faulkner, the town itself as observer becomes an important force, almost a character.

The plot is little more complicated than that of "A Great Mollie." Susan and the Doctor are deeply engrossed in an affair which cannot lead to marriage because he is responsible for a "not quite right aunt" and an invalid mother (9). The opening sentences of the story immediately shadow her reputation: Susan had "started going with the boys early. Too early" (*Omnibus* 1). We learn that she is the one who had initiated the relationship with the Doctor (11), adding to that shadow. But these are the only real doubts cast on her probity. We see the Doctor and Susan together, we discover her passion and tenderness for him and her sometimes desperate lack of fulfillment because of the impossibility of marriage. Then his mother dies, and for a time there seems a chance of their marrying. But he appears to procrastinate and eventually, having taken up with another woman, he breaks with her. Susan is left with nothing, but forever after the townspeople, seeing her, will think of the long affair with the Doctor.

The Doctor is never given a name, always being referred to simply by his professional title. He does, however, receive a fair degree of not-unkindly characterization, although most of his principle actions in the story are fairly despicable: breaking cruelly with Susan and institutionalizing his aunt so he can marry his new love. But it is Susan who carries the story; it is her development and change and the townspeople's inability to alter their view of her that are crucial. And if he is not given a name, she is given little background in the town—except for her romantic history. We learn that her mother died and that her father had been an absentee parent. She lives in two rooms with a Mrs. Calverton, who occasionally speaks for the community, but little else of her private life is depicted. Even for Susan herself, the affair "obscured the rest of her life" (2). Like the town, readers can see Susan only in connection with her affair.

Susan, we are told, had always been attractive and fun-loving; not only had she "gone with the boys" early, but she had dated a number of men in the town. That any of these relationships became sexual is doubtful, and none of them touched her very deeply. She valued her independence, and she progressed steadily in her career at the bank by hard and efficient work. But the affair with the Doctor, entered on almost as a lark, by making an excuse to consult him at his office, changed her. It drew out of her reserves of feeling, of tenderness, she had not known she had.

Both Susan and the Doctor are changed by the affair, and his change, caused by her, also influences her in ironic ways. Susan's change, in fact, from brittle and fun-loving career woman to obsessed mistress is not much different from the transformation that overcomes Cora and leads her to a disastrous marriage. For Susan, the affair demonstrates

> how the sullen humors, the regal gloom, and lordly gayety, the insistent warmth of his intimate presence could break into her shining hardness: and how at last her cool strength, at the appeal of his sudden childishness, could diffuse into a passion of tenderness. She had no idea when she started deftly, and with a subtly cool speculation, to draw him to her, that the thing could ever be real—that he would want more of her, and that she would give it, with the future—always so clear to Susan—lost in haze. (10)

Her treasured independence is gone, and with it goes much of her contentment. But she gives him a new contentment, and from this irony comes her anger. She has "made him a different person from the solitary man she had passed upon the street" (13). In the process,

> he had slowly bound her to him and taken her freedom with her love By the giving of a free gift she had bound herself. But that she, Susan, should be conquered and held at last by tenderness!—what an amazing overturning of nature and fate (12).

His situation has been improved by their affair: he is more open and happier, less turned in upon himself, less brooding upon his situation with his mother and aunt, and he is even making money (13). Susan has grown into a nurturing, a tenderness, a passion, that had seemed foreign to her nature. So for both, the affair would appear to be an enriching, even ennobling bond.

But nothing is ever that simple in Suckow's world. Susan, "who had been the free one, the incalculable one, at first" (12), loses the independence she had so valued, and she chafes bitterly at the fact that the Doctor will not commit himself to her. They quarrel sometimes, and Susan feels bereft and alienated when he leaves her after their love-making, bitterly angry that "her own need must be sacrificed to his" (7). The strains in their relationship are caused not just by its being illicit but also by the very nature of the differing needs of the two people involved.

Mrs. Calverton, Susan's landlady and a spokesperson for the town, had tried to warn Susan, with a wisdom, the story seems to say, that Susan cannot understand, a wisdom not much different from Mate's sturdy practicality in its implications if not in its reasoning. Before the affair began, when Susan was still seeing a variety of men, Mrs. Calverton had told her that her then unspecified yearnings were caused by the fact that she had never been in love: "You'll see some day!" she adds, much to Susan's amusement. Suckow goes on, however, to say that "Superior as she felt, what Mrs. Calverton had said—her tone and her look of quiet, mysterious knowledge recurred sometimes to Susan: and again she felt that restlessness" (9). It is shortly after this conversation that she enters the affair with the Doctor. And when the affair ends, she remembers those words of her landlady. Love, in Suckow's Iowa, is for women both an enchantment and a trap.

The presence of the townspeople is felt increasingly as the story moves to its inevitable ending. "They" assume that the pair will marry (16), but an unexpected change occurs. The Doctor does not immediately propose, and an unexplained and unexpressed estrangement occurs. Suddenly, "Susan was no longer a glittering fixture to the town" (18): she and they realize that she is no longer in the flush of youth, and "They were thinking . . . 'I wonder if he will marry her!'" (19). And then, "no one was really surprised when he started going with another girl" (19). The pathetic ending of the affair is largely traced through these observations by the town. While the actual scene of break-up is directly presented in an objective narrative voice, the town's commentary quickly resumes. "The whole town, of course, knew that the affair—whatever it had been—was over. They blamed the Doctor and felt sorry for Susan, but without much conviction" (25). A distinction is made between the attitudes of the men, "who were indignant" (25), and the women, particularly the "older women who had known Susan's mother" and "were unhappy to see that the long affair, which they had regarded so fearfully and about which they had tried to give their warnings, had come to nothing" (25-6). The town's concern, then, is sympathetic if somewhat detached.

The pathos of the story's conclusion emphasizes two points: Susan's loneliness and the townspeople's wonderment. Like Mollie, Susan is doomed to remain unfulfilled. The two, of course, are very different. Mollie apparently never had any real relationships outside of her family; for her the nurturing qualities assumed to be peculiarly womanly are a trap which keeps her from seeking fulfillment through work. For Susan a long affair teaches her the impossibility of fulfillment through her work and leaves her "sucked . . . dry" (28).

And sadly the town, bound to its gender stereotypes, continues to distinguish between Susan and the Doctor. The affair apparently has never consumed their attitude toward him and it will not do so now, unlike the fate it metes out to Susan. "People took him as he was. But as long as she lived in this town, they would never look at Susan without thinking of the Doctor" (28).

These two stories present very different types of independent women and very different aspects of the dilemma of Suckow's Iowa women. And yet the conclusions the stories come to are

depressingly similar. No matter how strong, talented, energetic, a woman is, the pull of domesticity—the need for a nest and for people to take care of—is so strong that independence is not enough. Self-sufficiency, perhaps, might seem more possible, yet it also fails to overcome the woman's need for homing. Thus Suckow's independent women are left lonely and yearning. Yet nesting, too, fails to create fulfillment; the experiences of Georgie in *The Kramer Girls* and especially Cora in the novel named after her are particularly instructive here. Even more telling in the novels is the history of Marjorie, in *Odyssey of a Nice Girl.* Suckow's women attempt to find their work and they search for love, but almost universally they finally succumb to alienation, to a dissatisfaction with their lot which they do not understand and which they are able to articulate only vaguely.

But there is a subtext here. The cause of the conflict in the women's psyche is never overtly addressed; it simply seems to be assumed as part of their nature—to be thinking, feeling human beings with strength and energy and ambition, on the one hand, and to be domestic creatures who need love, tenderness, responsibility, who need in short to be nurturing, on the other. But there are suggestions of a cause beyond an assumed inherently "feminine" nature: and here the emphasis on the townspeople in "Susan and the Doctor" becomes instructive. Perhaps the dilemma is one externally imposed upon individuals with full human capabilities who happen to be women, imposed by the assumptions of their society. Why else the insistence in "Susan and the Doctor" on the differing ways in which the affair affects the town's views of Susan and of her lover? Suckow does not usually overtly emphasize the power or the nature of public opinion, but she often subtly dramatizes the effects on young women of societal assumptions about who they are and what they may become. Whether Suckow herself was conscious of this subtext seems doubtful, but she was too fine an artist not to depict fully and sympathetically her characters. And in the process, she revealed more about the forces controlling their destinies than she may have known.

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A JEW FROM EAST JESUS: THE YIDDISHKEIT OF NELSON ALGREN

JAMES A. LEWIN

> "Kippel's players were Jews and this was a Jew—yet one who didn't somehow belong. They sensed a renegade."
> (*Man* 248)

In *Who Lost an American?*, Nelson Algren tells the parable of the Jew from East Jesus who wandered into town on a partly-cloudy afternoon only to find a long line of local people waiting to stone a local prostitute. Every ordinary citizen was holding a stone in one hand as a personal ticket to the great event, but the man at the front had "a housebrick in either hand. He was *loaded*" (260). When the "little Jew" asked how Mr. First-in-Line managed to obtain "two tickets while the other sports have only one" he was informed that such privilege is based on the fact of being a newspaper columnist. The Jew from East Jesus then proceeded to go and get "two two-by-fours nailed crosswise" and bang Mr. First-in-Line upside his first-in-line head. Then he announced to the others still in line that there would be "No rainchecks" on that fair day (261). That same evening, when the provincial "Governor" called in his "Chief Scorekeeper" to check on the scheduled stoning, he was surprised to hear the results;

> "Called off" the C.S. had to break the bad news, "a Jew from East Jesus broke it up with two two-by-fours nailed crosswise."
>
> The Governor stroked his beard, studying the Chief Scorekeeper.
>
> "Keep an eye on that fellow," he decided at last. "If the sonofabitch ever learns to write, he'll be dangerous." (262)

Nelson Algren concealed his Jewishness behind a Swedish-American family name. His paternal grandfather, the original

Nels Ahlgren, was still an eighteen-year old growing up in mid-nineteenth century Stockholm, when he "found a cache of Hebrew prayer books among his dead father's possessions" and, evidently, converted to Judaism on the spot (Drew 11). Since there was little opportunity to get a start in life for a Jew in Sweden, he emigrated to the United States under the name of Isaac Ben Abraham and found it was not much easier to get a start in life for a Jew in Minnesota. He tried for a while to make it as a fur trader but merely became a footnote to history when his trading post was burned out by Indians in their last raid east of the Mississippi. After that, Algren's grandfather "drifted to Chicago" where he met his bride, "a German-Jewish servant girl named Yetta Stur." After they were married, the couple set up a country store in Black Oak, Indiana. That worked out about as well as the trading post in Minnesota. Following an extended detour to San Francisco, where Algren's father was born in 1868, the original Nels Ahlgren and his family embarked on an early pre-Zionist pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Drew 11). It was none other than this picaresque Jewish-Swedish hybrid who was author Nelson Algren's namesake and spritual role-model.

The old man was a fanatic. As a convert, Algren's grandfather was more zealous than the vast majority of even the most orthodox believers and felt sincerely outraged to find so many Jews utterly lax in their religious observance. He became a community nag and the Jews of San Francisco, reportedly, were somewhat relieved when he and his small family got on a ship in 1870 bound for the Holy Land. In Jerusalem, Algren's grandfather soon became the head of a house-full of true seekers and philosophers like himself. The work involved in keeping these unemployed prophets in the manner to which they had become accustomed eventually wore out his wife, who turned for help to the American consulate.

Having begged the passage money, Algren's grandmother apparently didn't have the heart to leave the old man behind, and so they all got on the ship to America. When, however, Nels Ahlgren a.k.a. Isaac Ben Abraham saw "the consulate's currency engraved with Washington's head, he quoted the biblical injunction 'Thou shallt make no graven image' and threw the money overboard" and the family would have been left without one red cent except that the "other passengers took up

a collection" which the old man was never allowed to get near (Cox and Chatterton 18). In his later years, Algren's grandfather evidently "abandoned Judaism for socialism and traveled the world, a sort of mercenary missionary who'd adopt any faith that would send him somewhere and pay his expenses" (Drew 12). Maintaining a close identification with this Wandering Jew, Algren would wonder aloud "Can pseudo-intellectualism be inherited?" Finally, according to the author, his grandfather concluded that " 'there is no religion, no truth. It is all nothing' " (quoted in Cox and Chatterton 18).

Algren was indubitably a Jew by birth. Algren's father, a quiet man who worked as a mechanic for the Yellow Cab Company, married a woman named Goldie Kalisher who came from a good Americanized German-Jewish home where German was spoken and Yiddish scorned (Cox and Chatterton 18-19). As a child, however, Algren seems to have had little or nothing in the way of Jewish upbringing. Instead, he faithfully attended the local Congregationalist Sunday school.

> My mother didn't mind my coming back from Sunday school and telling her stories about Christ that I had learned. The old man would say, "Oh, that son-of-a-bitch—He gave us nothing but trouble—He caused all our wars—lay off that." He just didn't want to bother, you know. And then my mother would say. "Well, he ought to go and learn something." And I wanted to go there. It was a Protestant school in an Irish and Protestant neighborhood. My mother sent me there because she didn't like the Irish. (Donohue 19)

Like so many other Jewish-born Americans of his generation, Algren seems to have felt that his assignment was to become fully assimilated in American society. The initiation into manhood for him was not the traditional Bar Mitzvah but another kind of ceremony, namely saving his nickels earned by running errands for the iceman in order to buy his first pair of long pants, required to be accepted as a self-respecting player at the tables of the poolroom in Albany Park (Drew 19). He graduated in 1927 from Hibbard (now Roosevelt) High School, where he was most remembered as the class clown, and received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne in 1931. In college, he experienced a humanistic conversion through the works of, among others,

Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Lord Byron, Percy B. Shelley, John Keats and Shakespeare. In the process his sense of identification with his namesake the Jewish-Socialist of Swedish origin became complete. " '[I]t dawned on me: I was him' " (qtd. in Cox and Chatterton 20).

Following this insight, as a sophomore stoic, Algren instituted for himself a very severe ascetic discipline and fought fitfully with the fun-loving comedic side of himself. "Living on this plane" of strict moral self-control," he later explained, "when you do fall off, you do a sort of Jekyll and Hyde thing" and lose all sense of measure (qtd. in Donohue 30). Both the highly disciplined artist and social critic, as well as the Rabalesian self-mocker, contrasting elements of Algren's writing as well as his personality, seemed to come in a direct line from his long lost, but not forgotten, paternal grandfather. For Algren, this grandfatherly influence developed as a vaguely Jewish-slash-socialistic spirit of humanistic skepticism by which he set his ideological compass throughout his life.

Algren's clearest statement on the issue of Jewish identity comes from his first published story "So Help Me" which was written with the encouragement of Murray Gitlin who ran the Writers' Circle under the auspices of the Jewish People's Institute on Douglas Boulevard. Curiously enough, this early effort was also the only direct treatment Algren made of the issue of anti-Semitism. Based heavily on his own experiences on the road, it is told in the voice of an illiterate named Homer trying to put all the blame on his travelling partner Luther for the semi-accidental killing of the "Jew-kid" named David whom the two con-men have been taking advantage of from the time they meet him. The story is not so much a protest against anti-Semitism as a diagnosis of it as a symptom of an even deeper malaise of lies and violence and ingrained irresponsiblity, presented as the underlying fabric of American society.

In his novels, the minor Jewish characters are usually on the outer fringes, the lowest hells, embodying such ultimate victimization and harmlessness that they have become almost saintly. Perhaps the best example of this ineffectual Jewish holiness is the "little Jew called Snipes" (166) in *Never Come Morning* who tends to the coal stove in Mama Tomek's whore house during fall and winter and who, when sent, runs out "without

knowledge of evil" to pick up the heroin to which Mama Tomek is addicted and who also patiently listens, over and over again, to Mama Tomek's whispered confession of her life story which she confides only in him.

> His feet did not quite reach the floor, and his shapeless, colorless face was shadowed by an oversize derby into which he had pinned, buttoned, hooked and tied a dozen badges, buttons and pins: a milk-driver's union button for 1931 that Bruno had given him, a red-white-and-blue button with a picture of Figura, candidate for alderman of the 26th ward in '36, upon it, and one which read around its edge: *A Big Brother to the Poor.* The rest were too rusted to read. (179)

Eventually, we learn Snipes suffered shell-shock during World War One and, then, lost whatever shreds of sanity which he may have still maintained after the war, while serving a four year sentence in the county workhouse. As he appears in the book, Snipes is a bridge between ordinary reality and the unconscious because he "failed to distinguish between his dreams and reality" (248). Symbolically, Snipes is the spiritual child which can never be born from the doomed love of Bruno "Lefty" Bicek and "the Duchess" Steffi R. Finally, Snipes achieves a kind of apotheosis as the human sacrifice to the ingrained superstition and anti-Semitism of the barber Bonifacy who solemnly warns the younger gangsters, in Polish, that " 'When the thunder kills a devil . . . then a devil kills a Jew" (3). Snipes the Jew embodies an innocence which can never be lost because it has suffered so much and been so outraged and so defiled that it has returned to utter purity and utter helplessness.

A more ambiguous kind of Jewishness is represented in *The Man with the Golden Arm* by the side-kick of Frankie Machine who identifies himself in the police line-up as Sparrow Saltskin but admits he is also known as Solly: "Account I'm half Hebe" while Frankie corrects him "Half Hebe 'n half crazy" (5). Solly Saltskin again embodies the innocence of the utterly incompetent, yet he strives, in his own pathetic way, for acceptance in the underworld of hustlers and petty criminals. His main claim to fame is his ability to steal dogs and sell them as strays. Then he graduates, with Frankie's help, to become the door-keeper for the back-room poker game where Frankie Machine earns his living dealing cards. Just as Frankie is known as Dealer,

Solly prides himself on his role as Steerer until he is caught in the web of coincidence that forces him to betray his only friend. Threatened with mandatory life imprisonment as an habitual criminal, Solly serves both as comic foil and tragic disciple to the novel's protagonist. It is not so much Solly's Jewishness that makes him distinctive as his refusal to be defined by that Jewishness.

But, like Algren himself, Solly "Sparrow" Saltskin was a Jew all the same. As Algren explains in a narrative aside, traditionally, Jewish fighters and gamblers have always been counterpunchers, "hoarding their strength, their cunning and their cards for the single opening as though one opening were all that were granted a man in one lifetime." The Jews had been forced to learn "the knowledge of the long-hunted" through bitter historical experience: "For the hunter there was always another day. When the hunted lost they lost for keeps." As a result, Jewish gamblers "had to win every day, they had to win tonight, tomorrow and forever" (248).

Polish gamblers, by contrast, "shoved the law of averages off the table and chased the longest possible chance down fantastic myriad ways" tempting fate and enjoying the dangers "of having had the brassbound nerve to play a chance that long" while playing, on borrowed money, "like men who never lost a round; though they might have been losing steadily for a month" (249):

> The Jews recalled last year's losses and forgot this hand's winnings. The Poles played the game for its own sake, to kill the monotony of their lives. . . . The Jew knew that the moment he felt he could afford to lose he would begin losing till the bottom of the world fell through and he himself went through the hole. It was more fun being a Polish gambler; it was safer to be a Jewish one. (249)

In his writing and in his life, Algren wanted to be a Polish, not a Jewish, gambler. He loved the large gesture, the longshot, the unromantic losers of the underworld and the unredeemed lumpenproletariat. In Algren's America, to be born a Jew is a misfortune, but it is not the only misfortune, certainly not a case for special pleading. There are other greater and more tragic misfortunes in the American context. And to be Jewish, for Algren, is to identify with the universal fate of humanity.

One way of approaching Algren's hidden Jewish identity is in terms of the non-Jewish Jewishness as defined by Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher associates his own sincere Trotskyism with the great heretic of the Talmud, Akher, about whom Deutscher first read as a small child in cheder: "The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. You may, if you like, see Akher as a prototype of those great revolutionaries of modern thought: Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud" (26). Deutscher credits Spinoza with identifying "the cardinal contradiction in Judaism, the contradiction between the monotheistic and universal God and the setting in which that God appears in the Jewish religion—as a God attached to one people only; the contradiction between the universal God and his 'chosen people'" (28). Thus, for Spinoza, "God ceased to be Jewish" (30). Writing from his own Marxist-Trotskyite viewpoint, Deutscher wants to find a tradition, from Spinoza to Freud, based on "the ultimate solidarity of man" (36). Yet, of all his pantheon of great Jewish heretics, only the poet Heinrich Heine, Deutscher admits reluctantly, really felt the inherent tragedy of the European Jews (37). Marx, Freud and the others went along spinning their theories as if oblivious of the Angel of Death standing over them. To avoid another, potentially far greater holocaust, Deutscher argues, all the peoples of the world must "find their way back to the moral and political heritage that the genius of the Jews who have gone beyond Jewry has left us—the message of universal human emancipation" (41).

For there have always been two related yet distinct schools of traditional Judaism, as demonstrated by the Holy Scriptures. On the one hand, there is the cult of Temple sacrifice led by the priestly caste for the sake of the upright citizens of the ancient Jewish commonwealth. On the other hand, however, there is the voice of the prophetic scourge of established society, crying out against the smug complacency which ignores the suffering of the outcasts beyond the borders of respectable normalcy. It is for the rights of the widows and orphans, the downtrodden and the strangers in their midst, that the Old Testament prophets cry out for justice. Intentionally following the mold of these angry voices, Algren also championed the untouchables, the disreputable, the vulnerable and the rejects of society.

It is only as the victim that the Jewish identity, as such, interests Algren the writer. But, rather than focusing on the Jewish question, Algren developed his critique of the American social order as perceived from the point of view of the dispossessed and the unemployed, the con-artist and the bum. He was not interested in Jewish victimology, as such, but in victimology in its broadest scope, as all-American as the Black Sox Scandal of 1919 and as pervasive as police corruption. Algren was never an orthodox anything, whether as Jew, Communist, or member of the so-called literary establishment, and he consistently defied any efforts to define him. He followed the path of his Jewish origins with the puzzlement of a sign he once saw on a door in Greeenwich Village reading: "Non-conformist's Meeting at 8:30 - Be On Time" (Donohue vi).

Bettina Drew describes Algren's refusal to be categorized as a Jewish writer in terms of his rebellion against the conformist pressures of the Eisenhower era when the academic literary establishment had caved in to the McCarthyite political pressures calling for official loyalty oaths for university professors. Algren embodied a living, open challenge to the hegemony of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Furthermore, Algren represented the literary antithesis to the reigning New Critics who emphasized formalist interpretations and wished to exclude discussions of ideology from purely literary analysis:

> seeing literature as something removed from the turbulence of life, above social and historical forces. Their orientation was white, European, and elitist; they searched for imagery, symbolism, secret codes. Algren believed that, in its concern for defined symbols and easy patterns, American criticism ". . . mistook the uses of literature for literature." (Drew 293)

As his biographer Bettina Drew recounts, his anti-academic bias sometimes blended into an animus against the specifically Jewish literary in-crowd:

> He particularly loathed Alfred Kazin, who had trashed *Wild Side* and whom he dubbed Elvis Zircon, the Footnote King. Over dinner in New York, Kazin had apparently questioned his ancestry. "I don't feel I'm any closer to being Jewish than I am to being a Viking," he wrote. . . . "and I resented the period of cross-questioning by people using the tone that, if I give the

> right answers I can still get in. If Elvis and his old lady are Chosen People, deal around me." (Drew 293-4)

Algren's Judaism was anti-establishment prophetic Judaism, the non-Jewish Judaism for all peoples of the world, not just for an inner circle of the Jewishly correct.

Algren's unique brand of Jewish-Socialism owed a clear debt to the observations of injustice recorded by British tourist William T. Stead who, in 1894, wrote and published *If Christ Came to Chicago*, detailing the apocalyptic social ills of the Chicago of one hundred years ago. If Jesus had visited Chicago in the year after the Columbian Exposition of 1893 he would have found, according to Stead, streets filled with wandering armies of homeless vagrants while the privilged few lived in their millionaire's mansions on Prairie Avenue, just a stone's throw from the Levee area which depended heavily on its infamous saloons and wide-open prostitution and, further north, a large part of the central city devoted almost entirely to gambling. Stead portrays a metropolis so evil that the most virtuous and upright "citizens have forgotten the existence of any moral law apart from that which is embodied in the state or municipal legislation" (99). Furthermore, even that minimal level of civic righteousness had been so systematically corrupted, Stead opines, that nothing and nobody remained except the cop on the beat and the hack politician of the big city machine to "remind men that they are members of one another and are united by common interests and in common concerns" (128).

Not only did Algren adopt the underlying argument, he even puts Stead's words into the mouth of a defrocked priest, standing in a police line-up, accused of exploiting the institutional respectability of his "smudged clerical collar" to cash phony checks. When the captain asks the reason he was defrocked, the fugitive preacher answers: "Because I believe we are all members of one another" (*Man* 198). The fact that the captain cannot understand this cryptic reply is the key to its significance. It expresses the truth that no dominant society has ever yet been able to comprehend, the messianic vision of social equality which developed out of prophetic Judaism and became the basis of Christian theology and of the American belief in democracy defined not as the lowest common denominator nor as merely

the lesser of two evils but finding a positive spiritual value in its own stubborn refusal to be put into any pre-determined category. It was within this universal tradition that Algren presented himself, *not* as an American-Jewish or Jewish-American but purely as an American writer working in a radical humanist style of social criticism whose origins may be traced back to the ancient Jewish prophetic tradition:

> He has told thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love true loyalty, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

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JAMES WRIGHT AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT OF PLACE

WILLIAM BARILLAS

> . . . one day the demons of America must be placated, the ghosts must be appeased, the Spirit of Place atoned for. Then the true passionate love for American soil will appear. As yet, there is too much menace in the landscape.
>
> D. H. Lawrence

> This field is the beginning of my native land,
> This place of skull where I hear myself weeping.[1]
>
> James Wright

Among Midwestern poets most attuned to the region's landscape was James Wright (1927-1980), whom critic Bonnie Costello has called an "elegiac poet of place" (221). Born and raised in the industrial city of Martins Ferry, Ohio, Wright was a self-described "jaded pastoralist" (328) who saw America from the perspective of his native Ohio Valley as "rifted paradise" (3)—a beautiful place significantly degraded by human inhabitation and industry. The rift in the American pastoral ideal derives in part from the legacy of conquest: the national "soul history" that Michigan author Jim Harrison describes as stained "with the blood of over two hundred Native American civilizations we destroyed. . . ." (300). Given Wright's localism and spirituality of nature and landscape, it is natural that American Indians, the continent's original inhabitants, would arise as a theme in his poetry. Like Harrison, Theodore Roethke, and other poets publishing major work during the 1960s, Wright derived inspiration from Native American culture in his quest for an authentically American literary localism.

Wright was fond of D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature,* particularly the chapter on "The Spirit of Place," which he considered "a very beautiful essay:"

> There is such a genius of place, a presence, and because there is, people's feelings accumulate about it. You can share in that feeling when you become aware of particular historical events and the significance of monuments and so on. (*Collected Prose* 194)

Monuments do in fact figure significantly in Wright's poetry, especially graves of notable (or notorious) people, such as George Doty, whom the State of Ohio executed for the rape and murder of a girl. "At the Executed Murderer's Grave," the second of two poems about Doty, is a signature piece among Wright's early poems because of its treatment of a particular Midwestern location and its theme of guilt and malice as universal human traits. While the poem's sense of place and guilt is personal and mythic rather than historical, Wright declares himself "sick of lies" and ready "to face the past," having rejected escape into facile literary pastoralism:

> It does no good to woo the grass, to veil
> The quicklime hole of a man's defeat and shame.
> Nature-lovers are dead. To hell with them.
> I kick the clods away, and speak my name. (82-3)

In the 1960s, Wright's poetry increasingly assumed this skepticism about pastoralism and the possibility of transcendental experience in nature. Romantic epiphanies of place comparable to Emerson's experience in "Nature" on "a bare common" of becoming "a transparent eye-ball . . . part or particle of God" (10) do occur in Wright's work, but only after psychic struggle to overcome alienation from nature. History, represented by certain events, personages, and monuments, is one significant obstacle to the unity with nature and landscape for which Wright (like Emerson) strives.

Wright's *The Branch Will Not Break* (1963) is generally viewed as the book in which he found his true voice—a colloquial lyricism addressing concerns of place and person, history and spirit. Under the influence of his friend, poet and critic Robert Bly, Wright adopted a largely free verse style partly derived from French, German, and Spanish poetry. While the book concludes with transcendental experiences of the Minnesota prairie, most of the poems in the beginning of the book present the natural world—mainly in Ohio—as frightening, disrupted by human activity, and spiritually inaccessible. In the

book's first poem, "As I Step over a Puddle at the End of Winter, I Think of an Ancient Chinese Governor," Wright announces his theme as "the whole loneliness / Of the Midwest" (119). Thus his poems depict women "dancing around a fire / By a pond of creosote and waste water from the river / In the dank fog of Ohio" (123) and "animals that our fathers killed in America" that "stared about wildly" (123). Those animals, like the "Indian ponies" of "The Blessing" (one of the book's concluding pieces and Wright's best loved poem), lend a distinctly historical dimension to Wright's experience of place. In striving to feel at home in nature, in America, in the Midwest, Wright faces that which Gary Snyder describes "eating at the American heart like acid . . . the knowledge of what we have done to our continent, and to the American Indian" (119).

Wright had distinguished company among white American authors in the 1960s touching on frontier history and the troubled American spirit of place. Theodore Roethke, who taught Wright at the University of Washington, began his "North American Sequence" (published posthumously in 1964's *The Far Field*) with "The Longing," which answers T.S. Eliot's rejoinder in "Four Quartets" that "Old men should be explorers":

> Old men should be explorers?
> I'll be an Indian.
> Ogalala?
> Iroquois. (183)

A similar empathy prevails in Thomas Berger's novel *Little Big Man* (1964) and in the poetry of Gary Snyder, who has since become one of the foremost authorities on American place, culture, and ecology. In his 1969 book of essays *Earth House Hold*, Snyder recapitulates D. H. Lawrence's comment about the "menace" in the American landscape in a manner useful to our understanding of James Wright and the cultural moment of the 1960s:

> The American Indian is the vengeful ghost lurking in the back of the troubled American mind. Which is why we lash out with such ferocity and passion, so muddied a heart, at the black-haired young peasants and soldiers who are the "Viet Cong." That ghost will claim the next generation as its own. When this has happened, citizens of the USA will at last begin to be Americans, truly at home on the continent, in love with their land. (112)

Robert Bly attacked the cultural roots of the Vietnam War in terms identical to Snyder's. At a poetry reading in 1969, Bly declared that "what we're doing [in Vietnam] is repeating the crime with Indians. The Vietnamese are our Indians. We don't want to end this war! We didn't want to quit killing the Indians but we ran out of Indians, and they were all on reservations" (qtd. in Mersmann 65). In his National Book Award-winning *The Light Around the Body* (1968), Bly illustrates the frontier / Vietnam connection with statements such as "underneath all the cement of the Pentagon / There is a drop of Indian blood preserved in snow. . . ." (36). According to James F. Mersmann, Bly's Vietnam poems attempt an "expiation of the burden of guilt accumulated from the rape of the frontier and the ecology, from puritanical morality and discipline, from killing Indians, from a history of violence and socio-economic inequities. . . ." (72).

Mersmann's commentary also applies to James Wright. Whereas Bly borrowed from surrealism and Jungian psychology to explore the national psyche, Wright chose to continue writing extensively about his personal relationship to American places, as in "Stages on a Journey Westward," one of the longer poems in *The Branch Will Not Break*. The four parts of the poem retrace the westward movement of conquest, creating place images for Ohio during the Great Depression, western Minnesota, Nevada, and Washington state. Landscapes in each location bear the marks of callous economic exploitation. Wright's memory of Ohio, for example, is of his father prowling bread lines, returning home "grimy with machinery" to sing his young son a lullaby, while "Outside the house, the slag heaps waited." In Minnesota, the winter wind howling "out of the abandoned prairies / . . . sounds like the voices of bums and gamblers, / Rattling through the bare nineteenth-century whorehouses / In Nevada." Standing in a graveyard with "the half-educated sheriff of Mukilteo, Washington," Wright imagines the miners who "paused on the way up to Alaska . . . / [spading] their broken women's bodies / Into ditches of crab grass." Americans, here represented by bums, gamblers, whores, and prospectors, have always been on the way to somewhere else, abandoning one place for another and leaving slag heaps and graves in their wake. These people and places haunt the American national conscience, which speaks to Wright one night in a dream:

In western Minnesota, just now,
I slept again,
In my dream, I crouched over a fire.
The only human beings between me and the Pacific Ocean
Were old Indians, who wanted to kill me.
They squat and stare for hours into small fires
Far off in the mountains.
The blades of their hatchets are dirty with the grease
Of huge, silent buffaloes.

Whereas Snyder and Bly explicitly correlated the events of the day, including the Vietnam War, to patterns and archetypes in America history, Wright preferred to imply a connection between present and past by visualizing himself in a simultaneously naturalistic and symbolic location. "Stages on a Journey Westward" ends with the poet in such a place:

I lie down between tombstones.
At the bottom of the cliff
America is over and done with.
America,
Plunged into the dark furrows
Of the sea again. (124-5)

The "dark furrows" in Wright's familiar graveyard setting embody his "jaded pastoralism," in which America has become an ironic garden of death. The resignation of these last lines—America entering the depths *again*—proved prescient of the crises, international and domestic, that would convulse the nation soon after the poem's publication.

Wright's residence in Minnesota during the 1960s deeply influenced his poetry and his appreciation of place. Western Minnesota, as Wright observed, is where you "start to get a hint of what the western United States is like" (*Collected Prose* 195). The prairie begins there; before the arrival of settlers, the whole state was contested ground, home to woodland Ojibwa and their ancient adversaries, the Sioux. The American war of conquest against the plains Indians began in Minnesota in reaction to the Sioux revolt of 1862, when Indian resentment over being swindled out of their land led to the killing of hundreds of white settlers and the subsequent exile of the Minnesota Sioux.[2] Wright's meditation on that historical event resulted in a

poem essential to his oeuvre: "A Centenary Ode: Inscribed to Little Crow, Leader of the Sioux Rebellion in Minnesota, 1862."

In that poem, Wright addresses Little Crow, identifying him as the "true father / Of my dark America." He first assumes a defensive tone: "I had nothing to do with it [Little Crow's death]. I was not here. / I was not born." Wright's Ohio ancestors, "a lot of singing drunks and good carpenters," also had an alibi: they were busy fighting on both sides of the Civil War. But they, and Wright, share a measure of guilt: "it was not my fathers / Who murdered you. / Not much." Wright here implies that atonement for the genocide of America's native people must begin with a recognition of guilt, followed by appropriate mourning. But the exact location of Little Crow's grave is unknown, a fact that symbolizes the difficulty of national (and individual) redemption. "I don't know," Wright tells the chief, "Where the fathers of Minneapolis finalized / Your flayed carcass. . . . / If only I knew where to mourn you, / I would surely mourn. / But I don't know." Lacking a specific location or monument upon which to meditate, Wright's thoughts shift from the conquered Sioux to his own people; his confession to Little Crow that "When I close my eyes I lose you among / Old lonelinesses" suggests the psychic cost that all whites have paid for America's crime against the Indians. Despite having preserved the Union and conquered the West, white Americans are in deeper sense a defeated people who have never been more than superficially at home on the land. Wright feels himself fated to homelessness, like "Old Paddy Beck, [his] great-uncle . . . dead / At the old soldiers' home near Tiffin, Ohio." In addressing Little Crow, the poem's concluding stanza projects this dislocation even beyond death:

Oh all around us,
The hobo jungles of America grow wild again.
The pick handles bloom like your skinned spine.
I don't even know where
My own grave is. (186-7)

Native American cultures place great value on the manner of one's death and the disposal of remains. To know where one's grave will be is to recognize an eternally sacred relation with the earth. But Wright rejects any easy identification with Native Americans—as he writes in "I Am a Sioux Brave, He

Said in Minneapolis" (one of two poems about a disfigured young man Wright met at a city bus stop), "He is just plain drunk. / He knows no more than I do / What true waters to mourn for / Or what kind of words to sing / When he dies" (152). The difficulty of Wright's search for appropriate waters and words causes him, in "Many of Our Waters: Variations on a Poem by a Black Child," to refer to his poetry as "the cold-blooded plea of a homesick vampire" (212). Guilt, despair, and contamination pervade that poem, in which the following lines, spoken to the Ohio River of his youth, encapsulate Wright's connection of landscape, self, and poetry:

> Oh my back-broken beloved Ohio.
> I, too, was beautiful, once,
> Just like you.
> We were both still a little
> Young, then.
> Now, all I am is a poet,
> Just like you.

Such passages stress Wright's alienation from place, his own body, even the words of his poems, which at times seem to him incapable of bridging the rift in paradise.

In *Reading the Fire* (1983), a study of Native American oral literature, Jarold Ramsey contrasts the Indian approach to geography and nature with "the vaguely guilty and nostalgic sense of place and feeling for landscape that we inherit from Romanticism; it is altogether sterner, more pragmatic as to ecological necessities, and more caught up in the narrative" (188). Ramsey's observation holds true of a number of Native American poets and novelists who emerged during the 1960s and '70s, including Leslie Marmon Silko. Wright's correspondence with Silko, author of *Ceremony* (1977) and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), represents a remarkable cultural convergence: the meeting, on equal terms, of Euro-American Romanticism and a Native American worldview. Their letters, edited by Wright's wife Anne in *The Strength and Delicacy of Lace* (1986), do not dwell on the tragic aspects of American history or on literary aesthetics. Instead, Wright and Silko wrote of their admiration for each other's work, of their travels, of their daily struggles as individuals and artists. Each recognized in the other a kindred spirit, another author

giving voice to people previously unrepresented in American literature. Silko's narrative in *Ceremony* of Pueblo Indians facing the loss of their traditional way of life is not far removed from Wright's elegies to Ohio people worn down by the industrial age. Both write from a tremendous sympathy for human suffering, particularly as caused by abrupt social change and geographical dislocation.[3] In struggling to reconcile the ideal sense of place with the bleak reality of his native landscape, Wright derived lessons in language from many sources. Native American sensibilities about poetry and place—derived from his study of history, contemplation of special places, and contact with fine writers like Silko—proved crucial in the maturation of Wright's poetry and his redemptive vision of nature and culture. As he notes in "Many of Our Waters":

> My rotted Ohio,
> It was only a little while ago
> That I learned the meaning of your name.
> The Winnebago gave you your name, Ohio,
> And Ohio means beautiful river. (211)

Wright did indeed find (to use Ramsey's terms) that "pragmatism as to ecological necessities" required that he become "caught up in the narrative" of his place and people. While retaining the vivid imagery and terse colloquialism of his middle period, Wright during the 1970s increasingly employed storytelling to convey what he felt as "an abrupt pang that rises not only from the shape of my parents' lives but also from the very disruption of the earth in southeastern Ohio" (*Collected Prose* 330-4). Because Wright refused to idealize his place of origin or the people he knew there, the landscapes and portraits in his narrative poems are colored by both admiration and revulsion. The poem "On a Phrase from Southern Ohio," for example, centers on Wright's memory of a patch of native wildflowers atop a strip mined hill across the Ohio River in West Virginia, "the only / Beauty we found, outraged in that naked hell." The trip he shared with a group of "lazy and thieving" friends reenacts the conquest of America: white people cross a body of water, discover a sacred garden, and commit an act of racial violence:

Well, we found two black boys up there
In the wild cliff garden.
Well, we beat the hell out of one
And chased out the other. (300)

By finding an analogue for American history in his own experience, Wright sharpened the irony of his pastoralism: this narrative achieves the authenticity Wright wished for in "At the Executed Murderer's Grave" but could not achieve, because as Robert Bly points out, "a convicted rapist-murderer is a different piece of goods from James Wright" ("The Work of James Wright" 100). The sense of guilt in the earlier poem seems contrived in comparison to the confession of "On a Phrase from Southern Ohio," which occurs in a fully realized context of environmental and social debasement. This is honest regret, rather than literary posturing. If nostalgia is the generic emotion of pastoral art, then Wright has revised the pastoral convention of yearning for a primal innocence and verdure. The Ohio River valley was always degraded in Wright's lifetime, and the discovery of a lovely remnant of wildness, "a garden of bloodroot, tangled there, a vicious secret / Of trilliums," only emphasizes the horrors of industrialism:

It is summer chilblain, it is blowtorch, it is not
Maiden and morning on the way up that cliff.
Not where I come from.

It is a slab of concrete that for all I know
Is beginning to crumble. (300)

Such lines betray an ironic optimism—that hope may lie in entropy, in the crumbling of the slab. A tone of conciliation with Ohio, the Midwest, and America, in fact, resounds in Wright's late poetry, despite his dismay at the betrayal of the best ideals of the New World. As he wrote to Silko, "When you love a place, really and almost hopelessly love it, I think you love it even for its signs of disaster, just as you come to realize how you love the particular irregularities and even the scars on some person's face" (Anne Wright 32). Wright's realization may be attributed to a happy marriage, to his travels in America and Europe (particularly Italy, homeland to Virgil, greatest of all pastoral poets), and to his increasing sense that his poetry had

succeeded, however tenuously, to bridge the pastoral rift (as in "On a Phrase from Southern Ohio") "like one fainting strand / Of spiderweb, glittering and vanishing and frail / Above the river" (301). Native American history and language was also crucial to Wright's discovery of beauty even amid disaster, in his "[finding] a way / To sit on a railroad tie / Above the sewer main" by the Ohio River at Martins Ferry. When he learned that "Ohio" meant beautiful, he credited the source, noting in "Beautiful Ohio" that "Those old Winnebago men / Knew what they were singing about." The poem's concluding lines clarify how what he heard transformed what he saw:

I know what we call it
Most of the time,
But I have my own song for it,
And sometimes, even today,
I call it beauty. (317-8)

Wright borrowed more than etymologies from Native American culture; he derived lessons from it about the American Spirit of Place.[4] In singing about place, Wright came home to his own voice, garden, and grave; so located, he gave his region and the world of letters a redemptive vision of human possibility in the modern landscape.

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NOTES

1. All quotations of Wright's poetry are from *Above the River: The Complete Poems.*
2. For a concise and well-narrated account of the Minnesota Sioux uprising, see Chapter 2 of Ralph K. Andrist, *The Long Death: The Last Days of the Plains Indians* (New York: MacMillan, 1964). The rebellion stemmed from the murder of a group of settlers by four impetuous young braves returning from an unsuccessful summer hunting trip to the Big Woods of central Minnesota. At a council of tribal leaders, the party advocating war held sway, having argued, according to Andrist, "with any amount of historical precedent to back them up—that it would do no good to turn the four murderers over to the whites for punishment because all Indians would be punished indiscriminately anyway" (34). Little Crow, who had been working to adapt his people to agriculture, argued eloquently against attack, which would surely prove futile. But as Andrist relates, when the peaceful chief "found the Sioux meant to fight regardless of his warnings, he had decided that it was better to fight a lost cause than become a nobody" (36). The days that followed saw the brutal killing of hundreds of settlers, followed by an all out engagement with the Minnesota 6th Infantry and state militia. The Sioux lost this first installment of the Plains War; even those who had remained neutral or had assisted whites during the uprising were exiled to reservations in Dakota Territory. Thirty-eight Sioux men were hung on a

single scaffold in the town of Mankato to satisfy the whites' desire for revenge (306 had been sentenced to death, but President Lincoln signed an order of executive clemency). Little Crow, who had not wanted to fight, who had tried to convert his people to a agrarian existence, was shot to death one year later by a farmer near the town of Hutchinson. He had been picking berries with his son, who escaped. The chief's body, unidentified at the time, ended up in the offal pit of a slaughterhouse.

3. Silko particularly appreciated Wright's mastery of regional, spoken English, which she contrasted with "that hideous, empty, artificial language television speaks . . . the result of the past 50 years of working to eradicate regional usages, regional pronunciations, i.e., regional and community expression from American English, always with the melting pot theory in mind. . . . That is what I love most in your writing, Jim, the gully and railroad track, the sumac and coal smoke—all could only be from the place you give us or that gives you to us, that Ohio country" (Silko, in Anne Wright 82).

   Wright's influence on Silko resembles that of Theodore Roethke on many Native American poets who have rose to prominence since the 1960s. For example, see Duane Niatum's poem "Lines for Roethke Twenty Years After His Death" in *Harper's Anthology of Native American Poetry,* ed. Duane Niatum (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) 103-5.

4. Wright was correct on the meaning but in error as to the linguistic origin of the word "Ohio," which originally designated the river. Most authorities agree on its derivation from the Iroquoian languages: *oheo,* meaning "beautiful," or *ohion hiio,* "beautiful river." Another possibility is from the Wyandot (Huron people in Ohio who spoke an Iroquoian language): *ohezuh,* meaning "great; pleasant in appearance." The homeland of the Winnebago tribe (whose language is Siouan in origin) is Wisconsin, not Ohio.

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A FARM UNDER A LAKE: WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HUCK'S TERRITORY?

MARGARET ROZGA

At the end of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck has had enough of attempts to "sivilize" him and decides he "can't stand it. I been there before." (245) He chooses instead to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest. . . ." (245). At the end of Martha Bergland's highly praised novel *A Farm Under A Lake,* her main character, Janet Hawn, who for twenty years has been moving about with her husband Jack trying to find just the right territory, decides to return to their childhood farmland in Illinois. She tells Jack, "We're nowhere there. We need to be here" (196).

The contrasting conclusions highlight an important shift from Huck's nineteenth century belief in the frontier to Janet's twentieth century realization that civilization has permeated everywhere, and that since lighting out for uncontaminated territory is no longer possible, standing one's ground, claiming one's own territory, is the necessary conclusion.

The two novels, published just a little over one hundred years apart, have important parallels as well as contrasts. Janet like Huck is a free spirit with an ambiguous relation to those whose tendency is to go by the book. She, too, journeys southward where she has the chance to think about that relation. The similarities in character and plot make Bergland's novel particularly relevant as a model of this major thematic shift. The place where one can find and be oneself may be, perhaps must be, amidst the familiar. To avoid taking a stand, whatever form the withdrawal takes, only allows the effects of civilization to take a stronger and more destructive hold.

Janet Hawn, the main character in *A Farm Under A Lake,* embodies the spirit of Huck Finn in interaction with other char-

acters akin to those in Huck's story. I do not wish to argue that Bergland writes with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* consciously in mind. I certainly do not wish to say that Bergland's novel is merely imitative. Her handling of time and narrative technique and the social status of her character, her gender, her education and her twentieth century experience, all present considerations unique to Bergland's book. Nevertheless there are some points of striking likeness between the characters and plots of the two books.

Janet Hawn is a spiritual descendant of Huck Finn in at least three ways. First she desires freedom from restrictive social conventions. Secondly, she displays extraordinary sensitivity to the needs of a character generally dismissed by others as a non-person. Of course, with Huck, this quality is shown in his ability to respond to Jim, who has run away from slavery; Janet, in her turn, cares for May Nickelson, an elderly woman, and achieves a degree of communication with her though May has not spoken in over a year. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly is her ambiguous relationship to, her inability to understand the implications of, the conventionality of the character assumed to be closest to her; with Huck, that character is Tom Sawyer, and with Janet it is her husband, Jack Hawn.

Some of the ways in which Janet expresses her desire for freedom are remarkably similar to Huck's. Huck considers "dismal" the "regular and decent" (3) ways of the Widow Douglas with whom he lives. He runs away to that he can get "into my old rags" and feel "free and satisfied" (3). He defines himself outside conventional religious beliefs. When Miss Watson tries to motivate Huck to behave as she wishes by telling him about hell, Huck concludes, "Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it" (4). Huck is pragmatic and focused on immediate concerns rather than abstractions. He perceives from the Widow and Miss Watson two different concepts of God and feels himself in flux between them:

> "Sometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body's mouth water; but maybe next day Miss Watson would take hold and knock it all down again." (11)

He tests Miss Watson's belief in prayer by praying for fish-line, which he gets, but it is useless since he doesn't get the hooks which he also prayed for. When Miss Watson tells him that he must pray for "spiritual gifts," Huck decides "This was too many for me . . . so at last I reckoned I wouldn't worry about it any more, but just let it go" (11).

Likewise, Janet empresses her desire for freedom in her choice of clothing and tests reactions, though her age and education allow her somewhat more abstract language in which to express her perceptions. When she returns home from college after finishing her degree in French, she wears tight jeans and a tank top without a bra. She anticipates negative reactions:

> "I was trying out not wearing a bra, and I didn't know if I did or did not want to see someone I knew. I hoped nobody would react in a redneck way to my liberated choice about underwear. I wasn't very sure of myself; I was alternately concave and convex." (37)

From the very beginning of her story, Janet makes clear how unconventional is her approach to religion. The novel opens with this statement about her husband: "Jack is the church I have joined, but he is a church without ceremony" (3). Though she misses the ceremony in the little Catholic Church which she attended as a child, her religious spirit attaches itself to nature rather than to other-worldly abstractions. As she listens to the robins outside the Green Bay condominium where she and Jack live as adults, she is reminded

> "of holiness. On a flat-land grain farm with no cover around the house and fields full of pesticides, there weren't many robins, so the ones I remembered were in Half Moon in the lilac bushes beside the little Catholic church. The sound of holiness was robins, and the odor of sanctity was lilies of the valley." (3-4)

Twenty years earlier, before her marriage to Jack, on the verge of an affair with Jack's brother Carl, Janet had tried to rationalize her way out of her desire for Carl by thinking "of what the nuns had been telling me for years, but somehow, under that sky and in the middle of all the heat and fast green growth, what the nuns and priests had to say seemed irrelevant, silly, ideas suited for town life." Thus Janet, like Huck, identifies

freedom with natural impulses and with places out of town and away from social structures.

Because she is a twentieth century woman, Janet's desire for freedom from restrictive social conventions sometimes focuses on issues different from Huck's. Whereas Huck can't see the harm in the pleasure of smoking a pipe, Janet insists on sexual freedom. Not only is this seen in her affair with Carl, but several earlier episodes make this clear. In college, Janet steals the boyfriend of a college classmate and, when upbraided by her roommate, replies in terms that emphasize her desire to seize the moment:

> "I turned to her and I said, 'JoAnn, for Christ's sake, this is 1965 and I'm almost twenty years old which I'll never be again, and beside that, look at this.' Then I flung open my robe and showed them what was then a very pretty body. Both girls gasped. 'Do you think I'm going to let this go to waste or wrap it up in tissue paper like farm ladies do their nicest slips and save it for *some* day? *Some day* might never come, JoAnn.'" (29)

More significant to the plot as well as the theme of the novel, Janet's desire to assert herself sexually leads to an interruption to her relationship with Jack even before the Carl episode. Janet had gone steady with Jack for three years in high school, but because of Jack's close relationship with Janet's father, they had never made love. The terms in which Janet remembers her attitude toward this situation echo Huck's complaint about the "dismal regular and decent" ways of the Widow Douglas. She says,

> "I was proud of Jack, but I was also seventeen years old and I was tired of this careful and solicitous man; I was sick of Jack's plaid, short-sleeved shirts and his chinos with tabs. Jack was so predictable and so good that I ran away for a week with my crazy friend Marcie and two guys from Peoria who wore black and rode motorcycles." (64-65)

As a forty-year-old looking back, Janet can reflect on "how far waves could go out from one impulsive act" (65). Her affair with the motorcyclist caused an interruption of her relation with Jack for five years, and even then they are brought back together only by the intervention of her mother. As a teenager, however, Janet is impulsive like Huck; "when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out" (Twain 4).

In the present action of the Bergland's novel, Janet displays most clearly a second characteristic of Huck's, one that is related to the practical and intuitive bent they share. They are both sensitive to the needs and feelings of a person whose right to be treated as an equal human being is often ignored or denied. With Huck, of course, that person is Jim, and Huck must cultivate his respect for Jim in a slave-holding society. He is in the ironic position of doing right by Jim, while believing he is doing wrong. He sustains himself in the effort by looking to his feelings. After he saves Jim from the bounty hunters by playing into their fears of small pox, he thinks to himself:

> "s'pose you'd a done right and give Jim up; would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad—I'd feel just the same way I do now. Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right, when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn't answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time." (78)

The battle to recognize human rights, however, is not over that easily for Huck. He faces additional challenges to his thinking. When Jim is captured and held at the Phelps' farm, Huck must again wrestle with his conscience. His memory of Jim's particular acts of kindness tips the scale against the weight of the institution of slavery. Huck cannot send the letter to Miss Watson revealing Jim's whereabouts because he "got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time, in the day, and in the night-time; sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind" (179). But Huck does not reach the point of believing slavery wrong and himself right, and thus cannot resist Tom Sawyer's assault on Jim's dignity as he plays a game of escape.

Janet similarly defies prescription in her relation to May Nickelson, the elderly woman for whom she is a private duty nurse. Though May is not a legal slave, in fact, she has substantial money, she has stopped talking and consequently is often treated as a non-person for whom arrangements must be made. When

Janet arrives to take May to her daughter's home in Illinois from the Green Bay house where she had lived, the women preparing for the estate sale do not even know May, the owner, by name and are anxious to have her out of the way. The person in charge tells Janet, "The owner? Oh, I'm so glad you came for her. This can be upsetting for them and for our girls, too. They don't usually have to see the owners" (14). Janet, on the other hand, believes in feeling, even if it is painful. She tells May after she has gotten her ready for the trip, "I am taking you down to Illinois to live in one room at your daughter's. She is a good woman, but, May, you are leaving your home. May, know some of this; feel some of this" (18).

What May knows or feels she does not speak, yet Janet is able to achieve some communication with her. She had been hired to "keep her from wandering out of her house at night, but that's exactly what I've let her do." Early in her work with May, Janet gives up trying to keep her in bed. She responds to May's clearly enacted desire to walk at night and comes to realize that one particular house on what she calls May's "slum" route must have particular meaning to her. Thus Janet develops a sense of May as a "complicated person," a real human being (8). She knows that Jack, and others, would disapprove. She says, "I never told Jack any of this because he would have raised hell at two women wandering around at night. I know there was danger, but no one ever bothered us" (10). The more remote possibility of danger gives way in Janet's mind to her much more immediate fear for May. She notes, "I suppose I could have found ways to lock May in the house at night, but I was afraid of what might happen on her face or inside of her when she discovered she couldn't get out. It was a cruelty I didn't see the necessity for" (10). Janet's refusal to be cruel carries a reward. During the trip south with May, May writes on a little piece of paper, "Janet Hawn takes care" (140).

Unlike Huck's story, though, Janet's does not involve a sense of irony at her choice of caring more for individuals than for social conventions. Janet is, in fact, sustained by an image of her type of choice as good. She remembers hearing about how an older nurse cared for a difficult patient:

> "a frightening man—tall and wild-eyed and mean with what we used to call senility. He would not rest or eat or stop cursing or even sit down when she first went to his home, but she noticed right away that when music was on he seemed more calm and he seemed to move his body to the music. One day she put on a record—I don't know what music—and she asked him to dance with her. And he did. It clearly gave him pleasure and peace; then he could rest. After that the woman danced every day with this apparition, this skeleton in pajamas who scared away the young nurses. She danced with him every day three and four hours at a time until it seemed that he could rest. She danced with this dying man every day until almost the day he died. Whenever I thought of her, she gave me courage." (190-191)

With this model in mind, at least professionally Janet is better able to stand her ground.

With Jack directly there is more ambiguity in her response. Part of her attraction to Jack is that he seems to have answers. At one point, continuing the metaphor of Jack as her church with which she begins the novel, Janet says, "he became a cult I had to give up everything for, a fundamentalist church I joined" (30). Elsewhere she defines what this figure must mean:

> "you don't in the end resist Jack's version of events and what Jack wants because of the force of his energy and concentration and generosity and organization—Jack's will. Being with Jack solves a lot of problems, I remembered, because Jack was always in charge." (60)

Jack, like Tom Sawyer, may want adventure, but he wants to do it by the book. Certainly, he wants his wedding to Janet to be "by the book" (112). Janet goes along with him for most of their life together because she is practical, like Huck who avoids arguments with Miss Watson on the grounds that "It would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good" (4). Janet uses somewhat more philosophical language:

> "I was going on the assumption that the way to live a life was to let people have their way in everything except in the few things that you have let be important to you. Then, if you just pointed out to them that they had chosen all those other times and now it was your turn to choose, it would be clear to them and they'd say, right, it *is* your turn." (112)

Janet, of course, is wrong and on reflection sees what really happened. "Jack and I both got used to him choosing for the

both of us" (112). In fact, Jack so dominates their life that Janet's career choice is based on his need. She becomes a nurse so that she can follow him in his moves from job to job and still find employment for herself. But Jack's choices for them and Janet's acquiescence only take them farther from the goals they envisioned as young lovers. At night on the road with May, Janet realizes

> "Jack was what I knew of the world. He was how I knew the world; he was my means and my end. I had married him over and over; though he didn't know this, I had had to marry him over and over. As he seemed to take me farther and farther from where I wanted to be, I had married him in each new town, with each job he took on, with each new shirt and vest, with each three-piece suit and haircut and pound around his belly. All the time I was wanting to go back, he was pulling me forward into what I called the world and he called reality, progress, the dream come true. We seemed to only get farther from the farm we both wanted, from home. The Jack I had married seemed to become more and more submerged in this business man." (130)

Janet with Jack has tried, that is, to find a territory where they could be happy together. What they have found is that such territory no longer exists. Instead there is progress, suburbs, condominiums. Rivers have been dammed up to create electric power and to create lakes, but to create the lakes means putting farms under water, hence the title of the novel. The farm on which Janet and Jack might have found happiness no longer exists.

They leave the farm because it can no longer support all the members of the family who would depend on it, but they go to places infected by the same forces that make farming unprofitable. We do not learn of all the places they have been but they go first to Madison, Wisconsin, where Jack has been offered a job with a former professor, "testing defoliants" (130). Jack, with his feel for the land, had studied agriculture at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, only to use his knowledge doing research on the defoliants used for destruction in the Vietnam War. He even worked for a time for Dow Chemical (148). The free and open territory has been permeated with the residue of civilization.

The Green Bay which Janet leaves when she takes May to her daughter's home in Illinois is no better as the episode with the cabbage man reveals. When Janet stands with him outside the church, she sees "the four-lane road, the shopping center, and the rank upon rank of condominiums on the hills beyond" (144). He, too, is a man displaced, a man, as Janet comes to see of Jack, "out of context, away from the place where his people are, a man separated all his adult life from doing the work he wanted to do, living the life he wanted to live" (188). The land has been fundamentally reshaped and the lives of people with it. Finally the cabbage man, unable to deal with such progress, kills himself in the farm house he wishes were his. Janet is profoundly affected.

She does not want this end for Jack. She journeys southward, in her case, a journey toward home, for the opportunity to think. In her words,

> "I realized that I was making this trip to Illinois to learn what to say or what to do about who I was . . . I was trying to sort—with my skin and my eyes and my breathing and my remembering—what to keep, how far out to draw a line of . . . what? Sisterhood? Eminent domain? Marriage? Duty? I don't yet now the terms for inside and outside." (165)

Janet's trip south from Green Bay to Illinois gives her the opportunity to transfer to her personal life the same sense of standing her own ground that she has professionally. She escapes for a few days having to live with the frustrations of her unemployed husband, and she comes home to face the meaning of her past. Janet is then ready to define that ground, to say yes or no to her life with Jack. Issues become clarified for Janet in view of the Mississippi River, as she aligns herself with natural shapes and forces:

> "I stood beside the Mississippi River with the length of my back against a walnut tree, so my back bent as the tree bent as the wind blew from the west. The sky sent yes and no through the tree to my spine. I stared across the glare of river into tomorrow, the wind, the source of yes, the source of no. I could settle down to live in either country." (163)

Her conversation with May's daughter Ina helps Janet make her decision. Ina tells Janet the secret of May's love affair which

explains May's attraction to the house to which May led Janet. In the conversation about Jack that follows, Janet finds herself understanding Jack's frustrations anew. She realizes that "Jack is like that farmer with a farm under a lake" (188). To be constantly "lighting out" is to avoid this reality.

She hurries back to the farm, where, as she telephones Jack, she becomes certain: their only chance is to return. She tells him, "We're nowhere there. We need to be here. Remember how visible the future was when we were here?" (196).

Janet's story concludes, like Huck's, not with a definite answer, but with a resolution. She calls Jack home to the farm that still is there and says, "I want to work on this place with you and Carl. I want to start over" (197). Though the times are different from Huck Finn's, in a spirit akin to his, Bergland's novel leaves us looking forward with hope. In this case, the hope is not for undefiled country. Huck's territory has disappeared, been destroyed. Instead Janet's hope is that one can stand one's own ground, shape it into a space where human beings can best realize their potential. It is a country of questions and hard choices and waiting. These are the terms in which we see Janet at the end of *A Farm Under a Lake,* not following Jack as he hopes for a new place, a new job, in Sturgeon Bay, but understanding her father's metaphors that offer her a space and laughing and "Waiting for Jack" (199).

The two novels present similar characters, though they are a hundred years apart, though one is a boy, the other a woman, though one tells his story chronologically and the other moves back and forth in time, though one sees an open frontier to which he can escape while the other must stop running to define an interior landscape, a space where more than the vanishing optimism of being between jobs, a real vision of the future, is possible.

Huck and Janet both desire freedom from social conventions that limit them and degrade others. They think in terms of natural metaphors rather than abstract concepts. Their sensitivity to others and their lack of a theoretical basis makes them vulnerable to energetic, attractive characters whose fundamental bent is more conventional than is their own. Huck's ironic position, not defining his own good, necessarily limits the ground he is

able to claim. But the frontier gone, Janet must and does go further in developing the self-affirmation that gives her the hope the Territory gave to Huck.

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SOY CITY VOICES: AN ORAL HISTORY OF WORKERS IN DECATUR, ILLINOIS

DAN GUILLORY

Soy City

Soy City—even this memorable title has been lost by the once-proud City of Decatur, Illinois, a crossroads settlement of the 1830s that always was associated with the grinding, milling, shelling, and shipping of grain. During the late 1920s, from 1926-1927, the Staley family, owners of the largest corn-processing factory, erected an art-deco skyscraper to proclaim the fact that milling made millionaires. From here came Karo corn syrup, all kinds of corn starches and thickeners, and strange chemical compounds that infiltrated everything from lipstick to adhesives and plywood.

Here, too, the soybean gained ascendancy in the 1950s. This hard little pea could be pulverized into a mash that extended or increased the mass of cattle food, candy bars, and milkshakes. Here were born the "bacon bits" and "veggie burgers" of textured vegetable protein (soy flour). Yet all these inventions and creative applications of corn and bean, the circumambient crops of Decatur, came to naught in the late 1970s when various sites in Brazil surpassed Soy City as the Soybean Capital of the World. Even the fabled Wabash Cannonball made its final run through Soy City. Decatur joined the so-called Rust Belt of worn-out factories and machinery that became all too common in the Northeast and Midwest during the 1980s.

The long decline of Soy City had just begun, for events marched on tragically and inexorably during the 1980s as the City recorded a net loss in population and many of the flagship industries passed into the hands of foreign owners. Staley was purchased by Continental, then by Tate and Lyle, P. L. C., a British multinational that specializes in syrups and sweeteners.

The local Borg-Warner factory, manufacturer of automobile air conditioners, was bought up by Zexel of Osaka, Japan. The Firestone tire plant retained its name but became part of Bridgestone Tires, the largest tire manufacturer in Japan. Even proud old Mueller Laboratories, the oldest and most famous of Decatur's industrial blue chips, also fell to foreign ownership. By the early 1990s, the old General Electric phonograph plant was only a memory—as was the famous High Flyer kite company. Only Archer Daniels Midland, Caterpillar, Wagner Castings remained, but the first two of that trio were beset by major labor problems—one on the verge of a strike, the other in an epic struggle between labor and management.

As this oral history began (in January of 1994), Staley workers had been locked out for some six months in a bitter and devastating strike symbolized by the little plywood shacks erected by the strikers at the main and west gates of the plant. Even on the coldest days—as the air temperature dropped to minus seventeen degrees with an equivalent wind chill of minus sixty-five—these workers persevered, a reminder of all the working men and women who have made Soy City a workers' town. Symbolically, one of old Decatur's historical workplaces, the old Shellabarger Mill, was demolished in January, 1994, just as this oral history project was getting underway—a graphic reminder of how easily the past can disappear from sight.

Between the Civil War and the end of the First World War, immense fortunes were amassed in Soy City, and a small army of craftsmen made that wealth possible. [O. T. Banton, *A Pictorial History of Macon Co.*]. Decatur was famous for its stone-cutters, meat-cutters, carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, and brass workers, who excelled at all kinds of musical instruments, especially horns and trumpets. Machinists, blacksmiths, painters, pipe-fitters, tinsmiths, gunsmith, carpenters, bicycle-makers, and carriage-makers all thrived at the turn of the century and helped to create the infrastructure that allowed Decatur to support two car companies during the World-War-One era: the Comet and the Pan-American. The Transfer House, a building that has become the logo for Decatur—and once the hub of the rail lines passing through—was moved during the 1960s and transformed into a centerpiece for downtown Decatur and Central Park.

Any American city can be described as the product of its work force; but, as the foregoing overview of Decatur's history suggests, Soy City is uniquely bound to its workplace environment. This oral history of Decatur uses the actual words of real workers who made Decatur and who are the privileged carriers of its past and future. These are the actual words, the unique cadences, and the special visions of schoolteachers, farmers, businessmen, clerks, and ministers.

* * * *

Eldorado

Eldorado—it means the "gilded one"—is the street where hearts are often broken, and true love is sometimes found. People work or protest here, deals are made and broken, and lots of money changes hands. Above it all is a Lazy-Boy recliner which is propped zanily on top of an antenna, as if an invisible occupant is watching and waiting for Eldorado Street to come alive each day.

This long avenue, like so many others in mid-America, twists and groans as it moves through the center of Decatur. The poet John Knoepfle compared it to a strand of DNA. It almost perfectly marks the middle of town. Along its borders there are more vacant lots with burnt-looking grass than there should be. There are more fast food restaurants and gas stations than any town this size needs to remain healthy. The prosperous buildings belong to the nation-wide chains—the decrepit buildings contain valuable memories and keep the flames of economic growth burning, as in Appelbaum's department store.

If you begin at the west end of the street, where the cemetery and Millikin University meet, you can look east and see what awaits you. The signs seem to shout, grabbing your attention. Eat here: "4 pcs frichick $2." This end of Eldorado has been built to cater to the students at Millikin with their 3:00 a.m. food and cigarette runs. *The Primp Shop* and *Early Riser's Cafe* are both remnants from an earlier day, before fast food and trendy hair salons were in vogue. They are thrown in callously among all of the neon signs and obnoxious billboards, but they still have a respected clientele.

Past the old ice house and the Lazy Boy antennae, Eldorado becomes more familiar to those citizens who have lived in Decatur since the turn of the century. Mueller and Co. lies cramped on a hillside in a low-slung fashion with orange eyes where windows really should be. A mural (actually a mosaic made of thousands of little square tiles) that so many drive by but never contemplate decorates the side of this structure, telling the story common to many of Decatur's earliest settlers. Hieronymus Mueller arrived in the 1850s and succeeded initially as a gunsmith, then as a businessman. Mueller made his fortune when he invented a system for tapping gas and water lines while they are under pressure. The pastel colored tiles in the mural tell of the struggle Mueller endured as an early Decatur settler from 1857-1900. There is the long nose of a gun depicted among the many buildings that housed his endeavors. Also abstractly placed are the valve that made his fortune, a T-square, and one of his many cars, a Mercedes—the first in the area. But the Mueller family no longer owns his company. The international Grinnell Corporation took over in the late 80s.

The ultra-modern Civic Center lies like a fortification or a bomb shelter on the corner of Eldorado and Franklin streets. The sign outside advertises ice skating every Wednesday night, along with gun shows, WWF wrestling, car shows, antique shows, dog shows, country music concerts, and garden shows. Churches in various states of disrepair inhabit the area: St. Patrick's, St. John's Episcopal, and Central United Methodist.

The Pump House, Spiritualist Psychic and Card Readings (no appointment necessary), Soy City Motel, Expertune, China Palace, Classique Beauty Salon, Mister Donut, Tattoo U, Steak & Shake, Soy Capital Bank, World Tae Kown Do Academy, Heartland Tropical Fish, Zipps, Decatur Inntown Motel, GB's, Speed Lube, Eldorado Package Liquor, Fox Photo, Mr. G's, and the Rolling Prairie Library System all inhabit the east end of the street. There are as many vacant lots and decrepit buildings as there are inhabited businesses.

Marking the end of Eldorado is something quite unexpected. A large art deco building with many tiers and gothic elements looms over Staley's. The elegant structure is home to the administrative facilities for the A. E. Staley Corporation which produces corn and soybean products. Below the building there are

numerous smokestacks billowing white smoke that smells like bacon grease, and plywood huts housing the factory workers that have been on strike for nearly a year.

Locked-Out Staley Employees, Factory Workers

This interview occurred in a six-by-six foot plywood shack, heated by a homemade stove, and perched at the edge of Staley's West Gate on Eldorado Street. Such shelters had been erected at the center and east end of the plant also. The three workers we interviewed were friendly, open, and talkative fellows, eager to talk about the union and strike issues: it was a little harder to have them focus on the actual minutiae of their respective jobs—or on the trauma and upheaval in their families' lives because of the lockout, which had been in progress nearly six months at the time of our interview.

Cars honked in support as they drove by the shack on this busy artery. A few days after the interview, the shacks were all torn down by court order, and several demonstrations took place in front of the company—a group of sympathetic clergymen leading a prayer vigil. The plight of these workers dramatizes the end-result of huge global forces like multinational corporations, leveraged buyouts, fluctuations in currencies and exchange rates, and the greater reliance on computers. They may well represent the *last* generation of American workers who were able to work for a better standard of living than that of their parents. Their children will probably face a future in which the horizons of opportunity shrink with every passing year.

* * *

Each person is here four hours at a time. We'll do 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. About 700 people are on strike. I've never been on strike. We're in a lockout situation. We worked our contract. Some people say the Union said "all or nothing." But there was no negotiation.

I worked in waste treatment. We get water products after they've been filtered before they go to the Sanitary District. It's supposed to look clear, but it looks like baby poop mixed with water. I fell off a ladder when we was cleaning out the bottom

of a tank. I fell off the rope ladder—I lost my balance, grabbed a block, and it came loose. I sprained my ankle. I was a scout. I looked for sewer breaks—it's a large area. Syrup can be leaking anywhere. If we spot it, we can save the company money. I know personally I saved the company thousands of dollars.

My area had a musty not a very likable smell—fumes, gasses; the last four hours of the shift I'd about want to throw up. I'd work sometimes six 18-hour days in a row. It's cheaper for the Company that way.

The pension is the big thing—if it were put in everybody's name. Now they control all the workers—it's a big sham. Our pension fund made $2,300,000 in 1992. The Company is in control of it, using it as a negotiating device. Only one hundred people were going to retire. Fourteen of the last fifteen years were record years. The new contract would have cost us $5,000 apiece. If they can hire somebody for $10 an hour to do your job, then who's to say they won't give you a bad evaluation, and you get put in a labor pool. They want to get our knowledge and skills, then get rid of us.

I'm 43 and diabetic, and I know I can't get another job. I know I can do the job but I'm screwed.

I was on night maintenance. I worked on instruments and electricity. I'd cheek out motors, I'd work on transducers, monitors. We worked on air instruments—level in tanks, air pressure, something 1500 pounds. Now it's more electronics. But the valves work on air. We worked on oilers and automatic lubers, PH meters—we also worked in the co-generation plant. A lot of the lines have chemicals or hot steam. One time I smashed my fingers changing a motor. I'm always getting burned on pipes. We'd go to trouble-shoot and we'd disconnect.

I was on swing shift—I relieved second or third shift. I'd average 56 hours per week; sometimes 80 a week. Once I hit 97 hours. I was a zombie. Hell, I wouldn't go back after all of those hours. If you were on overtime, you could easily work 60-64 hours, especially during winter.

Some of us are drawing unemployment. The man is supposed to be bringing in money and isn't. Money and sex are the root of all in a marriage anyhow. The companies are trying to outdo each other for lousy contracts. The laws are against the working man.

Florence White, Schoolteacher

She's a sprightly octogenerian with silver-gray hair waved neatly into place. She sports a nicely fitting blue knit dress with a red rose embroidered over the left breast. One senses that she dressed this way in her many years as a school teacher—almost half a century working in and around Decatur in rural and city schools, as teacher and principal. She manages to command respect and affection all at once. Opening the door to her modest ranch-style home, she welcomes us as if we were old friends. Even though she's nearly 90, her calendar is filled almost every day. She's still active and clearly *enjoys* being so. But she generously makes room for two interviewers armed with notebooks and tape recorders. Coffee is awaiting us. The living room-dining room is neat but homey, and on closer inspection one notices little stacks of books everywhere. A few volumes are tucked away on the mantelpiece, others rest on the treads of the stairway and on flat surfaces like the tops of the coffee table and end tables. Some are piled on the floor, in the corners of the room.

Florence is animated and energetic, gesturing frequently and raising her voice for emphasis. There is a nervous, bird-like quality to her motions, which is quite captivating when one considers she is 88 years old. Her blue eyes would roll in thought then meet your gaze confidently and directly. She seemed to enjoy the interviewing process. Earl, her husband, appeared briefly and quietly on a few occasions, adding a few shy comments of his own. Once he disappeared to trap a squirrel that had somehow taken up residence in the basement. Florence is understandably proud of her family history—her ancestors were neighbors of Abraham Lincoln at one time—and of her acquaintance with the educational network in Central Illinois, where she seemed to know every school teacher and principal of the past 40 years. Former students still write to her, and on our first visit, the table was covered with a special tablecloth, embroidered with all the names of the PTA at a school where she once taught—a fitting symbol of the close relationship that once existed between teachers and parents. The tablecloth is enduring physical proof of the gentler and more civilized world that Florence recalled so vividly.

* * *

My ancestors came here in 1826—the Warnicks and Austins. My great-grandfather was William Warnick, the first Sheriff of Macon County. I used to go down to the pasture with my grandmother who had an old-fashioned yellow rose bush. She used to say, "You know, Abraham Lincoln used to live down the river."

1924 was the first year I taught. I graduated in June. We had a terrible time getting there—the hard road wasn't finished and the car couldn't get through the mud. I had already passed the Teacher's Exam. Somebody else had to register for me—can you imagine someone starting college like that. When I first started teaching I was so scared I was timid. I'd have to get up in front of the parents. We didn't call it PTA. I swear my knees played *Home Sweet Home*. You hide your shyness, and you *work* on it. I usually brought in coal and cobs the night before so I got the fire going. Then I'd sweep the floor. I didn't have to dust the erasers or ring the bell because the kids fought to do it. One of the kids brought in a bucket of water used for drinking with a dipper—or with a wash pan and soap. Even in the country schools there was a kerosene cooking stove. The parents and directors somehow permitted this.

Most country schools were like families. The big ones took care of the little ones. I never had any acts of violence or any girls getting pregnant, but one got married. I do remember one girl holding up her hand and claimed, "Somebody's taken my pen!" Nobody said a thing. We spent 45 minutes searching those kids. One of the other girls had hidden it in the cuff of her pants leg. I remember one boy died; it was traumatic for his classmates. Another boy was killed by the Interurban [RR]. The good friends were pretty morose and just didn't understand why this should happen to a buddy. It took a while for them to go over it. The parents just loved you and wanted to show it. There were fewer of the rural people. The rural school was like a family. I can only remember big kids looking after the little ones. Westville had only ten students. Many children were the only ones in their grade. I tried to act as his classmate. He had no one to work against since there was such a small neighborhood. There were rural schools every three or four miles. There weren't so many of us as there are today. My Mom and Dad taught me to read and complimented me for achieving. Today *some* families could care less. I know of one student *today*

whose Dad just doesn't care. When I taught at Pleasant Hill (between Mt. Zion and Macon), I passed three schools between the edge of Decatur and Pleasant Hill. If I go north to Maroa, I can point out where four or five different schools *used* to be.

I grew up on a farm; I went to Warrensburg High for my sophomore year. In good weather we went in a Model-T; in bad weather we went in a mule-drawn buggy. Many schools had barns attached to them; many kids rode their ponies and horses to school. Every desk, except those of the little children, had an inkwell, a metal container with a glass insert, that fit in a hole in the desk. Every week—and at that time you could buy ink—I would go down the aisles and pour ink from a gallon jug. Mr. Trainer made his own ink from different berries, including elderberries and huckleberries. The schoolmaster had to fill the inkwells. When I play the schoolmaster for children today (at the Macon County Historical Museum), children often don't sit on the desk but on the *recitation bench,* on iron legs. You listened to them read or do arithmetic there. It didn't happen very much—I didn't have a single instance of boys dipping girls' pigtails in the inkwell. But it did happen around 1900 when my mother was in school.

In the early schools, in the time of Mr. Trainer, in the 1890s, I don't think they had clocks. Men had watches in vest pockets with chains; women had pin or brooch watches. The bigger schools had clocks later—they had to be wound every five or seven days.

When the bell was rung, we usually had morning exercises. Sometimes we sang or played a geography game. Some teachers read from the Bible. Everybody took: orthography, civics, physiology—that's health, today. After morning exercises, we took care of the first grades first. They were always given something to do—color or play with blocks. The next class would be the third grade. In many country schools, it was alternate years of grades. The "off year" students came anyhow. But I didn't do that because it was unfair to the students. That was why when the war was going on I had 52 children in all grades except second and seventh, from first to eighth. Reading always came first, then arithmetic. You'd get through all classes—sometimes the class period was only five minutes. You had to be on your toes and keep going. Later, a high-school teacher could spot the

country students because they always went to work as soon as the bell rang. At recess and noon-time, I always went out to play with the children. The first year I left the country I went to Brush College in Decatur. And I had three boys who were "scorchers." They were real problems and many have ended up in prison. In order to avoid fights I umpired the ball games. Around the end of September, Mr. Green, the Superintendent, called me down to the office. I thought Good Lord! What have I done wrong now? He asked, "Mrs. White, what have you been doing to those boys? I haven't had 'Scorchy' Becker and the others down to my office, and I used to have them every week."

I always had my program for the day written up so anyone who came along could tell what was going on. We had to teach orthography, which was like the Bible. Every week at Normal we had a 100-word spelling test. The currriculum was structured. The textbooks were chosen by the Superintendent. If you had time, you could introduce something else. But each month the superintendent mailed out a set of questions—not to be opened until the morning of the examination. So you had to teach that book, or the child couldn't pass the examination. The papers were sent to the County Superintendent's office. It was frustrating because if you wanted to teach something in a different way, you just couldn't.

Always my favorites were literature, history, and spelling. I taught the old Palmer Method, but I never considered myself a good penman.

I don't recall that textbooks were changed very often. I have an old geography book covered with cloth that belonged to Frank Sawyer. The mother had stitched the cover, and it was used by three generations of students. 100 years ago you could have a third-grade reading class and no two students had the same books. Paper cost too much money; we used slates. I had students whose fathers worked as kind of migrant worker. As soon as "the corn was husked and the hay was all in, the family was gone. Come Monday morning Jerry wasn't in school."

One of the hazards of teaching in rural schools was that there were no tenure laws whatsoever. Teachers today have no conception of looking for a job each spring. We would interview with Directors in the field or even in a barn. When contract signing time came, we'd argue about whether I'd get $85 or $90

a month. A friend of mine taught in a district where two board members were bitter enemies. She was a good teacher; one board member didn't like her and persuaded the board to fire her. [She had a mnemonic device to help students memorize the names of presidents in succession.] I had a friend who taught two boys from Kentucky and saw smoke coming from the outdoor toilet. She pumped a bucket of water and she doused them. "What did you do *that* for?" they asked. "Why, I thought it was on fire," she said. The school day was from nine to four. In the country school we didn't have a flag pull, although we did say the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning.

Work applies to how you feel about yourself. The days in the rural schools were long and tedious. I drove a horse and buggy—until the mud and snow. Then I used a two-wheeled cart with no back. You had to take care of the horse, put it in the barn, build the fire, sweep the floor—whatever you had to do to get ready. You worked hard *all* day—not like teachers today who get a break. I went out and played with the kids—Sure I could have got a cup of coffee, but I worked. Did I get satisfaction? Yes. I was one of those people—quoted Shakespeare about greatness. I wanted to be a missionary, but I had only one hand. The other day I got $100 from a former student for my bookstore project. She said she was a fan of mine. She said, "Mrs. White taught me that you can do anything if you want to do it badly enough." Another wrote, "I make my *t's* just the way you make them." One of my former students wrote me that they learned how to make t's and r's and a's from me. Would you think that someone had a lifetime tendency because of something you weren't ever aware?

The reason I taught so long was because of three persons, all students of mine: 1) Tom Brinkoetter (Walnut Grove School); 2) Shirley Moore (Brush College School) and 3) Penny Severns (Lakeview School).

Advice to a young school teacher: My sister said recently that she and I lived through more changes than any other people. I would say you must *love* children if you want to be a good teacher. You must be prepared for hard and intensive work. You can't stand on the sidelines. I was there to *teach* those kids, and I would do it to the *best* of my ability. I knew two teachers who were too prone to get out the door at 3:30. That's not the mark

of a good teacher. A young person may feel that some things they'd *like* to do, but the community won't approve. I wanted to go to a dance, when I was young. But I knew there would be disapproval, so I didn't go. Would I be a teacher again? Yes. Happily! Maybe a librarian—as long as I'd be around books.

"I'm glad I did it. I taught 47 years altogether. I can't think of anything else I'd rather have done."

* * *

Lester Barnett, Farmer

Lester is a man living on the edge. In his mid-80s, he still performs daily chores on his farm which literally occupies the easternmost edge of Decatur. After Lester's farm, the wide-open country begins. But if Lester is a man living on the geographical edge, he also inhabits the farthest cultural and chronological edge as well. His memory of Decatur goes back to the second decade of this century when huge draft horses hauled coal from the mine in downtown Decatur to the Barnett Homestead, then "out in the country." Lester helped to lay railroad tracks for the Norfolk and Western Railroad and to pour concrete for the runways of the Decatur airport. He was one of the oldest draftees from the Decatur area to serve in World War Two—or the "Japan War," as he calls it.

In fact, one of the most noticeable attributes of this wiry little man who has held all kinds of jobs and still works on a *daily* basis, is his twangy backwoods speech, a linguistic throwback from the days of Samuel Clemens. Lester's speech would fit comfortably and unobtrusively in the pages of *Huckleberry Finn*. When Lester is gone, a unique style of speech (once common in Central Illinois and the Midwest generally) will be one step closer to extinction.

His house and farmstead are virtual museum-pieces, the yard littered with the rusted out carcasses of old John Deere tractors, forty, fifty, and even sixty years old. He drives a twenty-year-old Chevrolet pickup truck, one of his newer possessions, considering the fact that his idea of high-tech musical entertainment is a vintage Edison crank-up phonograph on which he plays scratchy waltzes and fiddle tunes—his favorites.

He keeps a tool shed filled with antique horse tack, including circus-horse collars and bridles, fancy saddles, and all kinds of ancient screwdrivers, crowbars, weighing scales, and other farm-related tools and implements. After a few visits and interviews, he shined and polished these precious keepsakes and displayed them proudly on our next visit.

Lester dressed in overalls, rubber boots, an insulated vest, and an aviator-style cap with ear flaps. The strings fluttered loosely from the flaps. He did not appear to shave, change clothes, or bathe frequently, although he did shave before our final visit, in which we were finally allowed a brief admittance to the old, dilapidated house. We made several visits before he agreed to be formally interviewed. Time and memory flowed into pools and eddies in his mind—he had vivid recall of some 75 years of personal history, so his monologues were often difficult to follow.

At first, it often appeared that he failed to answer a question, when, in fact, he had taken the long way round through a series of anecdotes.

In every visit his love of animals—wild and domestic—was obvious. He commented on the birds, foxes, skunks, and other wild creatures on his farm, all the while talking gently to his beloved cows and calves and to the dozens of cats that inhabited the barns and outbuildings. He had no idea how *many* cats he owned. But, over the years, he had become a kind of hermit, a bit of a pariah for his nonconformist ways, and the animals had become his only friends. Indeed, they were the only beings he regularly addressed, which made our sessions all the more difficult *and* valuable.

* * *

I went to school to Dessie Stacey and Mary Rubles, her dad used to run a dairy across from North Fork cemetery—he lost his mind when they built the airport and he lost his home and his holsteins. Willie Zimmerman—I went to school with him. We had rough kids like Bill Binder who tripped the girls, and Will said, "Did you do that a-purpose?" He was making his brags outside. Willie said, "we don't want that to happen," and he tried to swat Willie, who slapped him to the floor. Teacher

made me sit with Davy Bender, and I got lice. I wanted my hair long, and my Mom saw a couple of lice. She got that coal oil jug and doused my hair, then shaved my head. It blistered. My old head was red as red could be. My sisters were all a-crying. Ollie Nickey was a good teacher.

* * *

All the ground down there by the airport, I cut corn there for Rubles and Veech. Big roasting ears. Harry Meisenfelder and I got into it there once.

I worked for Clem Veech till he died, then I worked for his boys, then he died. Dave Neavis—I had an old coal oil light. Dave said to me, he wanted my light before I died. I said, "I ain't dead yet." He was a bricklayer and dug trenches with a backhoe. Louise—she married my brother—said he died. Had a heart attack. They took him to Decatur hospital and they couldn't do nothing for him. He died on the way to the hospital. He was only 50.

I was too old to go to the Japan war. The guy who sent me was an Irishman. We got into it, and he sent me anyhow. They sent me to *Arkansas*. McCarthy was his name. He found out he met up with one who was half-Irish and half-Indian. If I had met him, I would pound the living daylights out of him.

Roy Clarkson out here must be purty near a hundred. He's *old*.

* * *

My brother worked with two colored guys and two white guys on the runways for the airport. "You gotta go ____ and lean on your shovel. You're fired." The Big Shot says, "You can't fire them—they belong to the union." My brother threw their time book at their feet. You-uns have just come up here and have a white-shirt job. For two years he walked around with a cigar and didn't do a lick of work. He didn't like big shots.

They couldn't get nobody to go through the alemite grease. We put in iron pins in the concrete. It was a hot summer—even the cinders caught on fire. You couldn't wipe sweat off because of the grease.

Old Lady Poe came out here during the Depression and bought five acres of land. Mom had bunions and couldn't wear shoes. Mom said "when you die, they'll put shoes on you."

Dad said to Mom, "I don't know who'd want you. I've got a little blue-eyed thing. You take the kids and 16 acres." He lived in a shack and three or four different ones he lived with. Well, Cliff Maples was drunk, and they brought him to our house—two army guys. They said, "He h'ain't in his uniform. If he doesn't have it, they'll kill him." Cliff borrowed my uniform and never gave it back. Cliff had gone over the hill (AWOL). After they got him, Dad went to the tavern and got drunk. Cliff said, "Pap won't come home, and he's drunker than the devil." The old bartender wouldn't let him be taken out. But dad would freeze. I had never been in a tavern and never eaten in a restaurant. I was stronger than the devil, and I picked him up, even though he said he was his own boss. I don't want no damn beer or whiskey to drink. He swore it wasn't me who took him.

I stayed single—I saw too much of this married life. I stayed with Mom till she passed away—a cancer in her back opened, and they took her to Decatur Hospital. The years go faster but I don't feel any older than when I was 15 or 16. I grew up with horses—look I polished my harnesses. I've chewed tobacco and smoked cee-gars since I was no higher'n that. Me and my little sister got to chewing, too. Heck she weighs 300 or more. You lose that stoutness when you get old.

They used to parade the streets in Decatur. They'd have a lion or tiger. They'd a-be driving those horses. They don't have parades like they used to. See that road. In wintertime, we'd go to Decatur Mine for coal, and the snow was so deep the wagon would sink up to the hubs.

Old Roy Clarkson bought a white circus mare. I went out there. They had cut the bone out of their tails. He said I'll take $20 for that big gray horse. He said, "He's got a mean eye." I said, "I don't care, just so long as he's got two of em"—when he saw that collar, he started snorting. I had to push the harness on him. He jumped a time or two. I put the singletree on. I put the hitch straps on the end of my line and we pulled four railroad ties together.

I loved my horses. I farmed my five acres up there—just corn. Soybeans will kill the horses. It makes their guts purple.

Roy, who lives down there, well, old Roy fed soybeans to his hogs and the beans poisoned them.

I was around twenty or twenty-one. I used to buy guernsey bulls. I told Jackson not to let his boy walk in the pasture with this bull. He came after me. I jumped over his horns and hooked my legs around his neck. He took me round and round the barn. I grabbed the door handle and took a pitchfork. That was the *heaviest* pitchfork I ever picked up. Dad said it was a circus.

* * *

Lester cranked up his vintage Edison phonograph (oak). He played us a scratchy old 78-record of a fiddle tune. "Come on," he said, "Get done fiddling." My nephew can put the fiddle behind his back and play it. We listened to reels on old Edison disc #9151.

A curved-glass china cabinet (walnut) contained dozens of knick-knacks and gee-gaws, including three horse statuettes (bronze, plastic and ceramic). He also showed off a loaded pistol, a cavalry sabre, a .22 rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun.

Many old photographs hung on the walls, including one of Lester in his WWII ("Japan War") uniform. He also showed two lovely oak chairs with brass knobs on the top, and a large oval walnut dining table with elaborately carved edges and legs.

Lester owned 20 outbuildings (sheds), four generations of weed cutters, and most of the machinery was museum-pieces.

He had three tractors—generations of John Deere tractors, the older ones supplying a succession of spare parts to the newer.

He had an Indian Chief tin sign—in red, yellow, and black with bullet indentations.

He was chewing tobacco today. His eyes water up frequently.

"No Hunting Keep Out" was the sign on the front gate. He also had a handmade birdhouse. He once owned over 100 cats—a large inbred family (black, white, black-and-white, gray and white) They was slinking around on beams, branches, outdoor tables, and trooping through the snow. A huge pyramid of rusted tin cans rose in the yard formerly cat food tins.

He showed me a bronze pipe-wrench when we entered the house—a rare tool used around gas lines "because it wouldn't cause sparks."

I plowed the whole east side with one little horse. I had the best corn on the prairie. This corn now ain't got near the fatness that the other had. I never bought seed corn. I'd pick up the good ears and save them in a box. This corn they're putting out now, it ain't worth anything.

Millikin University

ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE: 1992

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