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by members of*

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edited by
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**In honor of
Judith Minty**

PREFACE

In its twenty-sixth year and the second of its bi-annual appearance, *Midwestern Miscellany* explores an array of topics, ranging from the bloody fields of Chickamauga in 1863 as portrayed by Ambrose Bierce to the storied and disgraced playing field of the Chicago White Sox in 1919, from the search for moral truth in Midwestern Catholic rectories to the fertile fields of Malabar Farm and to the fictional memoir of a man's youthful search recreated in late middle age.

This array, in many ways a microcosm of Midwestern literary study as well as of the wide-ranging interests of the membership, is as diverse as the region that each of the essays reflects, the people of that region, and the attempts by the region's writers to, in the words of the late John T. Frederick, "reveal and interpret the people of his region to themselves."

That this issue is dedicated to Judith Minty, poet and recipient of the Mark Twain Award for 1998, is testimony not only to the clarity with which she reflects the Midwestern experience in her work but as testimony, too, to the oneness in her work with that of all Midwestern writers, a oneness that transcends the diversity of time, place, and circumstances in Midwestern life.

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CONTENTS

Preface		5
Ambrose Bierce's "Chickamauga": A Lesson in History	Kelli A. Larson	9
Playing "with the faith of fifty million people"?: The Response of the Print Media to the Black Sox Scandal and its Revelations about Gambling	Douglas A. Noverr	23
Priestly Sleuths: Mystery in Midwestern Urban Settings	Russ Bodi	32
Louis Bromfield's "Cubic Foot of Soil"	David D. Anderson	41
A Chapter of Autobiography, Part One	William Thomas	48
A Major Midwestern Bibliography: a review essay	David D. Anderson	56

BIERCE'S "CHICKAMAUGA": A LESSON IN HISTORY

KELLI A. LARSON

In his San Francisco *Examiner* column of May 8, 1898, Ambrose Bierce responded to a reader's request that he clarify who was responsible for the near rout of Federal troops at the battle of Chickamauga. The reader, urging Bierce to "relate the battle more fully, telling us why and through whom it was so nearly lost" (*Skepticism* 20), had subtly chided the usually outspoken journalist for his uncharacteristic reticence in "Chickamauga: some random personal recollections of that famous field,"¹ which had appeared in the *Examiner* just two weeks prior. Bierce's response is notable for indeed in his earlier article he had mitigated the role of the commanding general (William S. Rosecrans) in the debacle that resulted in the loss of 37,000 lives. As a veteran of Chickamauga, Bierce understood well the controversies attached to this particular battle but chose in his "personal recollections" to characterize Rosecrans's most fatal miscalculation, the withdrawal of Federal troops from the battle line just as the Confederate army lay siege, as a "misunderstanding" (274).

Now, in his clarification of May 8, he deemed the tactical error an "unpardonable misconception" and Rosecrans "a brilliant crank" whose "best judgment ... was never very good" (*Skepticism* 20). Whether or not the inquiring reader was satisfied with Bierce's further explanation remains a mystery. However, he might have been better served had Bierce simply reprinted his short story "Chickamauga," originally appearing in the *Examiner* nine years before. In this fictional account, Bierce surrealistically transforms the Georgia battlefield into a child's playground while the blundering military leadership is cynically depicted through the playful and naive antics of the text's six-year-old protagonist who envisions himself in the

role of general to the bloody remnants of retreating Union troops. Through numerous parallels between the story's plot and actual historical events, Bierce delivers a scathing indictment of the ineptitude of General Rosecrans while detailing his fall from military grace.

Having already participated in several battles, including Shiloh, Corinth, and Stone River, Bierce was no novice to war when on September 19, 1863, he marched into the maelstrom of Chickamauga. With the hindsight provided by thirty-five years, Bierce writes in "A Little of Chickamauga" that this "was not my first battle by many, for although hardly more than a boy in years, I had served at the front from the beginning of the trouble, and had seen enough of war to give me a fair understanding of it" (270). By the spring of 1863 Bierce's brigade, commanded by General W. B. Hazen, had joined with Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland to force General Braxton Bragg's Confederates out of Tennessee. In a series of near bloodless strategic maneuvers, Rosecrans drove Bragg out of Chattanooga by early September. Despite wise counsel that he remain in Chattanooga until it could be firmly established as a base of operations for the entire Northern Army, Rosecrans boldly continued his pursuit of Bragg into the heart of the Confederacy, ill prepared to defend against the reinforced Southern army he would meet just days later. Though General Hazen writes in his memoirs that "It was very clear, soon after taking up our march into Georgia, that we were not following a retreating army, but one falling back for strategic purposes" (120), Rosecrans himself was unable to recognize and unwilling to listen to his advisors that Bragg was not in flight until September 12, leaving him precious little time to reassemble his troops, now split into three corps with nearly sixty miles distance from end to end (Cleaves 150).

In summing up the Union army's vulnerability, Hazen continues, "We actually put ourselves in a position so false that for four days we were entirely at the mercy of the enemy; and that we were not totally destroyed by detachments was due to an equally great mistake on his part" (147). With his customary economy, Bierce outlines their precarious situation in his memoir: "By the time that Rosecrans had got his three scattered corps together we were a long way from Chattanooga, with our line of communication with it so exposed that Bragg turned to seize it" (271).

By the first day of engagement on September 19, Rosecrans's hastily gathered troops were assembled in battle lines extending

some six miles, roughly following the course of the Chickamauga River. The terrain was densely wooded, with thick undergrowth unexpectedly giving way at times to open farmland. After a day of heavy fighting and even heavier casualty counts, the tide of the battle turned when on the morning of the 20th the Confederates broke through a half mile wide gap in the Federal line, dividing Rosecrans's army in two. Bierce writes in his memoir, "They came on in thousands, and so rapidly that we had barely time to turn tail and gallop down the hill and away" (273). Caught within the collapse of the right wing of the Federal army, Rosecrans fled the chaos of the field, safely arriving in Chattanooga a short time later. Bierce, also caught in the rout and unable to find his brigade, did not follow Rosecrans's example but instead obeyed one of the fundamental laws of warfare—advance toward the sound of battle; in this case, to where the remaining left wing was still intact and heavily engaged. That Rosecrans chose to flee the field rather than support his left wing, now headed by General George H. Thomas who would later be known as the "Rock of Chickamauga" for his tenacity in carrying on the battle until ordered to withdraw, seems not to have bothered Bierce unduly. "Rosecrans's retirement from the field was not cowardly. He was caught in the rout of the right and naturally supposed that the entire army had given way. His error lay in accepting that view of the disaster without inquiry and endeavoring to repair his broken fortunes by holding the reorganized fugitives at Chattanooga instead of leading them back to the support of his unbeaten left" (*Skepticism* 20).

The break in line had been created by Rosecrans's own blunder. Just at the onset of battle on the second day, an aide wrongly reported a missing division in the front line. In fact, the division was present, though deeply entrenched in the woods. Deaf to the assurances of others regarding the solidity of the line and unwilling to check for himself though he was a mere four minute gallop away (Tucker 258), Rosecrans immediately ordered another division (commanded by Thomas Wood) into the supposed gap, thus creating an actual gap where Wood's division had been. Unfortunately for the North, Wood's withdrawal coincided with a Southern rush, resulting in the Confederate breakthrough Bierce describes in the previous paragraph. Though over the years historians have argued the degree of Rosecrans's culpability, Hazen lays the blame squarely upon the general's shoulders.

The causes of our disaster, where there ought to have been a decided victory, may be simply stated. The line of battle, on the night of the 18th, should have been compactly and completely posted for the battle, under the eye of the commander-in-chief, and nothing should have prevented this. During the progress of the battle no troops in the front line should have been ordered out of it by any one not actually present, and acting upon actual knowledge, and especially not from a point ten miles away. With the line properly posted on the night of the 19th ... our success would have been nearly certain. (135)

Bierce reinforces Hazen's judgment when responding to his *Examiner* reader's inquiry. "The action was lost, as I explained, by withdrawal of Woods' division from its center just as the enemy was attacking. That was Rosecrans's fault, for his order, in obedience to which Wood withdrew, was made under an unpardonable misconception" (*Skepticism* 20). That Bierce agrees with his commanding officer's placement of responsibility is perhaps not so surprising in light of Napier Wilt's seminal research establishing Bierce's reliance upon Hazen's *A Narrative of Military Service* in writing his own Civil War memoirs, including "A Little of Chickamauga" and "What I Saw of Shiloh." Wilt justifies Bierce's use of the Narrative for "Hazen naturally wrote in detail of the movements of his own brigade—the one in which Bierce fought. From Hazen, Bierce could learn more about his own actions than from any source outside the *Official Records*" (Wilt 270). Yet he cautions readers not to accept Bierce's accounts as historically accurate, for the author, no doubt for dramatic effect, often credited himself as having played significant, though realistically unlikely, roles within battle. For example, as Wilt points out, neither Hazen's memoirs nor the *Official Records* report Bierce as the ammunitions courier or the observant guide who led advancing Union troops to Thomas's aid in "A Little of Chickamauga."

To his credit, Bierce does not pretend to purport history in his memoir, readily admitting in his opening paragraph that his "purpose" is "not instruction, but entertainment" (270). He begins by revealing that it is not his intention to record the entire engagement, "but only to relate some part of what I saw of it" (270). Perhaps Bierce's reluctance to render a complete account stems from his desire not to detract from his earlier fictional version of the same battle, appropriately entitled "Chickamauga." During the late 1880s, Bierce's interest in the Civil War rekindled, culminating in the eventual publication of his first collection of short stories, *Tales of*

Soldiers and Civilians, in 1892. Included in the first section under the category of "Soldiers" are Bierce's best known war stories, including "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and "Chickamauga." That Bierce chose the "soldier" designation for these texts is ironic since both "Occurrence" and "Chickamauga" chronicle most poignantly, at least on the surface, the plight of civilians caught in the fury of war. Peyton Farquhar, a planter who longs for the distinguished life of the soldier, is granted his wish when he becomes one through the summary events of his execution. And the child of "Chickamauga" naively plays the game of war, forfeiting a share of his innocence along with his home and mother; while the soldiers around him, also no longer desiring to play the game, struggle to return to their own homes and mothers.

Bierce writes wryly of the soldiers' naivete and inexperience: "Our volunteers in the recent war ... were virtually, and most of them actually, militia. They had such military training as it is practicable to give to the 'citizen soldier' yet always and everywhere excepting in battle they died like frosted flies. True it was for their country" (*Skepticism* 268-269). Bierce aptly characterizes the ignorance and unpreparedness of these soldier/civilians in his depiction of the child protagonist in "Chickamauga" whose only training in military art is derived from picture books, igniting the ancestral "warrior-fire" within his young breast. As a product of both nature (heredity) and nurture (instruction), he readily embraces his race's "lust for war" (48), just as he embraces his crudely fashioned "toy sword, no longer a weapon but a companion" (48). The child appropriates "with some exaggeration, the postures of aggression and defense that he had been taught by the engraver's art" (47). Confidently and foolishly, he pursues his make believe enemy into the forest, deeper into the tangled undergrowth, eventually losing his way. There he meets others who also had marched boldly and ignorantly to the sound of battle; they too have lost their way. No longer seeking the glory and gallantry of war, they are driven only by the instinct to survive. In perhaps one of the most often quoted passages of Bierce's work, the author writes:

Singly, in pairs and in little groups, they came on through the gloom, some halting now and again while others crept slowly past them, then resuming their movement. They came by dozens and by hundreds; as far on either hand as one could see in the deepening

gloom they extended and the black wood behind them appeared to be inexhaustible. The very ground seemed in motion toward the creek. (50-51)

Like the earlier sleeping child, the soldiers appear "as heedless of the grandeur of the struggle as the dead who had died to make the glory" (55). On they crawl, these "maimed and bleeding men" (51), once victorious hunters now reduced to marked quarry, "streaked and gouted with red" (51). Proving Bierce's gruesome descriptions of the wounded are not exaggerations, Union General John Beatty recalls vividly his own first hand experience at Chickamauga:

We see again the soldier whose bowels were protruding and hear him cry, 'Jesus have mercy on my soul I'... A Confederate boy, who should have been at home with his mother and whose leg had been fearfully torn by a mini ball, hailed me as I was galloping by early in the day. He was bleeding to death and crying bitterly. (qtd. in Cleaves 175-76)

Upon encountering the retreating soldiers, or more accurately the grisly remains of those abandoned during the disengagement, the child is at once curious and afraid. Quickly, however, his fear turns to playfulness as he attempts to mount one of the soldiers in a game of "horsey." Only momentarily daunted by the wounded man's unexpected rebellion at this further degradation, the child swiftly and confidently moves to the front of the multitude, boldly instituting himself as commander of the Union troops. Unknowingly, he leads them toward the scene of his own destruction, the devastated remains of his home and mother. "He placed himself in the lead, his wooden sword still in hand, and solemnly directed the march, conforming his pace to theirs and occasionally turning as if to see that his forces did not straggle. Surely such a leader never before had such a following" (53).

Indeed, the leader of the Union army, never having faced before the overwhelming defeat awaiting him at Chickamauga, had been wholly unprepared for the rout and its devastating effects. Like the child protagonist who in the beginning easily overcame his imaginary enemies, Rosecrans's earlier campaigns had been nearly all successful. After his strategic maneuvering of Bragg out of Tennessee, Rosecrans was at the pinnacle of his military career. Along with such accomplishment came the customary overconfidence and egotism, further paralleled in the child's actions outlined above. In fact,

it is this egoism that prevents both leaders from learning Bierce's all important lesson, notably set off from the rest of the paragraph to signal its significance, "that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star" (48). Bierce writes critically that Rosecrans "was addicted to the vice of galloping wildly along in rear of the front line of his army, making a spectacular extravaganza of himself, with his entire glittering retinue thundering at his heels" (*Skepticism* 65-66). Ironically, the child's doomed "retinue" also glitters, as the light from the consuming flames "sparkled on buttons and bits of metal in their clothing" (53). Bolstered by recent conquests, each fails to heed the warning that victory requires "prudence" and a retirement to one's "base of operations" (47).

Made reckless by the ease with which he overcame invisible foes attempting to stay his advance, he committed the common enough military error of pushing the pursuit to a dangerous extreme, until he found himself upon the margin of a wide but shallow brook, whose rapid waters barred his direct advance against the flying foe that had crossed with illogical ease. (47)

The child's precarious position exactly parallels that of Rosecrans. In rashly pursuing Bragg into Georgia, he must now hurriedly reassemble his troops along the Chickamauga River in preparation for battle. And like the general who meets an unanticipated reinforced Confederate army at the river and flees, the child too, still in pursuit, is "confronted with a new and more formidable enemy: in the path that he was following, sat, bolt upright, with ears erect and paws suspended before it, a rabbit" (48)! Terrified, the child darts off. Stuart C. Woodruff suggests their mutual "retreats" connect the child with the soldiers, arguing that Bierce's purpose is not to preach of the atrocities of war but to show that the "child carries in him the same instinctive forces and impulses which send the wounded soldiers crawling crazily through the forest and which demolish his world" (42). However Woodruff criticizes Bierce's exaggeration of the child's reaction to the rabbit: "In an ironic reversal somewhat too heavily insisted upon, the 'son of an heroic race' flees in panic" (40). Yet such overemphasis, I would argue, is necessary for understanding the extent of the child's inculcation to war; for this child makes heroes of war generals and foes of the least offensive of woodland creatures. This child, "born to war and dominion as a heritage" (46), fears not the wounded soldiers so unfamiliarly clad, but that which

he has not been conditioned to—the peacefulness and harmlessness of a rabbit.

Perhaps even more significant, however, is Bierce's underscoring of the rabbit's primary physical characteristic, both in the quotation above and later when the child initially encounters the crawling soldiers, whom he is relieved to see do not possess "the long, menacing ears of the rabbit" (50). The ears are not threatening because of their appearance but because of their function—to listen, that which is impossible for the deaf protagonist. His naturally innocent and simplistic world vision has been further insulated by this disability, enabling him to wake in the midst of retreat with only childlike understanding of the battle which has transpired or its aftermath. To him, the wounded soldiers appear as painted circus clowns, their death struggles providing entertainment. To further emphasize the child's limited apprehension, Bierce has him awake within the "gathering gloom of twilight," a "ghostly mist" forcing him "toward the dark inclosing wood" (49). Had the child been able to hear the agonizing cries of the maimed and dying men—their curses, their prayers, their weeping—no doubt the "merry spectacle" (52) would have taken a decidedly different turn. As too would the entire battle, had Rosecrans been able to overcome his own limited perceptions.

Like his youthful counterpart, Rosecrans has proven himself unable to listen on consequential occasions leading up to and during the battle—deaf to advice to remain in Chattanooga until it could be rooted as a Northern stronghold; deaf to warnings of Bragg's feigned retreat; deaf to assurances of the soundness of his battle line; and deaf to the cannons of his own army's left wing when he fled the battlefield in favor of Chattanooga. One may recall Bierce's words from his memoir following the rout: "We could hear Thomas's guns going—*those of us who had ears for them* (italics mine)—and all that was needful was to make a sufficiently wide detour and then move toward the sound" (274). Ironically, Chickamauga was perhaps one of the loudest of the Civil War battles, no doubt as a consequence of the sheer number of soldiers fighting within the enclosed density of the forest. Several memoirs have commented upon the deafening clash, including General John Palmer, who observed the battle at a distance using a field glass: "In all my experience I have never witnessed such desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The sound of mus-

ketry was so incessant and rapid that it was a continuous roar" (qtd. in Cleaves 173).

To those civilians caught in the midst of unfamiliar battle, the noise must have been deafening. As in the story, there was indeed a small plantation located in the center of the battlefield. The Glenn house was a modest log cabin owned by Mrs. Eliza Glenn, the widow of a Confederate soldier named John who left for battle in 1861 but never returned. Though the Glenns had two children, the youngest just two years old, unfortunately no record is made of the age or sex of the older child (Tucker 139). However, several additional elements seem to connect the Glenn house with its fictional counterpart, other than merely ill-fated location. For example, both John Glenn and the protagonist's father were "poor planter[s]" (46) who relied on slave labor and who had served in war. Though the opening of Bierce's story seems to imply that the child's father is still living, no mention is made of him in the remaining text, suggesting his possible absence from the plantation at the time of the story and thus paralleling Glenn's absence. For instance, the child remembers playing "horsey" with slaves, but not with his father. And more significantly, the father does not appear at the end, with its detailed description of only the mother's destruction. Our sole clue to the contrary is Bierce's vague reference that as the battle approached, both "white men and black" (49) searched for the missing child. Fiction and history are further blended with the destruction of the child's home, described as "a blazing ruin" at the end of the story. The Glenn house was reduced to ashes during the battle, destroyed by an exploding shell (Foote 740).

Eliza Glenn and her children survived the fire, having moved to a place of safety during the battle itself, however, not before Mrs. Glenn attempted to aid the inept Rosecrans in tracking the battle, the general having appropriated her house as his headquarters until the fatal rout. A reporter from the New York *Herald*, W. F. Shanks, comically described the chaos inside the Glenn house, depicting a lost Rosecrans feebly depending upon the ears of others to direct him. In another obvious allusion to the general's deafness, the reporter writes of Mrs. Glenn's attempts to distinguish the sound of gunfire, from the continuous cannonade, and then to guide Rosecrans using a crude map of the area (Tucker 139). To the *Herald* correspondent it was obvious that Rosecrans had little or no understanding of events outside the cabin, much like the child protagonist who naively wanders

from home, at first oblivious to the surrounding battle but later inanely attempting to direct it. In support of Shanks's assessment of Rosecrans's ineptitude, Union Colonel John T. Wilder writes:

There was no generalship in it. It was a soldier's fight purely, wherein the only question involved was the question of endurance. The two armies came together like two wild beasts, and each fought as long as it could stand up in a knock-down and drag-out encounter. If there had been any high order of generalship displayed, the disasters to both armies might have been less. (qtd. in Foote, 717)

Hazen agrees with Wilder's evaluation, writing in his memoirs: "In studying this battle of Chickamauga one is mainly impressed with the lack of steady and systematic direction in placing and manoeuvring [sic] the different parts of the army" (120).

With the breakthrough of the Confederate army came not only a turning point in the battle but in Rosecrans's military career as well. The usually buoyant and confident Rosecrans was near collapse following the rout. According to his chief aide Brigadier General James A. Garfield, later President Garfield, Rosecrans "rode silently along, abstracted, as if he neither saw nor heard" (qtd. in Cleaves 168). Upon his arrival in Chattanooga, he appeared "faint and ill" and had to be helped from his horse; the general later maintained that he had been deeply engaged in prayer and not insensible as had been reported (Morris 59). In truth, the safe haven sought by Rosecrans at Chattanooga proved only a momentary lee before the onslaught of the political storm that swept him from favor with his own men and the powerful war machine in Washington D.C. Shortly following the debacle, Lincoln replaced Rosecrans with Thomas, commenting privately that since the battle at Chickamauga the general had acted "confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head" (qtd. in Cleaves 182). One may recall Bierce's own use of fowl imagery in describing the desolate cries of the child, after discovering his mother's body, as resembling "the gobbling of a turkey" (57). The war's end found Rosecrans without command; angry and bitter, and still unable to comprehend the series of events that had led to his military downfall, and more significantly, unwilling to take responsibility for his own failure at Chickamauga. Writing to his former aide James Garfield, now in Congress, Rosecrans questions: "I find myself put into retirement and apparent disgrace, while young men of less age, rank, services, men tainted with pecuniary speculation if not *pecula-*

tion, are in command and favor. I want to tax your friendship, in which I confide, to find out and give me an explanation of how and why this is" (Lamers 5).

At the end of Bierce's fictional account, we find the little general also without a command, only slowly awakening to the devastating aftermath of war. Though he too had retired instinctively to a place of shelter, there he found "His little world swung half around; the points of the compass ... reversed" (57). The child, without fully comprehending the extent of his loss for he has not yet recognized his mother's body, "flung in his sword—a surrender to the superior forces of nature. His military career was at an end" (56). Like Rosecrans, he has brought about his own destruction with his zeal-ousness, literally adding his wooden sword to the conflagration. The mother's death, a consequence of his behavior, suggests the extent of his sacrifice to the "warrior-fire" (46) which has consumed his heritage and his future. As he gazes down upon the body of his mother, the child is forced to confront death wholly and openly, her "white face turned upward" (57). Had he not wandered from home and lost his way, no doubt his mother would have followed Mrs. Glenn's example and removed herself and her family from the battlefield. However, with her heart "breaking for her missing child" (49), the mother had little choice but to remain, for she could not desert her son by leaving him behind.

Oddly, Bierce never identifies the dead woman at the end of the story as the protagonist's mother. In the most incongruous of descriptions, he vaguely refers to "the dead body of a woman" (57) and then proceeds to define her wound in the minutest of detail: "The greater part of the forehead was torn away, and from the jagged hole the brain protruded, overflowing the temple, a frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles—the work of a shell." Since Bierce has never before shied away from killing off parents, siblings, and other family members in his works,² one can only assume that such ambiguity implies a larger significance for the role of the woman. For example, as a mother in search of her child, she could represent the Old South's desperate attempt to maintain its present way of life and protect its future; her death suggesting its inevitable ruination. That the child looks upon an impersonal and generic "wreck" (57) at the end of the tale, rather than upon his mother or even a woman, seems to support such a reading. However, Bierce's message may be more direct. In ending with the final

destruction of the text's only two civilians, the author may be commenting upon the plight of those civilians, especially in the South, caught up in the relentless savagery of warfare.

One critic has suggested the woman's "deranged" clothing implies sexual assault (Davidson 43), but perhaps the assault is more figurative than literal. As a Southerner forced to endure the atrocities of the invading Union army, her rape may symbolize the North's culpable penetration of the South, the Union's violation deep within the Confederacy. Such an explanation for her disheveled appearance may prove more plausible in light of the historical events of the battle. Although Hazen reveals in his memoirs that pillaging of civilians often fell under the prerogative of retreating soldiers (120), an actual rape during either the feigned Southern retreat or the later rout of the Union army seems unlikely. We know, for example, that the mother is still alive after the initial Southern retreat since she is searching for her son at the onset of battle. During the later retreat, the survival of the Union soldiers necessitated their swift and immediate retirement from the field. Bierce writes of the sudden and unexpected breakthrough in his memoir: "I saw the entire country in front swarming with Confederates; the very earth seemed to be moving toward us! They came on in thousands, and so rapidly that we had barely time to turn tail and gallop down the hill and away" (273). Though the rape and murder could have occurred during the heat of the battle itself, which the narrator estimates as having lasted a few hours, the ferociousness and intensity of the fighting found in this particular engagement, as evidenced in previous quotations, seems to preclude such a reading. Bierce recalls the soldiers at the finish of the battle as "exhausted and unnerved by two days of hard fighting, without sleep, without rest, without food and without hope" (277).

Thus Bierce's fictional civilians may stand for the thousands of defenseless women and children who suffered greatly at the hands of the invaders. As the Union army approached and as battle seemed imminent, women like Mrs. Glenn fled with their families, returning later to find their homes destroyed and their land strewn with the bodies of dead soldiers and horses. Helpless to prevent the burning, harvesting, and looting of their crops and property, and left with no means to support themselves and their families, frightened and destitute women flocked with their children to the larger cities like Atlanta in a futile attempt to escape further hardship. But even there the war found them, perhaps especially there. The destruction

wrought in Atlanta, for instance, was not unusual—simply greater. Thus, despite the child's journey deep into the forest to play "soldier," he returns home to discover that war's devastating effects cannot be contained: "Desolation everywhere! In all the wide glare not a living thing was visible" (56).

In his *Memoirs*, William Tecumseh Sherman wrote, "generally war is destruction and nothing else" (301). This philosophy fits Bierce's war fiction perfectly. Unlike any other type of conflict, civil war engenders the destruction of ourselves. The soldiers, so "unfamilarly clad" (51) to the child, are still recognizable as men, only their uniforms distinguishing them. The men who struggle to drink from the life giving Chickamauga River, with its "dashes of red" (55) are drinking the blood of their brothers, of those who have gone before. While mothers wait anxiously on both sides of the river for the safe return of their sons, they seem to hold more in common than in opposition. In any *civil* war, the ranks are made up of *civilians* ... of planters, journalists, and shop keepers ... of husbands, sons, and brothers. All are called into the most *uncivil* of service for their country; civilians transformed into soldiers with the stroke of a pen and a few weeks of military training. And all are powerless under the capriciousness of war with its squandering of human life.

Though one early reviewer suggested in the *Nation* that Bierce's war fiction deserved "the widest circulation as a peace tract of the first order" (225), Bierce considered himself an artist rather than a reformer. He observed, "Literature ... is an *art*;—it is not a form of benevolence. It has nothing to do with 'reform' and when used as a means of reform suffers accordingly and justly. ... The love of truth is good enough motive for me when I write of my fellowmen" (*Letters* 4). For Bierce, his powerful and severe postwar critique of the administration of the battle allowed him to set the record straight—not the *Official Records*, but one still faithful to history and to the thousands of men who perished at Chickamauga, that "fiercest and bloodiest of all the great conflicts of modern times" (*Skepticism* 21). Though the extent of Bierce's reliance upon his own observations and experiences in writing his war literature has yet to be determined, it is clear that the events of Chickamauga stayed with him long after the withdrawal of cannons. Writing of the battlefield some thirty-five years later in his memoir, Bierce concludes: "To those of us who have survived the attacks of both Bragg and Time, and who keep in

memory the dear dead comrades whom we left upon that fateful field, the place means much" (278).

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NOTES

1. Bierce later revised "Chickamauga: Some random personal recollections of that famous field" for inclusion in the Works, retitling the essay "A Little of Chickamauga"
2. For example, see "Oil of Dog," "An Imperfect Conflagration," "The Mocking Bird," and "The Affair at Coulter's Notch."

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PLAYING “WITH THE FAITH OF FIFTY MILLION
PEOPLE”? : THE RESPONSE OF THE PRINT MEDIA
TO THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL AND ITS
REVELATIONS ABOUT GAMBLING

DOUGLAS A. NOVERR

In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) Nick Carraway is introduced by Jay Gatsby to an individual named Meyer Wolfsheim. The time is late July 1922 and the location is a cellar restaurant located on Forty-second Street in New York City. Wolfsheim is introduced as Gatsby’s “friend,” and during what, for Nick, is a surprising and unusual lunch, Mr. Wolfsheim talks openly about a payoff he has made in order to gain silence and about his fond memories of the old Metropole restaurant and the night he was there with Rosy Rosenthal, who was shot to death by five men at four a.m. in the street outside the Metropole. While Gatsby is away from the table, Wolfsheim tells Nick about Gatsby’s fine qualities as a “perfect gentleman” whom he met after World War I ended. To Wolfsheim, Gatsby is a well educated “Oggsford College” man who has “fine breeding” and who is “very careful about women” as well as respectful of married women.

After Wolfsheim excuses himself and leaves, Nick Carraway expresses his surprise and confusion about meeting and having lunch with such an unusual individual, one who has cufflinks made of the “finest specimens of human molars” and a person who holds Gatsby in such high regard. Nick is curious about Gatsby’s connection with this Jewish man who is constantly alert and nervous. Gatsby tells Nick that Wolfsheim is a gambler and that “He’s the man who fixed the World’s Series back in 1919.” Nick’s interior response to this startling factual statement is interesting and revealing.

The idea staggered me. I remembered, of course, that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919, but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely *happened*, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people—with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe. (74)

It is important to note, of course, that the Black Sox scandal had happened almost three years earlier and had been exposed and revealed, with the resulting lifetime suspensions for the eight conspiring White Sox players, two years earlier. But it is also necessary to note here that Nick Carraway had been in the Army in France in 1919 and had returned home “restless” and unable to live in the Middle West. He has a distinct memory of the infamous “fix” but had not then thought about how and why it had happened. He states that “if I had thought of it at all” his thinking would have been that it was something “that merely *happened*, the end of some inevitable chain.” The perspective here is that a series of actions or a chain of events resulted in the consequence of the fix. In this interpretation Nick allows for a set of circumstances that happen for indefinite and even inexplicable reasons. But the chain of events would inevitably result in this thing “merely” happening. But Gatsby's revelation “staggered” Nick. Before meeting Wolfsheim and learning he is the “man who fixed the World's Series,” Nick admits that he had never thought about one man “who could start to play with the faith of fifty million people—with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.”

This “faith of fifty million people” is a faith and trust in the honesty, integrity, and incorruptibility of baseball as the National Game or Pastime as well as a belief that the World's Series as the highest level of professional baseball competition and the showcase event of American sports would never be touched by a fix put in by gamblers, or by a gambler. The fictional Wolfsheim is, of course, based on Arnold Rothstein, the Big Bankroll or the Big Fixer of his day. Gatsby tells Nick about Wolfsheim's fix with a certain sense of pride and admiration for him. He says the Wolfsheim “just saw the opportunity” and that he isn't in jail because “They can't get him, old sport. He's a smart man.” Gatsby's startling point here is that nothing is untouchable from corruption and illegal profiteering if there is an opportunity to use it for one's purposes, and that the burglar who steals the honesty and integrity of the World's Series can himself be untouchable and can avoid the law and criminal punishment.

What we can read into Nick's response to Gatsby's revelation about Wolfsheim is a significant change in thinking that came with the experience of WWI and its outcomes. Before The Great War and the Black Sox scandal things developed and happened for indefinite reasons and out of circumstances and conditions that became linked and had a certain outcome. What was staggering about the modern world was that single individuals or types could cause things to happen because they were determined to profit from them and were powerful and opportunistic enough to cause a thing to happen. This individual had no concern for the faith and belief of the people in an institution, since "single-mindedness" of purpose and end blocked out all consideration of what people needed to believe in or trust. The modern world was one where laws, morality, ethics, values, and beliefs were seen by powerful and designing individuals as impediments or irrelevancies. Wolfsheim has flaunted and broken all the betting laws and has Gatsby directing the selling of stolen New York City securities to unsuspecting people in the small towns of the Midwest. Later, after Gatsby is killed, Nick wonders if the "partnership [with Wolfsheim] had included the World Series transaction in 1919" (172).

Fitzgerald's fictional use of the World Series fix of 1919 is, then, more than incidental. It illustrates Fitzgerald's theme of the corruption at the heart of the American dream of the pursuit of individual success and the costs of this pursuit in terms of a profound loss of innocence, honesty of purpose, and idealistic beliefs.

The Black Sox scandal of 1919-1920 was startling, shocking, and disheartening to fans for many reasons. First, it came upon the heels of World War One and the unsettling postwar times produced by the Red Scare and radical revolutionary organizations, a series of labor strikes, and economic uncertainties. The news of the indictments handed down against the eight White Sox players broke nationally on September 29, 1920, and came just three days before President Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke that incapacitated him for several months. The 1920 baseball season had seen an exciting three-team race in the American League, and the Brooklyn team had claimed the National League pennant over the powerful New York Giants and Cincinnati Reds. Baseball had been a diversion from bad news, but now with the scandal it was the source of ugly reality.

Second, the connection between the accused ballplayers and professional Eastern gamblers and underworld figures called into

question whether organized baseball in the form of the three-member National Commission and the league presidents could police the sport and protect it from the persuasive and corruptive money of big-time gamblers. The betting on baseball, up to this point, had been largely recreational, local, and personal. Wagering on ball games was widespread, but the pools, wager boards, and bookie action were localized and concentrated in and around ballparks and neighborhood saloons. The action involved individual entrepreneurship and risk-taking based on speculation of results or on known factors that could affect or produce a result. The shocking fact was that the Chicago players were presented with the promise of payoffs in the thousands of dollars and that they had been directly approached by gamblers (the fix men) from another part of the country. Further, it took almost a year for the incriminating evidence to come to light, creating the impression that gamblers may have had a control over baseball that extended beyond the 1919 World Series. The story broke in Chicago when one of the minor figures on the side of the gamblers suddenly began talking, naming names and providing details. Thus, the players had seemed to live comfortably with the knowledge that they had participated in the fix and had covered up, or so they thought, their tracks. The White Sox had even put themselves into position for winning a pennant in 1920 until owner Charles Comiskey had been forced to suspend players. If they had been approached once and given in, as they had in 1919, then this could have happened again, in the very next World Series if the fix had not been exposed. The 1919 fix had directly affected the outcome of the 1920 American League pennant fight between Chicago and Cleveland, since the White Sox could not field their best team in the last games of the season. The long reach of the corrupt gamblers extended back to the 1919 World Series and into the last week of the 1920 season, raising questions about whether these White Sox players might participate in a fix on the pennant race, or that the pennant race itself might be fixed. All of these questions and doubts swirled around the eight White Sox players and around major league baseball.

The impact of the scandal and its shocking revelation took on a certain immediate cultural mythology and symbolism. The story of Shoeless Joe Jackson leaving the Grand Jury room in Chicago and being approached by a worshipful and anxious young boy or group of boys becomes the cornerstone of the myth. The young boy says

"Say it ain't so, Joe.", or the group of youngsters asks confidently "It ain't true, is it Joe?" Joe Jackson answers "I'm afraid it is, boys." This dramatic confrontation of the baseball idol approached by young worshippers and believers, hoping for a denial of the corruption and the fall from grace, is told in various versions on newspapers all over the country and in various political cartoons. The Vic Lambdin cartoon titled "His Idol" in the *Syracuse Herald* shows the downcast young fan and aspiring ballplayer with bat and glove in back pocket standing before the fallen and broken idol of professional baseball. The statue is broken in two places and the money stuffed inside the idol pours out as a black shadow covers the sky and the ground. Part of the mythology of this youthful faith in the professional baseball player-idol crushed and destroyed is also incorporated into the stories of young boys burning their bats or breaking them into kindling wood, throwing away their gloves and baseballs, or dumping their treasured scorecards or other memorabilia into the gutter or wastebasket. All these images of a faith in baseball stolen, lost, or devastated illustrate how the National Game (the organized part) and the National Pastime (the recreation of playing baseball and being an avid and loyal fan) had become linked and interdependent. The youngsters were more vulnerable to disillusionment because they selected their own idols and invested them with greatness and had absolute confidence in their playing the game always straight up, always to win or to do their absolute best because they were professionals or "the best." This youthful faith was carried out without the knowledge of adult gambling on the game or the faults or foibles of ballplayers that might make them vulnerable to the big money promises of gamblers or touts.

But this youthful faith and trust carried over to the adults who came to the ballpark as paid customers and as loyal fans. For these adults, the mythology and cultural belief in the game of baseball were centered on the following elements: the exciting experience of the ballpark with the diamond and playing field as the focus; the game as an out-of-real-time experience with its own clock and rhythm distinctive from urban realities; the idea of team or franchise loyalty as an intense identification allowing for boisterous rooting, unabashed enthusiasm and emotional intensity; a belief that a ball game and its plays and outcome were more important than adult matters of money and work.

The editorial titled "The Game Will Go On" published in the *Boston Daily Globe* on September 30, 1920, captured this process of youthful spirit in the old fans:

For we all are youngsters when it comes to the great American game—which will always remain the great American game. The players who fell for a bribe of money could not hurt the game: they have simply hurt the feelings of all Americans who love the hot bleachers on a Summer afternoon, staring out at the green and brown diamond, following the horsehide more intensely than we ever follow our work, most of us would have to admit.

Those fans in the bleachers are the ones who have made the game, as much as the men on the bases—the shirtsleeve, shouting, crazy rooters who have been exercising their lungs and wits ever since the old "Professional League of Players" began its rounds for organized baseball in '71.

The implication here is, of course, that the inherent qualities of the "great American game" of baseball and its satisfying appeals are perpetual and untouchable by the corruption of the White Sox players. The *Boston Daily Globe* article compared baseball to American politics.

Baseball ruined because they have found a rotten spot? What would have become of our grand old game of politics if it had been "ruined" every time they found out a crook in the game? It's only when the crooks are found out, instead of being permitted to go serenely on their way, that we know the game of governing ourselves is essentially sound.

This is an interesting and revealing comment on the belief in basic American institutions and processes. Those who do not respect the game of politics or baseball and who try to corrupt it or who are the source of rottenness have to be exposed and cut out, and the very fact that crooks are found out illustrates how the institution governs and regulates itself and regains its essential soundness. Those who administer or who own the institution, the clubowners in major league baseball, were not viewed as part of the problem. In the *Boston Daily Globe* article and in many other editorials, Charles Comiskey, president and owner of the Chicago White Sox, is seen as the unfortunate victim of corruptible ballplayers, an honorable man who did not deserve this "misfortune" and who acted on behalf of the interests of baseball when he pursued the investigation that eventually indicted and ousted his own valuable and talented ballplayers.

The consensus of many sportswriters and public opinion columnists was that baseball was essentially healthy and that the large majority of the ballplayers were honest and above suspicion. Many felt that the only way the game could be purified and protected was by a concerted effort on the part of federal, state, and municipal governments to bring the big-time gamblers and fixers to justice. It was proposed that national legislation be enacted to control gambling. Writing for *The North American Review* in April of 1920, Walter Camp saw the solution as resting with the larger "sportsmen" betters who put down a thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand dollars on some sporting event like the World Series. Camp advocated that the "straightest sportsmen" "limit their wagers to not over ten dollars on any single sporting event," thus making it unprofitable for big-time gamblers to try and buy players since the overall stakes would be extremely limited. The editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* on September 30, 1920, closed by stating:

Finally it should be noted that the public itself, has a degree of responsibility for the bribery of players in the Chicago-Cincinnati series of last year. Gamblers cannot spend money for bribes unless the public puts up its money with the gamblers. Gamblers cannot carry on their business unless the public tolerates gambling. The obvious conclusion is that while the two leagues clean house the public should clean up the gamblers. When both jobs are done baseball can take its old place and keep it.

The *Boston Daily Globe* editorial already cited concluded with the statement "The gamblers who trifled with the first love of American fandom will find themselves lower in the regard of their fellow men than ever." It was only natural that observers looked to solutions or fix-its to the fix and to the problem of the infiltration or insinuation of big-time gambling into professional baseball.

One baseball sportswriter, Hugh S. Fullerton of the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* was the first to suggest in print (on October 10, 1919, the day after the Series ended) that the World Series would be ended and that seven of the White Sox players would be out of major league baseball the next season. A year later in the October 20, 1920 issue of *The New Republic* Fullerton published an article titled "Baseball on Trial." In this sweeping indictment Fullerton made several startling charges, including the following:

- 1) that the corruption included certain officials and club owners who were gamblers or “interested in gambling businesses”;
- 2) that the corruption and attempts at the corruption of ballplayers had been going on for twelve years and that a “huge gambling system” based on baseball had developed in a number of major league cities;
- 3) that the clearing of an obviously crooked ballplayer, Hal Chase, gave many players the idea that they could play dishonestly and not be discovered or if discovered or suspected, would be cleared and that the code of silence or silent complicity kept ballplayers from exposing their crooked teammates;
- 4) that those officials in charge of baseball denied the gambling problem existed and tried to suppress or buy off sportswriters who tried to investigate.

Fullerton held up Charles Comiskey as the kind of owner who insured that baseball would be “safe and clean.” Fullerton’s assessment of the corruption and crookedness of the game was the most sweeping and damaging. The Chicago *Tribune* editorial of August 4, 1921 titled “Black Sox Acquitted, But Out” reflected the same kind of local cynicism.

Baseball is already hippodromed so that it is a circus rather than a sport. With Landis keeping it straight it may hold its place. If it goes crooked the organized part of it will be run out of existence by the semi-pro and amateur teams.

The immediate solution was to establish a single commissioner with broad, absolute, and discretionary powers to protect the integrity of the sport and to deal with the eight players who were acquitted of the charges. The Chicago *Tribune* article stated that if Judge Kene-saw Mountain Landis, the new Commissioner, had not banned the Black Sox “It would have been the end of decent interest in the game.”

What is interesting to note from all the editorials and articles is that there was no sympathy or regret for the fate of the ballplayers. The Boston *Daily Globe* editorial ended with the following statement: “The players who were false to the trust of their worshippers will be pilloried in a scorn they can never escape.” The Detroit *Free Press* editorial stated that in order to retain the public good will and gate support of the fans “the two leagues will turn every player they have, if necessary, into the outer darkness of sandlot baseball.” The

eight White Sox players, regardless of their relative degree of guilt or even possible innocence (in the case of Buck Weaver), had to be turned out into the "outer darkness" of lifetime banishment and public ignominy.

Of course, it was not possible to bring the big gamblers and fixers, namely Arnold Rothstein, to indictment and trial. Gatsby was right about Wolfsheim: They could not "get him" because he was a smart man who bought protection from the law and city authorities just as he directed his underlings to buy ballplayers. Baseball was "cleaned up" not because the gamblers were exposed or cut off from their supply of big-time sportsmen betters or because federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies cooperated to control gambling. With the excitement generated by Babe Ruth's home runs and the live ball, baseball once again captured the enthusiasm, support, and attendance of fans. Gambling and gambling interests in baseball did not go completely away; they just assumed a lower and less visible level of interest and action. The national scale of the problem and scandal receded to the urban and local gambling on the outcome of the games and other possible betting combinations. The public's faith or trust in baseball had been "played with" and, to a degree, shaken and diminished. The success of the sport as a business enterprise would from the 1920s on be less based on faith and more on the popular images of ballplayers created by press agents and publicists as well as compliant sportswriters whose expenses were paid by the team they covered. Sports became mass diversions and sources of excitement. Big-time gambling moved away from baseball to boxing and other sports as well as other forms of gambling.

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PRIESTLY SLEUTHS: MYSTERY IN MIDWESTERN URBAN SETTINGS

RUSS BODI

“There is nothing the matter with Americans except their ideals. The real American is all right; it is the ideal American who is all wrong.”

G. K. Chesterton (*New York Times*, 1 February 1931)

Mystery writers often possess knowledge of arcane phenomena which they employ in ways germane or at least tangential to the solution of a mystery. Ex-jockey Dick Francis, for example, uses horsemanship as a medium for contextualizing his plots. Francis's audiences always encounter particular knowledge of the world of horse racing, training, and handling. Two Midwestern mystery writers, Andrew Greeley and William X. Kienzle, perform a similar task using the exotic background of the Catholic religion to inform their readers. Definitely, these two writers exploit the multiple meanings of the word “mystery” not only as a fictional work dealing with a puzzling event or crime, but as a religious truth divinely revealed, and as a kind of religious rite dating back as far as the early Greeks and Romans. In addition, their novels provide a forum for positing criticism of post-Vatican II reforms, which they believe did not go far enough, and reflect an openness to various discourses on morality. That is why G. K. Chesterton, notable for his Father Brown mysteries, provides the epigraph that reflects these authors' affirmative view of the “real” American.

Both authors possess an insider's point of view of Catholic urban America, or, more precisely, MidAmerica. Andrew Greeley has created, according to David D. Anderson, a “post-office-box ministry.”¹ Greeley's editorial columns, novels (mostly mysteries about his Chicago), and book-length critiques of Catholic doctrine, do not

avoid controversial topics. As Anderson says, "he deals honestly and compassionately and courageously with the human problems of our age in all their complexity and confusion. And somehow, he suggests an ultimate human if not ecclesiastical triumph ("Greeley the Phenomenon," 10). The Greeley perspective that will illuminate this discussion acknowledges that "American Catholics had been intellectually mature and were psychologically ready for the democratization of Catholic dogma" (Bresnahan, 115).

William X. Kienzle writes about Detroit the way Greeley writes about Chicago, from an insider's point of view. Kienzle was born in Detroit in 1928 and became a Catholic priest in 1954. He left the priesthood in 1974, as he says, "because of canon law. Specifically the marriage laws. More specifically, the laws regarding the granting or withholding of decrees of nullity" (letter, June 1, 1998). Although he left the priesthood and later married Javan Herman, an editor and researcher, Kienzle draws from his experience as a priest to enrich his mystery novels with anecdotes involving his main protagonist, Father Robert Koesler, a parish priest and amateur detective. Kienzle says that Detroit, aside from being most familiar to him, is an ideal setting for his discourse. He states, "Detroit has been in the forefront of all the blessings as well as the woes of the post-conciliar era. ... Detroit was the birthplace of the international 'Call To Action.' Nowhere is there a more open confrontation between Catholic progressives and traditionalists. In conclusion, Detroit has become a natural setting for Catholic murder mysteries" (28 March 1998).

In this paper I will discuss how both Kienzle and Greeley represent Catholic clergy on urban American front lines. Their priestly protagonists occupy a position that mediates between authoritarian Rome and democratic America. Their urban settings clearly represent multi-voiced constituencies made up of diverse cultural, ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds. Both authors show clergymen who experience the challenges of reconciling the church's hierarchical authority with situations that demand sensitivity to individual needs rather than strict dogmatism. Their dilemma is comparable to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls authoritative discourse, able to

organize around itself great masses of other types of discourses (which interpret it, praise it, apply it in various ways), but the authoritative discourse itself does not merge with these (by means of, say, gradual transitions); it remains sharply demarcated, compact and

inert: it demands, so to speak, not only quotation marks but a demarcation even more magisterial, a special script, for instance. ... [I]t demands our unconditional allegiance. ... It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. (*The Dialogic Imagination* 344)

Since Vatican II tried to put a more “open” face on ecclesiastical phenomena, priests find themselves trying to function within an indefensible paradigm: a church that invites dialogue yet retains its ideological rigidity. Thus, priests pursue a “zone of contact” with their constituencies that they believe embraces the “spirit of Canon law” if not the exact word. Otherwise, they find ways to deliberately subvert laws they are sworn to protect and enforce.

In his novel *Call No Man Father*, Kienzle tackles the concept of papal infallibility, demonstrating how infallibility varies in interpretation. In the advent of a papal visit to Detroit, several religious scholars meet to debate the idea of papal infallibility. The prospective arrival of the Pope is complicated by the untimely murders of Catholic clergy. In this novel, Kienzle notes that while a majority of Catholics feel that all pronouncements from Rome bear the stamp of infallibility, actually only one infallible pronouncement was made since the 1868 First Vatican Council, Pope Pius XII’s declaration that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was assumed into heaven body and soul. Kienzle remarks that no one gets “worked up” about that teaching. The debate in this novel centers on whether Christ intended Peter to be infallible. One of the more radical scholars, a Father Daniel Hanson, maintains that “Peter’s place in the early Church is pretty plainly spelled out. He was indisputably first but first among equals” (128). Hanson later argues that the actual concept of infallibility did not appear until about 1300. “And then the idea was to *confine* the pope’s powers, not to broaden them” (129). The original use for infallible pronouncements was to prevent any future pope from watering down an otherwise infallible doctrine. “[S]uch pope would ipso facto disqualify himself from the papacy” (129). By disentangling papal pronouncements from original, apostolic authenticity, Hanson exposes their political motivation. Analogous to what Bakhtin would call internal persuasiveness,² or non-authoritarian discourse, Hanson begins to convince Father Robert Koesler, the novel’s protagonist, that infallibility is not in the spirit of Christian belief.²

In *Crisis in the Church*, Andrew Greeley also describes the dilemma that Church leadership faces in endeavoring to achieve “a

deeper and more serious understanding of the nature of the church and the unchurched, belief and unbelief; religion and non-religion in American society” (16). Greeley also indicates a growing skepticism among leaders who seek to translate religious traditions into meaningful discourse for those reared in democratic ideals.

Many ... Catholic theologians seem to think that the time has come to draw the line against the trend in theological reflection begun at the second Vatican Council. For those who seek explicitly or implicitly to recall pieties and certainties of the past, the data in this book will serve as a warning that it simply cannot be done. One may well object ... to the ‘watering down’ of the Christian tradition to achieve acceptability in the secular academic milieu, but the mindless repetition of the old pieties will not work (17).

Greeley points to Catholic leadership’s myopic denial of problems facing otherwise “pious” Catholics, evidence that demonstrates erosion of centralized Church rule.

Perhaps nowhere is the Church’s governance argued more vehemently than on the subject of marriage laws. Greeley describes the legalistic barriers the Church imposes on its members, particularly those trying to annul a previous, failed marriage:

The so-called pastoral solution ... consists of a priest listening to a person who has been divorced and for whom the annulment process is not possible—for one reason or another. If the priest concludes that the person believes in good faith that s/he is free to marry, then he notes that while the Church cannot grant “permission” and can’t publicly validate the marriage, the person nonetheless has the right to receive the Sacraments. The person may or may not understand the complicated reasoning in the conversation but concludes, not unreasonably, that the priest has in fact given permission. On the occasion of such a marriage which can’t take place in church, some priests will even provide a blessing in the church afterwards (*The Catholic Myth*, 117-18).

When priests grant such “permission,” ecclesiastical hierarchy, charged with administering laws, become anxious over increasing disintegration of their credibility as teachers. Nevertheless, priests who were once taught the sanctity of sacraments now observe the dictum “*Sacramenta propter homines*” sacraments exist to serve humans (*Myth* 119).

Kienzle agrees that the Church is too arbitrary when it comes to marriage laws. He writes:

I must confess this is a personal peeve of mine. The reason I left the active ministry was over a conflict with canon law. All the presumptions in Church law favor the Institution (hierarchical structure). Nowhere is this more tragically felt than in the marriage laws and procedures. Briefly, I do not think that the Church should be in the business of granting or withholding declarations of nullity. A friend of mine reported a conversation with a gentleman with the Library Congress. He said he had been an altar boy, gone to the seminary, dropped out, completed a Catholic education, married, divorced, remarried. He said he'd read all my books. And, following the directions he found in this and that book, he granted himself an annulment. I can understand how he could do that. (28 March 1998)

Both Kienzle's and Greeley's novels represent struggles between dogmatic authority and a discipleship that prefers to objectify moral interpretation. Of course, as novelists, they can create discourses that test the boundaries of theological and scriptural hermeneutics while distancing themselves from their protagonists' views. A novelist's discourses are what Bakhtin would call "*potential* discourses." The novelist's characters never *actually* utter the words, nor does the author. Actual responsibility for utterances becomes elusive. Thus, Kienzle and Greeley can freely explore numerous creative possibilities within potential marriage scenarios.

For example, in *The Greatest Evil* Kienzle presents a man and woman in the pre-Vatican II years struggling with the Catholic church's marriage laws. In a flashback to 1954, a young Father Koesler counsels the couple who were married out of the church because the husband, Frank, was divorced. Martha, a Catholic, wants her marriage to be blessed by the church. The priest tries valiantly to find a loophole in canon law that would dissolve Frank's earlier marriage. Since Frank could not recall any record of his baptism into any religious faith, Koesler believes Frank's earlier marriage would not be valid if Frank were not baptized. In a demonstration of the extreme measures marriage tribunals exacted on congregants, Koesler must inform the couple that they must live together as brother and sister until the tribunal makes a decision. In addition, Koesler must line up witnesses willing to testify that Frank

was probably not baptized, and who will fill out questionnaires notarized by a priest. Koesler tells the expectant couple:

A case like this has to go to Rome for a decision. That involves translating the documents into Latin and hiring a Roman lawyer to present your case, Right off the bat they want three hundred and fifty dollars—with a promise that you also pay any additional cost. (*TGE* 57-8)

In the meantime, Frank receives instructions so that he can become Catholic, and the waiting period, originally thought to be only a few months, turns out to be two and a half years.

[T]he lives of the Morris had stretched so taut that Frank and Martha almost began to wish word would never come. As long as they no longer wondered and worried at the start of each day whether they would ever hear from the Curia in Rome, things would be better. ... The mere act of waiting became the only reality. (61)

Rather than rationalize the matter for the priest or the couple, Rome returns a simple denial of permission. Father Koesler can only present the verdict: "The petition had been denied" (61). There is no explanation for the delay, no apology, no offer of advice to the couple. The frustration that so many couples must have felt during those years is captured in Frank's comment: "The Vatican seems to be terribly interested in our sex lives. How about if we promise no sex for the rest of our lives? Or at least until my former wife dies?" (61). The compassionate Koesler, uncharacteristically moved to tears by the news he must convey, can only weakly remind the couple that God loves them. Nevertheless, the occasion is soon punctuated by Frank's suicide. The Morris's difficulties represent just one example of Kienzle's excursion into the subject of Catholic marriage annulment and justice. Several such encounters with ecclesiastical bureaucracy implicate a need for change in Catholic marriage laws.

Andrew Greeley articulates a different response to hierarchical strictures. In John Blackwood "Blackie" Ryan, the protagonist of several of his mystery novels, Greeley manages to characterize a humanistic approach to the problems facing American Catholics. At the same time, Blackie Ryan, a Chicago auxiliary bishop, is a member of the problematic upper echelon often responsible for the conservative perspective. Ryan, however, is the somewhat rebellious, unassuming, sometimes-spokesman for Chicago's Cardinal Sean

Cronin, whom he advises and serves. Ryan's status as auxiliary bishop, along with the indulgence of the Cardinal, posit a kind of authority to the pronouncements that Greeley makes through Ryan's voice. Nevertheless, Blackie Ryan's persuasiveness carries with it the kind of humanity Greeley clearly wishes this character to portray.

In addition to Ryan's humanity, Greeley depicts a Chicago climate that readily responds to a bishop like Blackie Ryan. In essence, no less compelling personality than Ryan's could effectively lead a congregation that rejects papal authority. In *White Smoke: A Novel About the Next Papal Conclave*, a newspaper reporter characterizes the Chicago attitude toward the Pope:

They had nothing to learn from. They had long ago made up their minds on birth control and other matters such as artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization. They think it odd that a man who knows nothing about marriage and, in fact, little about married people would pontificate about marital intimacy or the context of marriage. They are embarrassed by his seemingly reactionary attitude towards women, but it does not trouble their allegiance to Catholicism. (66-67)

Here Greeley exhibits the attitudinal climate that exists in most of his novels. Greeley pinpoints the paradox of a democratic society that rejects Rome's authority yet accepts the Pope only as a figurehead, not as the ruler of its collective conscience. Nevertheless, this same society is content to be considered Catholic though implicitly subject to the Pope's judgment.

A particular example of how Blackie Ryan deals with the church's rigid marriage laws appears when he is investigating the murder of a priest nicknamed "Jolly Cholly" in *Happy Are Those Who Mourn*. During an interview with Lynn Reed, one of the leading suspects in the murder of the priest, Bishop Ryan hears a shocking disclosure: The priest/murder victim, Cholly, with whom she once had a premarital affair, had once given her permission to commit adultery. Such an apparent infidelity would hardly be sanctioned in traditional ecclesiastical discourse, but Blackie Ryan later concurs with Cholly's claim and finds a way to qualify Lynn Reed's extramarital relationship as marriage. First of all, Ryan informs Reed that she is definitely too good a person to be considered a sinner. Yet since she wants legalistic justifications, he renders them, citing canon law. Ryan tells Reed that she is indeed married to her "paramour:

Though she and her husband, Gerry Reed, lived together in the eyes of the state for over forty years, her original marriage to Reed is technically only an attempted marriage. Ryan tells her,

[A]n attempted marriage in which there is permanent impotency from the beginning of the attempted marriage is not a valid marriage. In ideal circumstances this matter should be adjudicated by a Church tribunal. In circumstances where that is impossible, the wife may nonetheless enter a new marriage which will be valid even if this marriage cannot be celebrated at a ceremony in church. (182)

This reasoning is combined with the fact that Lynn Reed's husband Gerry gave permission for her to proceed in an affair that would produce offspring. In order to justify the new marriage as a valid marriage, Ryan explains that a couple may exchange permanent vows when it is impossible to appear before a priest and two witnesses. Although Ryan's justification may seem subversive, the bishop explains that the interpretation of "impossibility" may include either physical or moral impossibility such as an occasion where "it would be an extremely grave inconvenience for the couple to attempt such a public marriage" (183). His knowledge of obscure doctrine surfaces when he tells his concerned listener that "the mere exchange of consent was considered enough for the first thirteen hundred years of Catholic history, give or take a century depending on your notions about the Church" (183). Ryan's evasion of the standard church tribunal would arguably be for reasons of "grave inconvenience." Nevertheless, his apparently free-wheeling advice cannot always be reconciled with traditionalists.

Both authors would agree that incontrovertible evidence of sin is never subject to dogmatic interpretation, especially when mitigating circumstances make clear-cut interpretations impossible. In *The Greatest Evil*, William Kienzle depicts this type of exceptional circumstance. A bishop excommunicates his sister, a medical doctor, for performing abortions. When she in turn speaks to Father Koesler, he informs her that the church's teachings on the abortion issue are not infallible, just as he and she are not infallible. She explains that she needed to find a solution that would be acceptable to her conscience. After much prayer and study, she responds that she found her answer in Thomas Aquinas who declared that "quickening" coincided with the awakening of the human soul at the end of the first trimester. Koesler then reverses her bishop brother's ruling

on excommunication: "You're not excommunicated. And you listened to our Church reverently and you prayerfully formed your conscience. And now you're following your conscience. You—we—may be wrong. But you're not committing a sin" (238).

Again, we see a solution to a modern problem coming from some of the church's earliest foundations. Both Kienzle and Greeley demonstrate a dialogic solution to moral problems: their protagonists listen to and argue with their constituents in a way the Roman curia cannot. They apply an historical spectrum of church teaching to deal realistically with the exigencies of modern life, objectifying each situation and analyzing the play of its internal relationships. In so doing, readers can locate a theory, tradition, or discipline where they can be dealt with compassionately, where they can indeed find a place.³

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NOTES

1. David Anderson's introductory essay "The Greeley Phenomenon, or Some Parish! Some Priest!" in *Midwestern Miscellany*, XV (1987) is the first of several essays all commenting on the enterprises of Andrew Greeley. Greeley's writing career makes him literally a man whose "parish is his mailbox" (7). He is a sociologist, novelist, University of Arizona professor of sociology, and priest of the Chicago Archdiocese.
2. Bakhtin describes the "objectifying" of another speaker's discourse in contrast to what is done with authoritarian pronouncements: "A conversation with an internally persuasive word that one has begun to resist may continue, but it takes on another character: it is questioned, it is put in a new situation in order to expose its weak sides, to get a feel for its boundaries, to experience it physically as an object" (348).
3. See Bakhtin's discussion of the author's function which I have roughly paraphrased in this final paragraph, *Dialogic Imagination*, 345.

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LOUIS BROMFIELD'S 'CUBIC FOOT OF SOIL'

DAVID D. ANDERSON

When I noted with some dismay several years ago that the then-new (1996) two-volume reference work *American Nature Writers*, edited by John Elder and published by Charles Scribner's Sons, in all its seventy substantial entries on American writers and twelve equally substantial supporting essays, ignores completely either the work, the writing, or even the existence of Louis Bromfield, I determined on a long-overdue return to the works of one whom I, like so many others, had neglected for too long.

That neglect on my part had not been total: since the publication of my *Louis Bromfield* (1964) and my anthology *Sunshine and Smoke: American Writers and the American Environment* (1971) I had written a number of encyclopedia and dictionary entries on Bromfield as well as several essays and papers, in all of which I emphasize the many dimensions of his life and work as novelist, mythmaker, Jeffersonian, practical and experimental farmer, ecologist, nature writer, and agricultural spokesman. In all these varied dimensions I stress a remarkable unity of philosophy and purpose that continued to the end of his life.

In them I point out, too, that in both dimensions of his life, as writer of the fiction that dominated his life and American best-seller lists from 1924 to 1944 and as practical ecologist and farmer from 1940 to his death in 1956, his life and work were dominated by two themes that stemmed directly from his Jeffersonian conviction that human beings must learn to live in harmony with others and with the nature of which each is a part. In them I noted, too, that in all his fiction, ranging from the panel novels *The Green Bay Tree* (1924), *Possession* (1925), *Early Autumn* (1926), his Pulitzer Prize novel, and *A Good Woman* (1927) to *The Farm* (1934), his best, most deeply-

felt novel, and beyond, Bromfield wrote of the despoilers, whether industrialists or farmers, who damaged and destroyed the natural world as they constructed a Hamiltonian society dominated by materialism and its concomitant greed. That world drove each of Bromfield's young people out of the once-rich Ohio countryside in search of a place where they might live in accordance with the values that had been lost in America in the years between the Civil War and the Great War of 1914-1918. During those years materialism ran rampant and ultimately won, resulting in a despoiled countryside, mined for profit by greedy or ignorant farmers, a countryside marked by polluted streams and smog-infested, dehumanized cities, where individualism had been lost to the machine.

This period, that in which Bromfield's best fiction is set, is the subject of my first response to the neglect of Bromfield in *American Nature Writers*. This was a paper, "Louis Bromfield and Ecology in Fiction," given at *The Conference on the Culture of the Ohio Frontier* in 1997 and later published in *Midwestern Miscellany XXV* (1997). In it I examined Bromfield's use of and attitude to the natural world of rural north-central Ohio in his novels as he portrays materialism triumphant over both the rationalism of the eighteenth century and the romanticism of the nineteenth. In it I ended with a discussion of Bromfield's autobiographical novel, *The Farm*, as that novel portrays the transformation of the Ohio country from natural wilderness to unnatural wasteland as experienced by three generations of an Ohio family; that work culminates in the life of a young man determined to understand what cannot be reversed and ultimately to escape it in his imagination if not in fact.

At the end of that essay I promised the rest of Bromfield's story, that of the practical farmer, ecologist, and naturalist, as well as myth-maker and nature writer, that he became after returning to America in 1938 from fourteen years of exile in France, his goal to return to the rural Richland County, Ohio, countryside that he had left twenty years before to go to war and to search out the land that would become Malabar Farm. His return, the result of the war clouds of 1938 foreshadowing another war, the exposed nature of his country retreat at Senlis, on the traditional German invasion route to Paris, and the vulnerability of his young family, combined with the affluence acquired by a decade of best-sellers and film rights sales, gave him the opportunity that the young protagonist of *The Farm* had been convinced was gone forever as an earlier war approached.

During the first five years after his return Bromfield continued to write and publish fiction, including two volumes of short stories and five novels, none of which carried either the indignation or the determined search of his earlier, best fiction. This series culminated in a devastating review by Edmund Wilson in *The New Yorker* XX (April 1, 1944) of Bromfield's *What Became of Anna Bolton* entitled "What Became of Louis Bromfield?" What Wilson didn't know or chose to ignore was the fact that Bromfield had largely lost interest in writing fiction in returning to Richland County, Ohio, where he purchased three worn-out farms, combined them, called them "Malabar Farm" after the Indian coast where two of his novels were set, and determined to reverse the course of history by restoring them to full fertility.

By 1940 writing fiction had become the means by which that restoration would be financed rather than the end in itself that it had been for so long. For the rest of his life—from his establishment of the farm and his construction of the "Big House," a monument to himself and the Ohio early nineteenth century past, until his death in 1956—his conviction was reserved for the determination to restore the farm, to operate it effectively and ecologically soundly, and to record his experiences and what he learned in some of the most effective nature prose of this century.

This record appears in the seven volumes of non-fiction that Bromfield published between 1945 and 1955, works that eclipsed and supplanted his fiction. These works, ranging from the folklore of the Ohio country to personal essays, political and economic theory, and treatises on practical agriculture, have their common inspiration in Bromfield's Malabar experience and their common theme is his conviction that the enlightened American in the twentieth century must, if he or she would survive in an increasingly material world, return to the dictum of the eighteenth century enlightenment that reason must be applied to experience, that one must generalize intelligently from his or her conclusion and both apply and publish the results. And nowhere, Bromfield was convinced, can the individual find truth more clearly presented than in the observation of the natural order of the earth and the living things that inhabit it.

Malabar Farm, the natural order in microcosm, despoiled by five generations of human ignorance and greed, would provide the place—a word descriptively important to Bromfield—where obser-

vation, learning, experimentation, and determination would return depleted earth to the natural order.

The record of Bromfield's successes and failures—and there were more of the former than the latter—properly belong to agricultural history, the results of which are clear today at Malabar Farm, now part of the Ohio State Parks system and operated as a working farm. But the record is evident, too, in the seven volumes that came out of the Malabar experience. In 1945 he published *Pleasant Valley*, the story of his return, his strong sense of rediscovery, and the experiences of the first five years on the farm. The book consists of a series of loosely-connected essays in which he describes his sense of discovery, tells the stories behind the farms and houses that made up Malabar Farm, and defines the theory and practice of agricultural and natural principles that had already, by 1945, resulted in the restoration of much of the soil that had been depleted for a century.

Central to the book is the exposition of Bromfield's two plans for the farm: to restore the eroded fields and hills to full production and to provide full economic security for the families who lived and worked on the farm. Sound practices, including grass and trash farming, would restore the soil; the farm itself would produce everything needed for subsistence except coffee. In effect, the farm would become the natural order in microcosm, a general society in an age of specialization. But that plan—that dream, in effect—was modified many times in the first five years as it would be in the future.

But the book is more than the record of Bromfield's return to the land and the working out of his romantic dream. In some of his most effective and deeply-felt work he explores the countryside, the people, the animals, and the legends that have given it life for more than a century. In "Up Ferguson Way" he combines the beauty and wildness of a lost farm that exudes a mystic aura marked by the spirits of long-dead Indians and settlers, the stones that mark the sites of long-gone cabins, and the relentlessness with which nature eradicates human signs. In "Johnny Appleseed and Aunt Mattie" he recreates the most enduring of Ohio legends, those of Johnny Appleseed and the Lost Dauphin; in other essays he retells other valley legends ranging from the pastoral to the violent. In each of the essays is echoed Bromfield's search for the natural order, for insights into the life cycle of plants, animals, the countryside, and the inexorable passage of time. The relationship between Bromfield's *Pleasant Valley* and Thoreau's *Walden* is clear, even as *Pleasant Valley* defines the path

whereby, Bromfield was convinced, one might find fulfillment and peace in the social as well as natural order. In the final analysis, he was convinced, the secrets of life and nature are revealed clearly and completely in the ultimate microcosm that is a cubic foot of soil.

Bromfield followed *Pleasant Valley* with the first of two economic treatises, *A Few Brass Tacks* (1946). Like its successor, *A New Pattern For a Tired World* (1954), *A Few Brass Tacks* extends Bromfield's Jeffersonian search for order and harmony in nature to the economic and social world, seeking a new harmony between production and consumption through rational distribution. In so doing, he asserts in the first volume, as he does in more detail in the second, the principles of sound agriculture can remove the sources of much of the disharmony and violence in the world. Jefferson rather than Karl Marx, he asserts, is the source of the order that must prevail if man is to endure.

In a sense, *Malabar Farm* (1948) is a sequel to *Pleasant Valley* in that it records the results in only a few years of what Bromfield had set out to do in the early years on the farm. If *Pleasant Valley* is imbued with a sense of discovery, of enthusiasm and confidence, *Malabar Farm* is a record of failures as well as successes, particularly of the impact of economic reality on romantic convictions. In *Malabar Farm* Bromfield assumes throughout, in eighteenth-century fashion, the self-evident truth that inherent in nature is a perfect balance in the continuous cycle of birth, growth, reproduction, death, decay, and rebirth that governs the natural order. The application of that truth is best exemplified in the essay "The Cycle of a Farm Pond," in which Bromfield recounts the restoration of a pond and the springs that feed it after generations of abuse had dried them up. In the apparently elusive but ultimately perceivable order that lies beyond the result of human abuses, Bromfield sees the order that gives the pond and its spring the life that had been denied them for so long. The pond, like the soil of the farm itself, is returned to its normal, natural place in the order that governs all things.

Bromfield ruefully recognizes, too, the failure of an important part of his dream for Malabar: that the intricacies of modern economics made impossible the establishment on the farm of a totally self-sufficient unit, and it was increasingly becoming a specialized operation for the production of beef cattle. It was to be the first and not the most serious of his disappointments.

In a sense, *Out of the Earth* (1948) is the agricultural textbook describing the Malabar experiment that *Malabar Farm* was not. In it he restates his conviction that wornout soils can and must be restored, but here he presents the evidence and describes the techniques that had made restoration the basis of Malabar's success. This is the means, perhaps the only means, he insists, by which a growing world population can hope to feed itself. The book marks, too, the acceptance of Bromfield, his theories, and his practice by many in the farming community, as the bulging file of letters after the publication of *Out of the Earth* attests, and it is this success that led him to write *A New Pattern for a Tired World* (1954), in which he proposes a system whereby land will be restored and its produce distributed to the world's people.

By 1955 Bromfield was ailing and he had little more than a year to live; but in that time he published two more books: *From My Experience* (1955) and *Animals and Other People*, published later the same year. In the former, Bromfield looks back at a life that he is reasonably sure has been well-lived, particularly in his decision to return to Ohio and to the land. Much of the text is technical in its record of the past and his plans for Malabar-do-Brasil, a project for the future that was ultimately carried out by his youngest daughter, Ellen Bromfield Geld, and her husband. But interspersed among the technical chapters is some of the most personal writing Bromfield was ever to do: his sense of romantic escape from the world in his return to Ohio; the frightening reality that shook him badly, when he saw what was ahead of him; the determination to make the ideal real. In it, too, he records the discovery of his spiritual kinship with Albert Switzer's "reverence for life," and he knows that that principle had governed his life at Malabar and beyond.

Included in the book is some of the best nature writing and myth-making that Bromfield was to do and some of the best that has ever come out of rural Ohio and America. Among these are the essays "A Hymn to Hawgs" and "The Hard-working Spring." In the former he describes the pig-raising operation at Malabar as it is part of the natural order of the farm, and he explores, too, the idiosyncrasies of hogs as living, individual beings, a theme he would explore in detail later; in the latter he explores place and people and the life cycle of both. Perhaps most telling, however, is the justifiable pride that he takes in reconstructing the soil of Malabar. In nature, he recounts, it

takes ten thousand years to build an inch of top soil; at Malabar three to seven inches had been created in little more than a decade.

In his last year Bromfield also published *Animals and other People* (1955), a remarkable re-creation of Malabar, its people, and its animals and the mystic rather than rational ties that unite them. Perhaps most telling, however, is his summation of what he had learned on the farm:

In the last analysis we are all animals and the fact of being born a man does not endow us with any special rights or virtues; rather it imposes upon us obligations of a high order indeed, which animals and birds do not share—obligations of intelligence, ethics, decency, loyalty and moral behavior. The sad thing is how frequently these obligations are violated and ignored by man himself.

Perfection and order had ultimately eluded Bromfield at the end, perhaps giving rise to this regretful epitaph and final statement. Bromfield died at University Hospital, Columbus, on March 18, 1956. The next day his ashes were added to the soil of Malabar and to the "cubic foot of soil," in which, Bromfield was convinced, all of nature's creation was made manifest.

Michigan State University

A CHAPTER OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: PART ONE

WILLIAM THOMAS

Time, which keeps a man so long a boy, gets him quickly through youth, speeds up mightily in; the fourth decade, and by the time he is forty-five is going by him so fast that he cannot but wonder if he will live long enough to get done what he has set out to do. The years immediately behind one are telescoped, so to speak, progressively more and more; a lustrum of maturity has not in it so much that is memorable as a year of one's teens; and the events of fifteen years ago seem further from those which occurred five years earlier than they seem from now.

In my twenty-first year a new path, that of college study, opened to me, and I followed it logically into the next; the first unsteady steps I took into an academic career are vivid in memory. So are the fumbling steps I made in a dark byway, when I was nineteen, going on twenty. But the contrast between those two ways and experiences is so great that none has exceeded it since, and the time as a neophyte teacher seems relatively near and that earlier one infinitely remote.

Even now, so long after, I cannot think of that unhappy time without emotion. Much of it I would willingly forget, and have forgotten. I have forgotten so much that I think I could not write about it now or ever, had I not set down a record of those months the following winter; and that egotistical, badly-written narrative, typed on manila sheets, remains in my archives and infrequently appears in my sight to fill me again with remorse.

Then one day I opened an old file, and there, unindexed, were letters in their envelopes, all of which I recognized but one. In that she had sent a photograph and written on the back of it "Don't you think your cap becomes me?" There was no letter from her after this;]

know I had not expected her to write and think I never answered. It was not because I was uninterested, for I was mightily interested in all female humanity. It was because I did not wish merely to correspond with a girl; I wished to hold one tight and love her, to enjoy both the romantic ideal of love and the body's rapture. And the only time I had held Neva was when we were on a sled and tumbling in the snow. It had not occurred to me that she would really miss me when I left. I had not made love to her, because I knew her father thought I plotted to seduce her, and I was afraid of her father.

A week after I discovered and once again read Neva's letter I read Thomas Burke's autobiographical book *The Wind and the Rain*. And when I finished that I knew I had to write this account of my unhappiest year, for I had lived longer since than I had lived before it; it was time for catharsis.

i The Wilderness

The reasons why Arch and I went to Idaho seem no longer relevant. We were at our destination, Elerick's cabin near Gray's Lake, the front fork and the sidecar brace of the motorcycle broken, ourselves tired, hungry, sleepy, and with thirty-five cents. We had come more than two thousand miles, lost our tent and some of the cooking utensils, and had unforeseen troubles, delays, and costs. It was late October, and about the cabin lay patches of new snow.

There were Lee Elerick, his wife, and their sixteen-year-old daughter; and Roy Stevens, to whom Arch, having been earlier in Idaho, was known, and at whose invitation we had come. Elerick was a red-haired, freckled Irishman somewhere in his forties, cow hand and horseman. He said he was the trainer of Earle Sande, the jockey. He had owned and raced horses on many western tracks, but had not prospered. Now he was here in Idaho, engaged with Stevens in a lumbering venture, and they were in quasi partnership with Dick Spencer, who owned the sawmill on the mountain at whose foot the cabin stood, a lesser one of the Caribou range.

It transpired at once that Roy Stevens had been over-optimistic in writing to Arch that we might have jobs at the mill. They were getting scarcely enough money from the sale of lumber to supply food for all. But it was then threshing season, and we had two weeks' work with the threshing crew. We made enough money to

pay the express charges on the trunk and get it hauled from Soda Springs, and to make a first payment to Elerick for board.

There were two rooms to the cabin. The rear, which had its own outside door, was the Elericks' bedroom and sitting room. The front room was the kitchen, where the other three of us slept, Roy and Arch on a mattress and I with some cotton comforters between me and the floor.

Roy Stevens was thirty-six or -seven years old, was a "jack-Mormon," and had a leg injury, a permanent disability resulting from a horse's kick, which required that he use a crutch to walk. He was good-natured and I know had not meant to mislead us; we, fully as much as himself, had been guilty of wishful thinking. But now, however bad we may have thought the situation we had left at home, we were really in trouble; we had no money, and there were no jobs. We four males played cards of an evening, a game called "solo"; Dorothy Elerick and Neva read or reread their old magazines and books. Days I spent tramping among the aspens with Roy's .22 rifle, hoping to get a sage hen or a grouse, and berating myself for having been such a fool.

Clearly I had no right to be there, eating food I was unable to pay for. Lee Elerick disliked me heartily, and his antipathy fastened upon a few innocent words and acts of mine to delude him into believing, or wishing to believe, that I had sexual designs on his wife or his daughter. I know now it was natural enough that the man should build up in his mind this delusion because I could not pay for my board; perhaps he was not truly blamable. He could not rid himself of Arch, because he and Roy were partners and Roy and Arch were friends. But I was at yet one further remove; he determined to be rid of me, and I wonder that he did not simply order me out.

Instead he learned, and told me, of a farmer on the other side of the lake who wanted a man to work for him a month; it would be thirty consecutive days of labor (Sundays unrecognized); and the compensation would be three dollars a day. I cannot remember this man's name or how I reached his place; I was there a couple of days, cutting poles and building fence, for which he paid me at that rate. He seemed satisfied with me, and said if I would stay a month he would pay me sixty dollars. I said I had understood the monthly offer to be ninety dollars. He said sixty was all he could pay. The end was that I, who desperately needed a job, refused this honest man's offer, who needed help badly—because I had been misin-

formed about the wage. It was an error in judgment which I regret to this moment. The good man brought me back over slippery mountain road in his Dodge touring car twenty miles to Elerick's cabin; I wish there were some way by which I might now compensate him for his forbearance and kindness.

Roy Stevens and Dick Spencer quarreled. Elerick heard of some hay land for lease at Kilgore, near the Montana line, and he and Roy and Arch went there, in the Ford truck. To conventional and suspicious mind, it was unthinkable that I be permitted during his absence to sleep in the cabin which housed his wife and daughter. He arranged for me to stay with Helmer Ronsback, our nearest neighbor. I resented Elerick's attitude, but liked the old Swede and his comfortable one-room cabin, where I slept warmer than on the floor. Days we felled and sawed timber for firewood. Helmer's wife had left him, he hungered for someone to talk to, and I cut his hair. He said it was the best haircut he ever had.

Lee, Roy, and Arch came back, Lee having successfully negotiated a lease. Lee and Dorothy prepared to move. Roy's intentions were uncertain. Arch could only go along with Roy. Dick Spencer and Roy arrived at a truce, and Dick agreed that Arch and I might cut timber by the foot. We worked four days and earned eight dollars. Then Dick stopped us, saying he had learned Roy was trying to cheat him out of the mill equipment, and that he would saw no more logs but would sell the mill for whatever he could get out of it.

I could stay no longer. Elerick demanded my trunk as security for my board bill. Arch, in return for past favors, generously let me have his share of the eight dollars, and I gave him my sheep-lined coat. I went, taking my traveling bag, to Soda Springs on the mail stage and from there on the train to Pocatello. As I then wanted, as much as anything else, to be a newspaper reporter, I applied for, and got, a job with *The Idaho State Journal*.

ii The Newspaper

Soon I learned how it happened to be so easy to get that job. The paper, a morning daily, was barely making its way. The senior of its two reporters had just left, and the moment was propitious when I came along. I had to ask the business manager for my fifteen dollars every week.

It seems I did my work creditably, for the editor seldom changed anything I wrote. I did obituaries and "city briefs," and attended weekly luncheons of the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Realty Board. A beardless young man with false teeth, Don Howard, was both city editor and telegraph editor; he read all the copy and wrote the heads. The other reporter was Orvin Malmquist, a handsome man of twenty-six, a graduate of the University of Utah.

At once Quist became my idol. Before then I had not known anyone whose interests and aspirations were like mine. He knew books, and had read many modern authors. His ambition (inevitably) was to write fiction. He occupied the top floor of a big house converted to apartments, and, finding me congenial, asked me to come and live with him. I was glad to leave the YMCA and could not have wished for a better companion or a better dwelling place. Here at last I was finding the way of life I sought: to live with and have opportunity to talk books with a writer—myself to write for print—to be among writing men.

We had many good talks, Quist and Don Howard and I, in the apartment and in the restaurant where we went after putting the paper to bed. Quist was an admirer of Edmond Rostand, and when he revealed that fact I spoke of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. "*Cyrano* is by no means his best work," said Quist. "It is an admirable piece of dramatic construction. But a conscientious student with talent and industry might in time achieve the ability to write a play like *Cyrano*. Whereas only Rostand could produce a work of art like *Chanticleer*."

What more could I wish than to live with a man so familiar with the world of letters as Quist? He admired Dreiser too, and infected me with his enthusiasm for that novelist, whose books were yet subjects of controversy rather than acknowledged great. I got a library card and that winter in Pocatello read *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, and *The "Genius."* Obviously anyone who could greet enthusiastically both Theodore Dreiser and Edmond Rostand had no prejudices or preconceptions to limit his literary enjoyment and taste; when I, so much younger and more of a novice in literary exploration, praised Sherwood Anderson, Quist was ever ready with a word for Joseph Conrad or James Barrie and *The Little White Bird*. I profited small, I fear, by his greater acquaintance with books, for I had some preconceptions about writing. I read *Poor White*, *Windy McPherson's Son*, and *Winesburg, Ohio* (*Marching Men* was later, in San Fran-

cisco), and thought the way a novel should be written was the way Sherwood Anderson wrote it. I read *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith* then too, but not *Main Street*, and there is no praise of Lewis in my record, which contains a good deal of quotation from Anderson, and states "if there is any such personage as the Great American Novelist, he is Sherwood Anderson." Perhaps—then, when reviewers gave the impression that all literate citizens eagerly awaited discovery of the Great American Novel (abbreviated to G.A.N.), and one or more was convinced every month that it had been found—he was.

It is difficult, now, to extract anything from that record but what serves as a reminder of facts and events which I must otherwise have forgotten. I know I set it down a year later only for that purpose, having a premonition of sense, a hint of knowing it would be a long while before I could evaluate the experience and properly write it. The record contains quite a bit about drinking, because, being newspaper men, we thought we had to drink. There is mention of the copy I wrote after I was promoted to the police station and courthouse beat. There is included a description of a party which began with my meeting, in a restaurant, a girl "with the bluest eyes I have ever seen."

When I wrote that I was twenty, and now, less inclined toward superlatives, I am comforted by the knowledge that youth habitually affixes a degree of intensity to every experience and a measure of beauty to every woman. Even maturity seldom abides by King Charles's "twelve good rules." It is doubtful, nevertheless, that I have since looked into bluer eyes than Bessie's, or kissed more roseate lips, or twined lovelier hair. She lived with Leona, who worked in a bank, in an apartment building not far from the newspaper office, and herself was a teletype operator for the Western Union Telegraph Company.

It is probably a well-nigh universal masculine wish that one might somehow live over certain hours of his life, always the life of his youth, and always hours spent in the company of a woman. If happy hours containing moments of ecstasy, to enjoy again those delights; if less happy or merely pleasant times, to act differently, to do better, to make love more skillfully, to follow up advantage gained, to take opportunity one was blind to all the while it was so obviously there. The truth is I did not know enough to fall in love. I carried with me a great deal of conventional rubbish in my thinking about love and sexual relationships: all women were of one type or another, the types composing a scale of virtue. Unhappily, I could

not with assurance place Bessie on the scale. I was, in a technical sense, experienced; actually I had no notion of how to conduct myself with a woman. I had never known so beautiful and charming a girl with such easy complaisance, such willingness to be caressed, such eagerness to embrace. I think no other girl had voluntarily and deliberately embraced and kissed me. What to make of this? I made a mistake. I attempted lovemaking of the sort I knew. I wonder that she tolerated my clumsiness and crudity so long. If I could find you now, Bessie, I would make it up to you.

Quist had lent me some money, and, though I managed to pay it back, I could barely get along on my wage. The only good meals I had were the hotel luncheons, of which the Rotary Club's was best and biggest. Fortunately, I had clothes fit to wear. Nothing was left in the trunk at Elerick's cabin but moleskin breeches, flannel shirts and high-top leather boots, and the trunk was of little value; I considered letting him keep it and its contents for the sum he reckoned I owed. But my wardrobe consisted of a single suit, a light overcoat and a hat that did not match them, two pairs of shoes, and too few of other necessary garments. So I wrote home asking for money, explaining that the dignity of my position demanded I have a new suit. When it came, enough for all requirements, I sent the sum to Arch for Lee Elerick, and in due time received the trunk.

In time also came Arch, unexpectedly. He was on his way to Blackfoot and thence to Kilgore, and was glad to see me and to have a bath. I was not so glad to see him, for I had got out of the back woods but was still a bit resentful toward him for having got me into it; I did not, however, treat him shabbily. I supplied him with money and he went the next day. That was the last I saw of him for a couple of years. I never saw Roy Stevens or Lee Elerick or Dorothy or Neva again. Each became an image (which I could bring before me at will but did not often will to do so), as did Quist and Bessie and Don Howard and Red Neill and Bruce King and a dozen others whose paths crossed mine.

Quist left Pocatello. He loved a girl in Salt Lake and she loved him, and he had to have a better job than twenty-five dollars a week. He wrote his last news story, and we put the paper to bed and went to the restaurant and from there to the station. When the train was announced we shook hands and said good luck, and Quist walked through the gate. I was almost crying.

Red Neill came onto the staff and shared the apartment. I was promoted to Quist's duties but not to his salary; mine was raised to eighteen dollars a week. Even that, said the business manager, was more than they could afford. The Journal Company was reorganized, the publisher was forced out, and the managing editor became general manager. We did not like each other. He said my writing contained too much levity. I thought he had no sense of humor.

With Quist gone and Bessie no longer wishing to see me, I speedily came to regard Pocatello as a dull and tiresome town. One chill March morning I left as Quist had left, for, for Salt Lake, on the same train.

To be concluded.

Late Ohio State University/
Marion Emeritus

A MAJOR MIDWESTERN BIBLIOGRAPHY

Robert Beasecker, *Michigan in the Novel 1816-1996: An Annotated Bibliography* (Detroit: Wayne State U. Press, 1998), 448 pp., illustrations, maps, indexes.

The first issue of the Society's first venture at publication, the *SSML Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (March 1971), announced the stated purpose of the Society as "encouraging and supporting the study of Midwestern literature in whatever directions the interests of the members may take." As a result of that promise and the interests of the members a number of important publications have appeared: *MidAmerica*, which will appear shortly in its twenty-fifth incarnation; *A Bibliographic Guide to Midwestern Literature* (1981), edited by Gerald Nemanic, former president of the Society; *Shade of the Raintree: The Life and Death of Ross Lockridge, Jr.* (1994) by Larry Lockridge, recipient of the MidAmerica Award for 1998; *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990* (1994) by Douglas Wixson, recipient of the MidAmerica Award for 1995; and many other works, including the forthcoming *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, to be published by Indiana University Press, edited by Philip Greasley, recipient of the MidAmerica Award for 1999.

This distinguished list of publications that have expanded our understanding of and insights into important dimensions of Midwestern literature is by no means complete, nor does the study of that literature approximate anything remotely complete, but both are greatly enhanced by the publication of an important, distinguished, and exemplary work, *Michigan in the Novel 1816-1996: An Annotated Bibliography*, compiled by Robert Beasecker, the Society's bibliographer and recipient of the MidAmerica Award for 1984.

Michigan in the Novel 1816-1996 is the product of more than twenty years of meticulous bibliographic research by one of the most capable and conscientious bibliographers in the profession.

and the results in this work are as impressive as they are admirable. In a compilation of works, the first of which appeared two decades before Michigan became a state and only forty years after the nation was founded, Beasecker identifies, records, and describes 1,735 novels set wholly or partially in Michigan and written and published during a span of 180 years, the years during which all of Michigan's and much of America's history and literature have been lived and written.

The study is limited to full-length novels, including popular and literary works, mysteries, romances, dime novels, juvenile works, and religious works. Other forms of fiction, including short stories, serial publications, and other genres are omitted, but novels in foreign languages are listed, together with any subsequent translations.

The organizational pattern of the book is designed to be useful to any possible reader, ranging from the casual reader to the historian, genealogist, or literary scholar. In his introduction Beasecker defines the scope and purpose of the work and includes extensive comments on his "Mechanics of Compilation," and "System of Arrangement." Following the introduction are a list of sources consulted, an alphabetical list of symbols of libraries holding various works, and four pages of Michigan maps, indicating counties, towns, and cities in the state. The entries follow, alphabetized by the last name of the author, each numbered for use in later indexes. Most entries include the author's dates, title of work, place of publication, publisher, and date of publication, number of pages, and a brief description of plot and setting. Many are described by category—mystery, juvenile, etc.; those in languages other than English are identified, and the locations in libraries for many of them are indicated at the end of the entries.

Following the bibliographic listings are six highly useful indexes: a title index; a series index, particularly of popular and juvenile fiction; a subject and genre index; a chronological index; an index of settings both real and fictitious, with fictional settings identified by quotation marks; and a Michigan Imprints Index, listed by place of publication.

Michigan in the Novel 1816-1996 is not only the most useful and impressive bibliography to come out of Midwestern literary study in the history of the Society, but it provides a mark whereby future attempts will be measured. More importantly, it is an indication of what can be done in this most important and too often neglected field

of literary research. *Michigan in the Novel 1816-1996* will occupy an important place on my reference shelf, and it will be well used, but its potential is inexhaustible. I can only hope that bibliographers in other states will follow this first-rate example. Congratulations, Bob. The literature of the state, the region, and the nation are well served by this remarkable work.

David D. Anderson

