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Four Quarters

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Cover: *Detail from "D. Benjamin Fraencklin," original mezzotint (1777) by Charles Nicholas Cochin (1715-1790). Reproduced courtesy of La Salle Study Collection.*

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Marginalia . . .

"WHO WRITES AN AMERICAN NOVEL?"

Of the many Bicentennial games, one literary variation has been to pick the ten (or twenty, or two hundred) best American novels. But in the fullest sense of the term, there have only been a few "American novels." I am speaking here of novels whose form and content are uniquely an expression of this country, novels that are American because they could not have been written anywhere else. I am concerned here with novels that have defined us to ourselves, and in so doing, have created the ways in which we see ourselves.

*No nineteenth century novel does this as well as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The theme of the novel (as it is the theme of America's beginnings) is the search for freedom. Huck and Jim begin by thinking of freedom as a political condition; Huck ends up an unsatisfied idealist who will "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest," moving westward in an endless quest to regain that fleeting, spiritual freedom he experienced in perfect moments on the raft. Surely there are parallels between the experience of this innocent and the experience of those other innocents who came seeking a "new world," a New Eden of which political freedom would be the foundation. But "Eden sank to grief," in the words of Frost, and the American innocent looked westward for the fulfillment of the dream of freedom, pursuing happiness in the setting sun.*

*Not only is *Huckleberry Finn* a dramatization of the pursuit of happiness and the quest for individual freedom, but it is the first American novel to raise the vernacular American speech to a rich literary language all its own, not a corruption of the "King's English." The way had been prepared by a whole host of frontier humorists and tellers of tall tales, but the narrative voice in *Huckleberry Finn* is neither the comic dialect of an Artemus Ward nor the literary English of Hawthorne or Longfellow.*

It is the language of a people not as much given to reading and writing as to talking. The talk is down-to-earth and colorful: "I'd druther been bit with a snake than pap's whisky." It is democratic and dialectal: "But, Huck, dese kings o' oun is regular rapsallions, dat's just what dey is; dey's regular rapsallions." It can be poetic without being pretentious:

(Continued on page 70)

Shakespeare's Hold On The American Imagination

BARBARA CASACCI MILLARD

THEY WERE various shapes and sizes, male and female, prosperously and slovenly dressed, senior and junior, and they all sported "Will Power" buttons featuring a shy, winking, bald, bearded gent. This meeting on April 23, 1976, in Washington, D. C., was not a weight watchers convention but the prestigious, highly-touted World Congress of the International Shakespeare Association, and the theme of this momentous event, deliberately tied to the Bicentennial celebration of these United States, was "Shakespeare in America." One hundred and twenty-five years ago, in his review "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Herman Melville described a situation not unrelated to this recent phenomenon: "this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakespeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions . . . Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare's unapproachability or quit the country." He continues to question this position for an American, "a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature—as well as into Life." Why, after all, does such interest persist in a British poet and how does Shakespeare relate, if at all, to American experience?

Shakespeare's artistry (or as a recent student expressed it, "He sure has a way with words") easily accounts for the first phenomenon, and Americans in this regard are only part of an international cartel, but the second issue requires the opening of several caskets of history and finding therein such curious riddles as the legend of the poet's life, the themes of his plays and poetry, the tradition of Shakespearean idolatry, strange and perverse American attitudes, and the famous Shakespeare Industry.

Any study of Shakespeare in America must, like Antaeus, set its heels in the earthy history of Colonial theater, for, search

as they might, scholars have not yet found concrete evidence of copies of the Folio in libraries of either the principal Puritan or Southern settlers of the seventeenth century. Lack of evidence to the contrary, Emerson once observed that the first Folio was printed only three years after the pilgrims landed at Plymouth and that had Heminge and Condell been a little earlier with their edition, the pilgrims might well have stayed home to read them. But his was a later perspective. The theater remains the first real connection of the colonists with Shakespeare. By the eighteenth century some copies of Shakespeare's plays must have infiltrated the eastern seaboard for we have an advertisement for *Romeo and Juliet* to be performed at the "Revenge Meeting House," on March 23, 1730 by amateurs headed by a physician, Dr. Bertrand. But John Durang, a Philadelphian preparing a history of the theater in America for its Centennial, proposes a much more romantic beginning to Shakespearean theater—one in keeping with the American dream of new beginnings, high moral purpose, and financial success. William Hallam, a bankrupt London theater manager, like another "Columbus" hit upon the notion of a theatrical "voyage of discovery," and launched his brother Lewis Hallam and Lewis's wife—with a troupe of actors whose ambition was o'er-leaping itself,—on the high seas. Upon sailing, old Lewis remembers, "there seemed to them a spirit in the wind that filled their sails, exclaiming in fitfall echoes, Prospero's farewell speech to Alonso . . . I'll deliver all;/And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales,/And sail so expeditious that shall catch/Your royal fleet afar off, My Ariel—chick—/That is thy charge; then to the elements/Be free, and fare thee well!" Their muse they called Shakespeare, and themselves, not actors, but Shakespeareans. On September 15, 1752, they presented *The Merchant of Venice* to a "numerous and polite audience" who rewarded their efforts "with great applause."

Actually this performance had been preceded by *Richard III* as presented by the Murray-Kean group which had been touring the colonies since at least 1750. Mostly amateur, in debt, and facing a hostile or chary audience, they managed to survive with *Richard III*, for three years, in New York, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and Annapolis. The Hallam company met the same difficulties, but the most virulent opposition to the theater was the moral objection of religious groups. On this point, Professor Esther Dunn in her *Shakespeare in America*, has argued that Shakespeare was played in the colonies to a particular class whose main interest was in aping the fashion and culture of London, and that opposition to the theater formed along

political/class lines.¹ Actually, the evidence does not support this. Even the sublime poetry of Shakespeare, claimed a Philadelphia critic, could not atone for the low buffoonery which drowns the "still voice of Religion." If revolution means to overturn, there were those who saw Shakespeare's supporters as overthrowing the god-fearing, for the theater with a proliferation of Shakespearean plays held on and flourished. Shakespeare was not only offered as a gesture to responsibility or London fashion. Handbills often excluded his name or subordinated it to that of the adaptor like Colley Cibber or John Dryden. The *play* was the drawing card. And the audiences, like Shakespeare's originals, cut across class lines. Interesting parallels exist between Elizabethan productions and early American ones. Audiences were barely informed, if at all; reading editions were scarce; criticism was lacking. Americans saw the plays without having read them, and demanded their money's worth from actors who exchanged barbs with them.

The experience of Shakespearean theater eventually awakened dormant literary interests. Alexander Graydon, who kept a memoir of his life as "mostly lived in Philadelphia," testifies that the theater induced him "to open books which hitherto lain neglected on the shelf . . . I became a reader of plays, and particularly those of Shakespeare, of which I was an ardent and unaffected admirer." By 1768, acting companies were beginning to add the more "political" plays of *King John* and *Julius Caesar* to their repertory. Suddenly the "Song of Liberty" was sung between the acts of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Commentators in the Philadelphia newspapers approved as appropriate the playing of *Julius Caesar* after the Boston Massacre in 1770. Despite a prohibitive proclamation by the Continental Congress and the departure of professional actors for more tranquil lands, Shakespeare continued to be played during the Revolutionary War. *Coriolanus* was chosen to pick up the low spirits of the American army at Portsmouth in 1778. A special prologue, later printed, indicated that Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* spoke for American soldiers and officers who felt that their efforts for their new country were not appreciated. But Shakespeare's part in the war may be more interesting. Generals Howe in Philadelphia, Burgoyne in Boston, and Clinton in New York—all sponsored and encouraged—even took part in theatrical productions including *Henry IV* (1), *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Richard III*. Historians like George Seilhamer have appraised this activity and Shakespeare's "fatal

1 Dunn (New York: Macmillan, 1939). My indebtedness to this comprehensive work is extensive since Professor Dunn presents many details of Shakesperan experience in America which have since entered into the public domain.

tendency to divert the minds" of the British, as promoting enervating indolence among British troops that helped make the Colonists' victory possible.

Shakespeare's contribution, then, to colonial life was considerable. Despite the performances of new plays written for the London stage at that time, Shakespeare remained the most popular playwright with American audiences. His "morality" helped to win the battle against religious groups who were hostile to the theater. In the twenty-four years before the Revolution, fourteen of his plays were performed at least 200 times and the figure is more likely closer to 500. Although it was felt that Shakespeare's greatest forte lay in his facility "to interest the minds of an audience," managers did not hesitate to adapt the plays to the audiences' taste. Favorites were *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*, either of which was presented more than any other tragedy. In short, Shakespeare was at the center of colonial experience with the theater and, therefore, a significant part of the growth of artistic sensibility in America. Colonial theater and Shakespeare prepared the way for future growth in a national theater, for Shakespeare did not disappear from American culture as a vestige of the British. On February 22, 1796, for example, the performance of *Richard III* was framed by a song in "celebration of Washington and Liberty." Shakespearean theater was stronger than ever in the national period, while America went on to produce native-born actors to rival the best in England. One of the first of these, Edwin Forrest, was a favorite in Shakespearean roles because of his acting style characterized as "full of swaggering Americanism."

As Shakespeare continued to dominate the young American stage, the repertory in eastern cities from 1800 to 1835 includes thirteen titles. Philadelphia saw twenty-one of Shakespeare's thirty-six plays: *Richard III* was played sixty times, *Hamlet*, 43, *Macbeth*, 42, and so on. America even hosted its own version of Garrick's pageant, *Shakespeare's Jubilee*, in New York, 1788. The whole concluded with "a triumphal car, containing the Bust of Shakespeare, crowned by Time and Fame." Any student of American culture knows, however, of the pressure in the East, despite politics and patriotism, to establish a rival and imitative culture in the new nation. But Shakespeare travelled with backwoodsmen and merchants on the flatboats along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Practically speaking, he was convenient and ready in the repertory of the actors who ventured to the outposts, and there was probably some snobbish value as well, but Shakespeare's plays and great speeches roared out from makeshift galleries over billiard rooms and swaggered over improvised

stages in saloons. Houston and Henry Clay were among the audiences numbering from twenty to 2000 in Chicago, Lexington, St. Louis, Natchez, and Mobile. Shakespeare offered them oratory, rhetoric, blood and "noise"—even some poetry—in brief: entertainment. Even when subject to the democratic rites of the frontier, Shakespeare triumphed. In his *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*, R. L. Rusk meticulously provides statistics on the Western stage from 1794 to 1840, and concludes that out of 1000 different plays Shakespeare was given first rank in the total number of performances of the work of any one author, or more than one in eighteen. Small wonder that Seminole Indians, ambushing a troupe on its way to a fort in Florida, would find as part of their booty a wardrobe enabling them to dress up as Othello, Hamlet, and a host of other Shakespearean characters and caper around the fort out of range of gun shot.

Like the Indians, Shakespeare was soon quaintly and variously arrayed in the West. As on the eastern stage, the fact that he was billed with crude farce and even circus acts certified his popularity with the people. Parody, adaptation, and the "travesty" were swift to follow. The Folger Shakespeare Library owns a collection of pamphlets ranging from 1820 to 1925, including such curious testimonies to Shakespearean inspiration as *Hamlet, A Dramatic Prelude in Five Acts* by Dr. James Rush, an attack on medical quackery printed at Philadelphia in 1834—and "An Ethiopian Burlesque" in which Hamlet is frightened by a ghost "from the South." By ear, from the stage, not from books, Americans wild and "gentle" learned to quote Shakespeare with ease. Melville deplores this popularization in his review of Hawthorne: "... very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making him his mere mob renown)." Assimilated by the country whose language his heroes also speak, Shakespeare continued to California with the gold rush and has never left the American boards since.

The tradition of bringing Shakespeare to the people, harking back to river-boats and caravans, is thus an integral part of American culture, like circuit-riding judges and preachers. Plays performed in villages and lines read around fires in mining camps; performances in piece-meal costume, on steamboats and in minstrel shows—through these episodes of Shakespeare in America, his language and rhythms began to enter deeply into the national consciousness as a source of wit and wisdom for widely different levels of society. Despite anti-British sentiment in the eighteenth century, cultural nationalism in the nineteenth, and modernism in the twentieth, Americans seem to feel a kin-

ship with Shakespeare.

If on the stage he has been a source of titillating love scenes and sensational history and stage effects, Shakespeare in the library has been a mark of status to aspiring gentry, a source of political wisdom and moral conduct for statesmen, a point of departure for transcendental philosophers of Concord, and a mine for the romantic critics. Washington, we know, kept Shakespeare in his library, used Shakespearean allusions in his military correspondence, and attended the theater regularly. Jefferson, as a young man, quoted and pondered the poet in his journals, particularly *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus*. As president, he gave Shakespearean theatricals in the garret of the Presidential mansion. The ever high-minded and tough John Adams hailed Shakespeare as "the great master of nature and a great teacher of morality and politics." Even the sober Franklin, no patron of the theater or the Elizabethans, reveals his intimacy with Shakespeare's text by seeing an analogy between John Adams' handling of the peace negotiations in Paris in 1783 and Othello's problems with Desdemona's handkerchief. Moreover Adams, Jefferson, and Lincoln drew from the plays hints both for governing and for speech writing. Lincoln's devotion to Shakespeare's histories and tragedies and his partiality to *Macbeth* are legendary. He especially liked to read Shakespeare aloud to friends. His Secretary, John Hay, records in his diary an incident on August 23, 1863, when Lincoln read to him the end of *Henry VI* and the opening of *Richard III*, "till my heavy eyelids caught his considerate notice and he sent me to bed." According to Van Wyck Brooks, the "secret of Lincoln's power and charm" was his ability to translate Shakespeare in his speeches in light of frontier experience and people.²

Curiouser and curiouser is Shakespeare's relation to some of our most brilliant writers of the nineteenth century, whose preoccupation with Shakespeare is literary history. Among them, they have deliberately praised, imitated, recreated, taken inspiration from, complained of, and banished Shakespeare. But his mark on these literary minds is indelible. Washington Irving wrote a popular article about the Bermudas in 1840 which describes the islands in relation to *The Tempest*. The chief reading in Cooper's maturity was Shakespeare. Quoted above, Emerson was one of those who simultaneously praised Shakespeare as the poet "beyond all poets" (*Nature*) and who protested his ascendancy: "Shakespeare will never be made by the study of Shakespeare" ("Self-Reliance"). Finally enshrining Shakespeare as

2 *The Times of Melville and Whitman* (London: J. M. Dent, 1947), p. 176.

a symbol and a transcendental abstraction, Emerson found little enjoyment in the plays themselves. Commenting on a performance of Macready in *Hamlet*, he told E. P. Whipple: "I got along very well until he came to the passage, 'thou dead corse, again, in complete steel/Revisit'st thus glimpses of the moon—' and then actor, theatre, all vanished in view of that solving and dissolving imagination. . . ." And while the play continued, he "paid no heed to it."

James Russell Lowell, the most widely read, judicious, and influential critic of nineteenth century America, produced his most complete and personal critique of Shakespeare in a review of White's edition of the plays, "Shakespeare Once More." Lowell would continue to champion the cause of Shakespeare and lecture to the Modern Language Association about the teaching of Shakespeare in colleges. Longfellow wrote sonnets on Shakespeare, and Hawthorne's indebtedness to Shakespeare's "stern sincerity and powerful intellect" is classically defined by Melville. Melville forges that critical link between Shakespeare's and Hawthorne's "blackness" that "furnishes the infinite obscure of (Hawthorne's) back-ground (and) . . . those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality" ("Hawthorne and His Mosses"). Melville himself discovered Shakespeare during a decisive stage of his intellectual development in 1850 when he had written the first version of the whaling tale that would become *Moby Dick*. In the essay quoted above, Melville not only noted Hawthorne's interest in Shakespeare's profound penetrations into the heart of man, but also his own. Melville's emulative attitude produced his "Lear," *Moby Dick*, his "Hamlet," *Pierre*, and his "Timon," *The Confidence Man*. As a result, recent scholars like Charles Olsen and F. O. Matthiessen have studied the Shakespearean parallels in these works, including Shakespearean rhythms and dialogues. Matthiessen summarizes his long discussion of this influence on Melville with the statement: "We are dealing with a rare case in which Shakespeare's conception of tragedy had so grown into the fibre of Melville's thought that much of his mature work became a re-creation of its themes in modern terms."³

Not Shakespeare's themes which were "old" world, but his poetics penetrated Whitman's writing. Walt Whitman, who early attended Shakespeare's history plays in the Bowery Theater, who roared Shakespeare's poetry on the wagons and trams of New York, and who, as a nurse, softly read it to dying men in

3 *The American Renaissance* (Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 435.

Union camps, patterned his verse after Shakespearean periods as well as the Bible. More widely recognized is Whitman's famous denunciation of Shakespeare's place in American culture and his protest that the "new" advanced American civilization required a new literature: "Even Shakespere, who so suffuses current letters and art . . . belongs essentially to the buried past." In his self-conscious plea for a New World poet, Whitman questions whether there is any foreign poem "whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy" ("A Backward Glance"). Yet late in his life, in "What Lurks Behind Shakespere's Historical Plays," Whitman decided that Shakespeare's history plays were really "the scientific inauguration of modern democracy." Shakespeare will be remembered in America for exposing the evils of the old order "which America has come on earth to abnegate and replace." Whitman has come full circle and embodies the contradictions which he celebrates in his great work when he proclaims Shakespeare "The poet of great personalities" and his portraits of great men "far dearer to me as lessons, and more precious even as models for Democracy. . . . If I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form and spirit, I could not have written *Leaves of Grass*."

Mark Twain never swerved from his aggression towards the Shakespearean Idolators, but his vehemence turned to burlesque. It produced a "news item" on the killing of Julius Caesar for the *Territorial Free Enterprise* on the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. Later, he brought "Master Shaxpur" as a character into his unpublished pamphlet, "1601, or The Fireside Conversations of Queen Elizabeth." But his best known parody is the garbled "To be or not to be" speech in *Huckleberry Finn*, an amusing and informative caricature of the way Shakespearean roles must have been played in small frontier towns. Henry James never adapted Shakespeare to his *donnee* in any sense, but he did cite Shakespeare in his critical writing and, in "The Birthplace," he made an interesting study of the nature of genius embodied in a humble worshipper whose duty is to guide visitors around the shrine of the great poet. As Holinshed and Plutarch did for him, Shakespeare has supplied a "usable past" for his fellow artists in America. His plots, language, characterizations and prosody have provided material for later writers to transmute into new forms.

Although Shakespeare's infinite variety continues to influence writing in America, we can stop short after the nineteenth century because I wish to make a distinction here. Rather than seek after Shakespeare most literate twentieth-century Ameri-

cans are exposed to Shakespeare through the highly structured educational/critical systems—or, the Shakespeare Industry. The process by which Shakespeare leaves his makeshift and “vulgar” shrines and enters into the more pristine ones of academe begins, of all places, in Philadelphia. That city was the first center of Shakespearean study and produced the earliest critics and editors in the country. In 1795 the first American edition of Shakespeare was printed in Philadelphia. Its editor was either poet and essayist Francis Hopkinson or Joseph Dennie, the Federalist editor of the *Port Folio* which includes the first Shakespearean criticism among its articles. The names of Dennie, Verplanck, Hudson, Simms, White, Rolfe, and Furness are among the many scholars who helped bring the plays and poems to American readers. The Shakespeare Society of Philadelphia founded in 1852 by four lawyers from the University of Pennsylvania, to “read and study Shakespere,” was the first such group in America and its eager “Apostles” proudly point to their influence as having inspired the search for folios and the New Variorum work of Howard H. Furness.

Shakespeare’s supremacy in the academy, however, began inauspiciously enough. John Quincy Adams, professor of Rhetoric and oratory at Harvard from 1805 to 1809, used Shakespeare to teach elocution. Professor George B. Churchill states that in the University of Virginia, Shakespeare had “considerable attention” as early as 1825. At Harvard, Professor George Ticknor gave formal lectures on Shakespeare as literature in 1833, while Professor Henry Reed of the University of Pennsylvania introduced Shakespeare’s poetry for study in 1842. Of course, “garlands” from Shakespeare had been part of school-children’s readers from the first days of the Republic. The McGuffey Reader was typical in selecting Shakespearean passages to teach morality and patriotism, and, by their beauty, to illuminate “pure literature.” The fight was to face Shakespeare up to the ancient classics which still held a monopoly on higher education. Perhaps because figures like Emerson criticized Anglo-American universities for not including Shakespeare in the curriculum, formal instruction was established by 1857 while organized courses began in other educational institutions after the Civil War. Shakespeare officially became part of the establishment in academe when Harvard’s entrance examinations for 1869-70 included Shakespeare. A similar mandate to American secondary schools would be given by Princeton’s inclusion of Shakespeare as a part of its College Entrance Examination.

To those who acknowledge Shakespeare’s art as unsurpassed; to those scholars, critics, editors, and teachers whose

livelihood depends on the Shakespeare industry; and to Anglo-philés, the reign of Shakespeare in American culture is a thing devoutly to be wished. But some voices have always noted the corollary—the absence of a national writer of similar proportions. Today, the sentiments expressed at the dedication of the Folger Library by its Director, Dr. John Quincey Adams, on April 23, 1932, seem a bit tarnished, even suspect: "If out of America, unwieldy in size, and commonly called the melting-pot of races, there has been evolved a homogenous nation, with a culture that is still essentially English, we must acknowledge that in the process Shakespeare has played a major part."

Let us look again at what Melville and Whitman and the frontiersmen saw in Shakespeare, for the reception of Shakespeare in America becomes an interesting measure of taste and opinion and an accurate barometer of the variable and conflicting elements of the national psyche. They saw perhaps that the mighty scale of feeling that distinguishes Shakespeare's plays was bred by the revolutionary epoch in which he lived, that his idea of revolution as destiny—or the change made by time and circumstance—worked his pathos, that on his stage mobs and barons struggle for power against forces that could render even a king a beggar. We cherish Shakespeare's feeling for the dynamics of history, his desire to understand the essence of his own time and to reveal it in its relationship with the past and the future. We study the elaborate, mobile social structures of his plays where the passing social phenomena come into collision with the new, where even women like Rosalind can instigate a new order. Shakespeare is all the nearer to us for not regarding the victory of the new over the old (witness: *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*) as an easy matter dependent upon the ethical superiority of those who believe in the new principles over the defenders of the old. Rather he gives us the tragedy of struggle between old and new, as well as the courageous acceptance of the sacrifice needed to pave the way for change. Surely the American recognizes his closeness to the people, his professional understanding of and constant anxiety for the psychological needs of the audience. The legend of Shakespeare's humble origin sustains American belief in the self-made artist and that democratic principle which is built upon the supreme validity of the individual soul. Along with the "darkness," did Hawthorne recognize this latter aspect of Shakespeare as well? Shakespeare, according to Santayana, excels in *ethos*. Without doubt, the poet's philosophy demands an acceptance of life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery and doubt, even in "faery lands forlorn." Pres-

ently, Shakespeare is our myth-maker for European culture, from Roman times through the English Renaissance. Our Homer, our archetypal poet, he has provided Americans of all kinds with a perpetual volume of reference and opinion; he is the reservoir of humanist values in the West.

But we cannot easily dismiss the spectre of Shakespeare's cultural supremacy ("essentially still British") and its implications for American letters—a spectre that haunted Melville's and Whitman's appreciation of Shakespeare's mastery. Is Shakespeare's place in our universities part of the "aryanism" ensconced in American higher education? Is he cherished as a last, if best, vestige of British inheritance? Or is he singular and paramount in American letters by default? Melville feared that Americans would neglect their own stars in establishing their culture, and he was just as sure that the Ohio would produce writers not much inferior to the Swan of Avon. He predicted, and rightly so, that the American people, beyond an elite core, would not rally in sustained enthusiasm behind any writer in the Republic. Where do Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Twain, James, and Faulkner, to name a few of our "major" authors, find a permanent place in high school or college curriculums for the general student in business, science, or even the liberal arts? At present, it is doubtful that the next generation will have any first-hand experience of these writers.

In our Celebration of 200 years of political independence, we Americans might well examine our relation to the ideas which we claim as our own, and to our native myth-makers. One is tempted to look about at what is rapidly becoming, for various socio-economic reasons, an educational wasteland in the arts and to agree with Lewis Mumford's analysis that we have subordinated our imagination to an "interest in practical arrangements." Instead, like Melville, we might examine the overriding "blackness" in American literature. Melville explains that the darkness in Shakespeare's plays glimmers only fitfully among the brightness after all. But the literature of our major authors, including Melville, has not this happy proportion of joy. Students are a good barometer for detecting what may be the problematic characteristic of our literature, for they are often overwhelmed psychologically and emotionally by what they perceive as a negativism (unmitigated "blackness," if you will) in the best American literature. They are still dreaming America, and what their writers outline for them is more often than not the failure, tragedy, or irony of their cultural-political-moral expectations of America. Whitman's lonely, barbaric yawp, raised in celebration, strikes them as out of joint with the times. What results

is a large body of youth who are psychologically dissociated, split between their cynicism and disillusionment and their insistence on the validity of the dream. Perhaps that is why Shakespeare's most "modern" play, *Troilus and Cressida*, is enjoying a new attention. But posterity is not eternity, and even Shakespeare is not guaranteed his place in this iconoclastic age. We were warned long ago, again by Melville, not to look for our "Shakespeare" in Elizabethan togs or on the stage. Has our own "Shakespeare" come to us as a novelist, yet to be enshrined, or has he/she yet to come in another guise? Genre might offer a clue. As we have seen in our own checkered stage history, drama invites, even forces, interaction between the audience and the actors—and, by extension, the playwright. Just as Elizabethans did not look to the vulgar stage for their "soul of the age," their Homer or Virgil, we must not, as Melville suggests we do, look for our "soul" in the wrong quarters. Whitman reminds us that "to have great poets, there must be great audiences, too." Audiences of the novel and of poetry are dwindling. At the risk of falling into Marshall McLuhan's "camp" (pun intended), one must notice that massive involvement in America today is with the audio-visual media of cinema and television. The primary components of drama—speech and spectacle—are those of the media; there as well are momentous extension, fresh potentialities of mechanical innovation, and, the threat of standardization and commercialization. The film facilitates the psychological enlargement that Shakespeare as well as great novelists have offered: the entrance into the existence of others and into the imaginative possibilities of life, of "heroic enthusiasm."

Shakespeare might find his future in America as a result of his "translation" into this medium. Here, too, American artists might find their "great audience." Like Coriolanus, the American literary artist has yet to bridge the widening gap between the intelligentsia and the populace, and like Shakespeare, he or she must manage to provide excellence "as we like it."

The Knitting Machine

E. N. HOLMQUIST

FOR A TIME it stood in the southwest window of the dining room, replacing the fern, the Christmas cactus, and the Surprise Lily from Sweden. The sun glinted on its magnificent silvery spikes. Its array of shiny needles fascinated me, its intricacy, its liveliness.

I could not understand my mother's hatred of the thing. She despised it, loathed it as if it were in some way animate (as indeed it appeared to me) and capable of betrayal. It was many years before I began to understand her feeling, years during most of which the machine stood in dusty disgrace in the attic, hidden in a dark corner like some disreputable relative. I used to visit it sometimes and play with it, admiring the way its silvery prongs could be provoked into a lively dance. Why had such a lovely thing been banished? It was incomprehensible to me, and I used to beg her to play it, not understanding that the long hours of labor on the farm and in the house left her little time to play; not understanding either her reluctance to remember the existence of the hated object. It was quite like a musical instrument to me, the flashing of sunlight on the needles music, the movements poetry. Yet I knew in some dim way that she hated it, and indeed I must have heard even then the reasons, but childlike, discarded them as being of no account.

You must understand first that this was during the depression, for it began earlier for farmers than for the rest of the country, but I was no more aware of that, other than a vague unease and some recognition of a change in her, a darkness, than I was of her feelings toward the Machine.

We had another machine then, too, almost as interesting. It was, I suppose, an embarrassment too, though there was no personal enmity involved. She disapproved of it, certainly, but then, since it was a legacy of the foolishness of my grandfather, it was more easily tolerated. It was no reproach to her. It was a Shocking Machine, a wooden box about a foot in height, well constructed and beautifully finished. Snakes with wooden handles

attached to it on either side. Two people each grasped one of the handles and then all between held hands, forming a living chain, and the current passed around from one to the next. It was supposed to be, in some mysterious way, therapeutic.

We had other enchanting machines too—a stereopticon, which brought flat double pictures miraculously to life, and a beautiful shiny mahogany Victrola whose handle my father cranked with a delicate and reverential touch while we sat quietly waiting for the next record to be played. Or so it seemed to me, though the reproving shushes from time to time suggest that perhaps we were not so tranquil as I supposed. Open the doors at its front, and far in the back, deep in its throat, one could see a tiny, silver upright pole which I used to think—and later to imagine—was the man who sang.

Yes, they were delightful machines, some more friendly than others. But though I appreciated all, I loved none so much as the Knitting Machine, though it never was a friend. It was too remote, too mysterious for friendship.

WHAT DO YOU THINK of children who touch finger to tongue and write on the walls with spittle, tracing names and pictures in the blue kalsomine? It was only my sister and I who did it, for ours was the South Room, where the golden sun shone in. Though perhaps I should not implicate my sister. She may be innocent for all I know. My memory puts her there with me, but memory is a tricky thing at best. Perhaps it was only I, driving my mother to distraction with my stubborn art. She worked and schemed so long for the paltry pennies with which to buy that pale and feeble paint, only to have it so soon mutilated. Oh, yes, she did expostulate, she was no patient saint, but it did no good, nothing would dissuade me, nothing could prevent me from indulging my aberrant pleasure.

How diligently she pursued those pennies. In the evening after the chores were done, she used to struggle with twenty-five words or less. You must understand that there were many things we needed. Our clothes were castoffs, remade handmedowns. She was terribly disheartened about that as she ripped out seams, cut out patterns of newsprint, laying out old dresses for size, fighting to make a dress of nothing. Yet they were good dresses, though never to her liking.

Our uncle, who used to live with us—for his health, they said—and who had never a kind word for anyone, whose cross and angry scowl made us tiptoe past him, scuttle for cover when he looked our way, our uncle, so fearsome that we never called

him by his given name, Uncle Lindquist he was, and to this day I do not know any other name, he might have had no other—this uncle had one kind word for my mother during all those months he lived under our roof.

"You make things over well," he said. Ah! Bitter. How she would have liked to hear instead that she made things well.

So she would work at the twenty-five words or less. "I like Oxydol because . . .," reworking, rewording, despairing of ever being able to say in so few words what they must want to hear. And she never did. All those contests entered, struggled over, all those hopes, in vain. Perhaps she was too honest, could not think in terms flowery enough for them. It used to pain me even then to see her struggle so, doggedly in her patient script the words put down, reordered, substituted, hopeful each time the envelopes went out with the final product. The dreams they held, the desperation, I knew even then, insensitive as I was.

But I have not explained sufficiently about her. In a day when college was not common even for me, she had worked to pay her way through school. College graduate, high school teacher, she married a musician who happened to live on a farm. They lived their lives out there, breaking their hearts and backs on that parcel of land I love despite that, wrestling some kind of living from it. The high school where she used to teach was just a mile away, but they didn't hire married women then, no, nor "locals" either.

God knows she had been poor enough in her own youth. A preacher's child. Those days the people couldn't afford to pay their pastor much, and so it was beans and eggs, donations in goods that felt like charity to her. A lot of her stiff-necked pride had come from that.

She yearned to belong to the Garden Club, my mother, longed for the conversation of equals—but she had no equal in that town, though she did not know it. Farmers' wives are not as socially acceptable as those who live in town. You didn't know that? Still, it's true, and was true even though her husband was a source of local pride, his piano playing, his voice, his singing. His station was lowly nonetheless, his wife no equal of the doctor's wife or the wife of the hardware merchant. She was a farmer's wife. Perhaps if she had ever asked . . . but she was too proud for that.

I can tell you about that pride, too, the stubborn will to be self-sufficient. Our pots and pans were a miscellaneous collection, mostly chipped enamelware which had been patched with rivets. The good ladies of the church one time, concerned about this—though I cannot imagine that many of them had

anything much better—the ladies decided to give a kitchen shower for her to replace that old equipment. How the sparks shot out when she heard of it! How she sputtered and stormed! To think that they would *dare* to suppose that she would take charity! A small woman, gentle always, soft-spoken, shy, she made known her outrage at this insult in no uncertain way, and the plan was dropped. She never quite forgave them.

IT WAS LATE in the twenties, the farm was slipping away, and my mother awaiting the birth of her second son. Everything she reached for slipped from her grasp, everywhere she stepped was quicksand. It was then that the Knitting Machine appeared, sparkled in the southwest window, worked its magic, the yarn fed to the chattering needles growing into socks.

The company would buy all the socks she could make, the salesman said. So the Machine clicked and prattled and the socks grew at its center. Carefully they were stacked, wrapped in brown paper and tied with twine. The packages went out as the envelopes had done, burdened with hope, but this was solid honest work, no distant yearning, this was real.

But the packages came back.

Impossible! Yes, but nevertheless it was so. She worked harder, anxious now. She would be more careful, make the socks even more perfect than she had done before. Again and again and again. Confidence yielded to uncertainty, to despair, and once more to yearning.

Do you suppose the salesman slept at night, knowing, as he must have known, that all of the socks would be found somehow faulty? But maybe he too was desperate. We must be fair, we must see all sides to the question. Maybe he told himself she could sell them somewhere else, or make them for the family. There was nothing wrong with the machine, a fine piece of merchandise which knit flawless socks, this he had sold and she had bought, each in his separate desperation.

But you cannot hold it against her, no more can I, that she never touched it again once the message was clear, could not stand to look at it, and hid it away in the attic. We lived well enough without the socks it might have made.

1776-1976: The Ladies' Rebellion

CARYN McTIGHE MUSIL

WHILE A GROUP of men in Philadelphia in 1776 were shaping the destiny of our fledgling nation, a woman from Braintree, Massachusetts, tried to influence her delegate-husband through the channel acceptable then—indirect power. In an oft-quoted letter, Abigail Adams pleads with John, “in the New Code of Laws . . . I desire you would Remember the Ladies.” More important than her request, however, is her less quoted warning, “If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebelion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no choice, or Representation.” Although the threatened Ladies’ rebellion was submerged by the bitter war to end England’s colonial tyranny, the revolt of women against their sexual colonial status eventually did surface. As America celebrates its bicentennial, American women can celebrate a proud two hundred years of courage, determination, and achievements that have molded the kind of dreams we now share for ourselves and for our country.

To read history books one would think America had been settled, developed, and grown prosperous only by the vision, labor, and sweat of men. To the contrary, America was never seen as more than simply a continent to explore until ninety women sailed that arduous sea journey in 1619 to Virginia and twenty-two in 1620 to New England.¹ Having women on America’s soil marked the real beginning of our history as a nation, for because of women stable communities and continuity were at last possible.

To survive those early years in the untamed and often unyielding new world required the labor of everyone. Conse-

1 Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 3.

quently, sex and class distinctions were altered in many instances, creating a rough parity. Europeans, often shocked at the American woman, saw her and her compatriots as a curious new breed. Although seventeenth and early eighteenth-century American women did not share in political power as Anne Hutchinson's excommunication from the Massachusetts Bay Colony testifies, they performed essential functions within communities. The work men and women accomplished together produced a higher standard of living for some, but with that higher standard more affluent women's work grew more superfluous, their tasks less functional. The independent, competent, engaging Abigail Adams seems to exercise more responsibility and power at Braintree Farm than she does accompanying her husband abroad and worrying about which dress to wear for the ambassador's dinner. As John Adams grew more prominent and affluent, Abigail's role shifted from an economic one to a social one. With that shift, her power diminished immeasurably.

As increased social stratification accompanied the economic growth of the eighteenth century, the colonies looked anew to Europe as a model. Early agonies of wrenching a subsistence from the land were tempered by some prosperity that allowed some citizens greater purchase of European goods. Not just material goods were imported, however. English common law was the foundation for American jurisprudence. Embedded in English law was the notion of woman's dependency, subordinate role, and need for protection. A single woman had few legal rights, a married woman almost none. Legally a woman was considered a *femme couverte*, interpreted by one historian to mean, "My wife and I are one, and I am he."² One disgruntled woman, Lydia Maria Child, a prominent writer and abolitionist in the nineteenth century, wrote with sharpness:

David has signed my will and I have sealed it up and put it away. It excited my towering indignation to think it was necessary for him to sign it . . . I was indignant for woman-kind made chattels personal from the beginning of time, perpetually insulted by literature, law, and custom. The very phrases used with regard to us are abominable. "Dead in the law." "Femme couverte." How I detest such language!³

In addition to transplanted legal codes were the codes governing decent behavior. While our nation was gaining its political independence, its cultural dependence on England was heavi-

² Duncan Crow, *The Victorian Woman* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), p. 147.

³ Flexner, pp. 62-63.

er than ever. Dr. Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, which had spurred Mary Wollstonecraft to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, had been imported to America along with bone china. As a result, young girls were taught in late eighteenth-century America that "'virtues which make a figure in the world' do not fall to the lot of women," for "feminine virtues are of a simple and peaceable nature; but the great virtues are for men."⁴ These same young girls whose mothers and grandmothers and even sisters in slavery and on the frontier hauled water, skinned animals, worked the soil, eked an existence out of almost nothing, were warned to embrace only modesty, delicacy, and weakness, for if "a girl spoke of her great strength, her good appetite, or her ability to bear excessive fatigue, the male world recoiled in disgust."⁵

The seventeenth century, then, had demanded that American women accustomed to European culture had to alter their expectations, invent new skills, and cope with an alien world. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, however, Americans in cities and tamer environs seemed eager to discard their rugged origins and clothe themselves in the cultural costumes dominating Europe. As they lost sight of what had distinguished them as a nation, women's importance suffered. Not all women, however, had lost sight of the American dream. Just as our country had defied governmental authority in demanding independence, some women continued to battle for freedom and equality. As the American economy under industrialism in the nineteenth century enabled our country to be more self-sufficient, tremendous powers were unleashed as our society began to explore new capacities. For women, that energy went first toward emancipating another subject people, black slaves, and then toward emancipating themselves.

The relationship between the anti-slavery women and the origins of the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century has been well documented. Many women from the anti-slavery movement became leaders in the Women's Movement—the Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Sojourner Truth, and many others. Anti-slavery involvement taught women that to be effective and exercise their full powers, they had to claim power they were not yet granted culturally or politically. For example, in 1833 in Philadelphia, a group of concerned men and women met to form

⁴ Monica Kiefer, *American Children Through Their Books 1700-1835* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), p. 79. Kiefer is quoting from Dr. Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, p. 15.

⁵ Kiefer, p. 30 quoting Gregory, p. 40.

the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society. Though permitted to attend the meeting, women were not permitted to join or sign the Declaration of the group. Consequently, twenty of these women then met to form the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. The Grimke sisters, who moved to Philadelphia in the 1830's from their slave-holding family in South Carolina, had much to do with liberating women from timid convention because of their eloquent public speeches, tough-minded pamphlets, and organizing skills. The younger, Angelina Grimke, summed up the elated sense of new found power when she said, "We abolitionist women are turning the world upside down."⁶

The world the female abolitionists were upsetting was not simply slave holders and those who profited from a slave economy, but the long guarded sanctuary of the patriarchs themselves. At the World's Anti-Slavery Conference in England in 1840, much time was spent deciding whether to seat the women representatives from the American delegation. The floor finally banned women from participation but granted them seats in a gallery—behind a curtain. Two of these literally *femmes couvertes* were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. At that point both women decided that something should be done for women's rights. It was eight years later before the same two women met again, but when they did, they organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. It was a convention that soon solidified women's reform movements all over the country, much as the formation of NOW did in 1966.

Once more identifying strongly with a peculiarly American heritage, the women chose to rewrite the Declaration of Independence to serve as their central document. A maiden speech by Frances Gage, who was to become a prominent midwestern leader in the Women's Movement, reveals what American women were dreaming:

The old land of moral, social and political privilege seems too narrow for our wants; its soil answers not to our growing, and we feel that we can see clearly a better country that we might inhabit. But there are mountains of established law and custom to overcome; a wilderness of prejudice to be subdued, a powerful foe of selfishness and self-interest to be overthrown. But for the sake of our children's children, we have entered upon the work.⁷

An unmarried woman with no children, Susan B. Anthony nonetheless worked tirelessly to accomplish Mrs. Gage's dream

6 Flexner, p. 49.

7 Flexner, p. 91.

"for the sake of our children's children." Having already worked without pause for more than thirty years and to give another thirty before she died, Anthony was determined to make the centennial of 1876 acknowledge its failure to listen to Abigail Adams' earlier plea to "Remember the Ladies." Philadelphia was the center for centennial celebrations. The July Fourth program at Independence Hall included no women speakers, petitions from women to address the audience had been denied, and the person to be honored at our 100th birthday was the Emperor of Brazil! Undaunted, Susan B. Anthony with four other women marched to the platform just as the audience had risen to greet the Emperor. After presenting their Declaration of Rights for Women to the startled chairman, the women walked solemnly out of the hall scattering broadsides of their Declaration in their wake. Once outside, they held a spontaneous rally during which they sang a song embodying their dreams for their future:

Then woman, man's partner, man's equal shall stand,

While beauty and harmony govern the land;

To think for oneself will be no offense,

The world will be thinking, a hundred years hence.⁸

It is now a hundred years hence. What women are dreaming today at first seems filled with contradictions. During 1976 as our nation celebrates its declaration of independence and the revolution that followed, the Equal Rights Amendment for state constitutions was defeated in referendums in New York and New Jersey, two of our most traditionally liberal states. Jubilant anti-ERA forces and other critics of the Women's Movement are contending that the Movement simply does not represent the dreams of most American women. Contrary to apparent defeats and deceptive quietness, the Women's Movement has never been stronger. Although many women do not identify with feminist organizations, as many women did not in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's lives have been unalterably affected by the Women's Movement in general, particularly during the last decade. A reluctance by some women to link themselves with feminist groups often prompts the familiar phrase, "I'm no women's libber, but . . ." What follows the "but," however, reveals how women agree far more than they differ on concerns and frustrations, aspirations and angers.

In the late sixties the Women's Movement seemed restricted to middle and upper-class, educated, white, mainly younger women. By the mid-seventies it has broadened its base and begun the challenging task of dissolving class, age, race, and economic

8 Flexner, p. 171.

divisions. A Virginia Slims American Women's Poll conducted in 1970 found that 40% of women were in favor of efforts to strengthen or change women's status in society and 42% were opposed. By 1974 57% of women were in favor and only 25% opposed.⁹ The increase in sympathy has taken the form of burgeoning grass-roots, community based groups. In cities and towns all over the country, women are joining in special projects to remedy a problem particular to their area whether improved health care, day care, schools, labor conditions, or adult education. NOW chapters alone have increased from 210 in 1972 to 659 in 1974.¹⁰ *Ms.* magazine's circulation has spiralled from 250,000 in 1972 to 450,000 in 1976 and the number of women's journals has jumped to more than 60.¹¹ Most significantly of all, women all over the country are beginning to exercise their power to shape their society and force it to attend to the needs of all its citizens.

What unites the disparate groups of women now, as it always has in the past, is the shared experience of growing up female in America. Although no one doubts the differences that exist in the experiences between being a miner's wife in Alabama, a black domestic worker in Chicago, a forty-five-year-old wife of a New York taxi driver, a suburban housewife in Westchester, or an unmarried secretary in Los Angeles, the similarities are what has produced a dramatically influential Women's Movement. Women all know what sexism is and few of us have escaped being its victim in varying degrees. What we have come to recognize as a group more forcefully than ever is how sexism permeates our institutions and how that has crippled our lives personally as well as economically.

The attack on institutional sexism has been the central core of the Women's Movement from the very beginning. Without question the economic thrust of the Women's Movement is the strongest tie that has bound the ranks together and increased the number of recruits. With more women in the labor force, 39% in 1974 versus 20% in 1920,¹² the economic inequities are felt more keenly by more women. Significantly, according to Department of Labor investigations, the profile of the average woman worker has shifted drastically from a twenty-eight-year-old single factory worker or clerk to a thirty-five-year-old married woman, almost half of whom have children under 18,

9 Deena Peterson, *A Practical Guide to the Women's Movement*, (1975; rpt. New York: Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, 1975), p. 2.

10 Peterson, pp. 3-4.

11 Peterson, pp. 4, 10.

12 *Women Workers Today* (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, 1975), p. 1.

who may be in a variety of occupations.¹³ Improving their economic earning power has become more and more essential to women whose personal and family survival depend on it.

So, in many external areas touching economic realities, women have discovered they share similar dreams of equal pay, greater access to better jobs, and public policies and laws that guarantee their just treatment. In other areas that concern their family's welfare, women have worked together increasingly to establish professional, well-funded child development centers for their younger children, to assure their older children greater educational opportunities, to demand more comprehensive and cheaper health care, and to have contraceptive information easily available.

In areas that are internal and not external, women have explored with alternate horror and elation their interior landscape. Introspection revealed inarticulated inadequacies and untapped potential. Most women found their lives had in some way been stunted by sexism. In varying degrees we shared crippling attitudes about ourselves so that we often automatically identified what is good and excellent and normal with what is male. Self-analysis also revealed, however, heady discoveries about women's strength, courage, and power. Adrienne Rich's poem, "Diving Into the Wreck," captures dramatically the adventure as women dive deep to try to discover what being a woman means:

I came to explore the wreck.

I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.
I stroke the beam of my lamp
slowly along the flank
of something more permanent
than fish or weed

the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth.

To get beyond the story of the wreck, the myth, the layers of socialization that have been superimposed on women throughout history has been arduous, frequently unsettling, and usually painful. But the result has been such a release of energy and the

13 *Women Workers Today*, p. 1.

sea change so wondrous that we continue to probe to find those "treasures that prevail." Rich claims "we are the half-destroyed instruments/ that once held to a course/ the water-eaten long/ the fouled compass." In salvaging the instruments, and in the process repossessing ourselves, we have begun to chart our course in terms of internal values as well as external goals. In trying to redefine what is human and what is humane, women are asking which traditional sex characteristics of males and females do we maintain, which ones discard? For instance, though women in general recognize that having economic power through jobs is the basis for any hoped change in women's status, most women also resist making a career the highest measure of success or the best judge of one's worth. As we move toward our next hundred years hence, women are attempting to create a new ethic, a more appropriate set of American values. Women are struggling to learn how to achieve without exploiting others, how to love without crippling others, and how to be analytical without forgetting that human beings can't be measured by statistics.

The strength of the Women's Movement lies in women's growing conviction that we can exercise power over our own lives and over our society as well. An example of how one woman reclaimed her life by her own initiative occurred after she had been in a consciousness raising group. Alice, a married woman in her forties from a working-class neighborhood, had finally decided to go back to school in speech therapy. Her decision defied the usual scenario which insisted that once a woman had raised her children, her life was over. Alice's determination to begin a second career spurred her unusually sympathetic husband to think of going to college himself when his wife had finished and could support him. A skeptical friend chided Alice for being like a starry-eyed 18-year-old. Unabashed, Alice answered, "I feel like one. I haven't been this optimistic about life since I was 18."¹⁴ That optimism which once defined America to most people was thought crushed beneath the cynicism, powerlessness, and corruption of our contemporary world. Women have rediscovered optimism. We have discovered it because we have begun to rediscover ourselves and to envision as Frances Gage did in the 1850's "a better country that we might inhabit."

Since much of women's history has been spent adopting someone else's dream and helping other people realize their dreams, it is time in 1976 for women to begin to articulate dreams

¹⁴ Susan Jacoby, "Feminism in the \$12,000-a-year-family: What do I do for the next 20 years?," *New York Times Magazine*, 17 June 1973, p. 43.

of our own. Alice did. We can. To feel the wonder of aspiring, the dizzying effect of fantasizing, has seemed unnatural at first, then exhilarating and liberating. Sylvia Plath's heroine Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* balks at the dictum of her society that proclaims, "What a man is is an arrow into the future and what a woman is is the place the arrow shoots off from." Esther retorts, "The last thing I wanted was . . . to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I want change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the colored arrows from a Fourth of July rocket." As the fireworks explode into seemingly infinite space during our bicentennial celebration July Fourth, 1976, we women must take note of the beauty the explosion creates—and the power it took to hurl it into the sky.

America

PHILLIP MAHONY

The trees of New York and Washington grow in unison.
And, just as Nevada is only as bleak as Texas,
lights in Manhattan flash like lights in Vegas.
And the dust of Reno settles like the dust of Houston,
of Cheyenne, of everywhere.

Pacific and Atlantic waves break and roar in unison.
And, just as 59th and Lex. equals Market and Powell,
the dawns of Denver are only as hopeless as Brooklyn's.
And if she isn't there, If I sleep alone there too,
then the cold winds of Madison freeze like the cold winds
of Milwaukee, of Minnesota, of everywhere.

Conversations With Grandfather

MICHAEL WATERS

in memory of George Waters

Listening to his chest,
That long and narrow house,
The powerful whistles
Boiling there,

I hear the locomotives
Pulling into the station on time.

*

He hasn't worked for years.
The railroad took away his watch.
Now it's Christmas past—
Nothing under the tree but tracks.

Boxing
Those miniature locomotives
That open the room to landscape,

He learns the trail of progress
Is circular:
Winding around a tree.

*

Sometimes the room seems to spin.
The bright lights wink and go home.
The train, like a dark moon,
Approaches.

*

He has a history of trains.
One locomotive
That swung past the house
Large and black as a bear

Still rests for water
In the town's shopping square.

*

Yesterday,
Bending to some simple task,
I felt the heart gather speed

Like a song
Composed in the misery of wheels

I know the heart revolves in the chest
Like a thin disc of moon,
Now the bright face,
Now the dark

*

Once grandfather
Recited this rhyme from childhood:

*One penny on the track
Enough to buy the darkness back . . .*

"It doesn't work," the boy said,
"It doesn't stop the train."

The Pine Barrens

(for Michael Davis)

CLAUDE KOCH

Down the Hospitality to Penny Pot
The deer are secret as tongues forgot
Though citizens search clear from Mullica Hill;
A dogleg off Route 30, Sicklersville,
Late hunters slice a path the Lenape
Abandoned to the holly and the laurel—
No trace of bog iron nor of indian.

White sand and brandy water of the pines
Inspire to an enthusiastic folly:
To course the Barrens and to bring to hand
The mythic, dim, and uncompleted land
That runs from childhood to the wine-dark seas,
Engages us through small eternities
And innocent vacations of the mind.

Within the green disclosure of the trees
As in a glass most darkly, ghosts of lost
And stately actions summon to their source:
So chase the Nescochague to Lower Bank
Where British redcoats bottle up a fleet
Of privateers, and later clippers weigh
Their home-wrought anchors out into Great Bay;

And punt the Mullica from Atison
With Pineys flared like Vulcan, alchemists,
The gaffers' furnace raveling the sun;
What crucibles transmute the cedar mist
Gave place to hungry lupine long ago:
A bubble burst at Herman and Batsto—
The Jersey Devil dances on the bones.
Then tramp Whale Beach: the broken shells and stones
Scored with their messages beyond the sun
Hold time and tide like bulkheads of the mind,
Roll back the wash until a chancy breeze
That in far Chatsworth turns the deer's soft flank
Brings velvet in the sand to life. And think:
The prize of fancy that the hunt achieves—
Behind

The low horizon's opalescent frieze
To stay the gods at last, immured in light.

FDR: The American as Idealistic Pragmatist

JOHN LUKACS

(*Ed. note: The following article is an excerpt from a forthcoming book, YEAR ZERO: 1945.*)

IN 1945 there was no world power such as the United States. There had been nothing like it since the Roman Empire. Great Britain after Napoleon, the France of Louis XIV, the Spanish empire in the sixteenth century, had been first among equals, *primus inter pares*. The vast Eurasian empire of the Soviet Union was a superpower because of her size, not because of the extent of her sway. Stalin did not have the slightest inclination to challenge the American dominion over the Atlantic and the Pacific. He was anxious to keep American influences out of his Eurasian domains, no matter how widespread these influences might be elsewhere in the world.

As the war was coming to an end, the President of the United States was a sick man, close to death. His mental capacity had weakened. He had been crippled by polio, dependent on his wheelchair for more than two decades. Apart from his legs, his body and his mind had remained powerful for many years. Some time after 1939 Roosevelt began to weaken. It is impossible even now to determine the exact beginnings and the nature of this change. He developed an inclination for protracted periods of rest. There were lengthening periods of weariness and lassitude. Unlike Churchill who in 1940 was in top form, exhilarated in body and mind, Roosevelt had slipped from the peak of his powers when his country was catapulted into the war, even as he was not yet sixty years old. Among his contemporaries, Stalin and Churchill at sixty were as strong as ever. At sixty, Roosevelt's arteries were those of a man ninety years old; they had narrowed and hardened, constricting the natural course of his blood. His heart was enlarged. His entire body had become flaccid, including the hitherto unimpaired torso, of the strength

of which he had been more than ordinarily proud. In 1941 Roosevelt began to take longer and longer vacations. His ability to concentrate was impaired. He required ten or twelve hours of sleep. In May 1944, the month before the invasion of Europe, Roosevelt was "out of bed no more than six hours a day, on his back eighteen." By January 1945 he could no longer sign his name without difficulty. Throughout the war Churchill's entourage had to keep him from plunging into all kinds of strenuous and dangerous activities, in quest of adventure. Roosevelt's problem was the opposite one. He enjoyed the restfulness of small talk, undemanding friends and favorites, the American domesticity of the cocktail hour. He could still flash his famous smile; his willpower still sufficed to raise his spirits and his voice, impressing people on occasion. But he could concentrate for shorter and shorter periods. (At Quebec, when Churchill kept talking, Roosevelt's head was dropping. At another time Elliott Roosevelt shouted at his father: "For God's sake, tell him you're tired. You work all day while he takes naps." This was both untrue and unfair.)

The American people knew nothing of this. They believed that the President was a vigorous man, a happy husband, a relentless worker, a powerful mind, until he was suddenly felled by a stroke, like a tree in full leaf. There were two reasons for the extent of this kind of national and popular ignorance. First, the deterioration of the physical condition of Franklin Roosevelt was kept from the people through all kinds of intricate public relations shields, as customary of the machinery of modern democracy as of that of the ancient Chinese court. Second, people did not want to think otherwise. Close to the President hovered dozens of newspapermen who could see his deteriorating condition with their own eyes. They would not report, or even suggest, anything about it to the American people; as a matter of fact, most of them would not think much about it at all. There was the case of Admiral McIntire, the chief physician in the White House. (Like Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt had thought it proper to elevate his doctor to the rank of Admiral.) McIntire's main concern seems to have been to keep the seriousness of the President's condition from the public, from the President's family, indeed, from everyone, including himself. In March 1944 when his family thought that Roosevelt looked awful, Admiral McIntire told them that it was the result of an influenza bug. At the insistence of Roosevelt's daughter, the Admiral ordered a young cardiologist, Dr. Bruenn, to examine the President in the Bethesda Naval Hospital. The results of the examination were most disturbing and ominous: a prematurely aged body,

approaching death. McIntire did not seem to be unduly disturbed. He arranged for Dr. Bruenn to be posted as the President's attending physician. He would be under the Admiral's orders. He was forbidden to discuss the President's condition with anyone, including the patient himself or his family. It was indeed like the ancient (or, at that, of the modern Communist) court in China, with the ruler's chief physician unwilling to admit bad news, satisfied as he was with his position: Poo-Bah.

The President was still capable of being his old self. He seems to have been aware of his condition. He knew that he was weakening, perhaps even that death was not far away. There was a grain of honesty in this kind of self-knowledge. It enabled Roosevelt to rise above the prison of his body. During the last months of his life he could be cheerful, jaunty, self-possessed, and not merely for the purpose of striking a pose; he could enjoy what life still had to offer him, which was no mean thing. There was more than a grain of vanity in this, perhaps, and a sense of duty. This sense of duty was often employed, however, in the ephemeral cause of publicity. On 21 October 1944, Roosevelt was driven through the streets of New York in an open convertible, in a cold downpour for four hours, through a tour of the city amounting to fifty-one miles. He had thought this was imperative for the purposes of the coming election in which he sought the support of the American people for an unprecedented fourth term. The route had been publicized for weeks beforehand. He went through with it, at the cost of very great strain and risk to his health. It did not seem to have done him much harm; but there is something awful in the spectacle of this sick man, with rain pouring down his hat and cape, with a relentlessly large smile on his face, propped up by his concerned and stern-faced minions, because of the unbreakable traditions of a presidential motorcade, for the sake of impressing the American people with the unbroken continuity of an image.

There was a brave kind of nonchalance in Franklin Roosevelt's make-up that persisted till the end. Oliver Wendell Holmes was supposed to have said that Roosevelt had a third-rate mind and a first-rate temperament. The statement reflects the New Englander's typical division of reason from emotion, of mind from temperament—but there is enough truth in it to be worth quoting. Roosevelt's temperament was generous (generous rather than magnanimous), strong-willed, and vain—altogether not an unattractive combination, and rather fortunately suited for an American President in his circumstances, in his times. His mind was both broad and superficial. His temperament had some of the engaging qualities of the American spirit at its best;

his mind accepted, and reflected, the prevalent consensus of American enlightened opinion of his times.

ROOSEVELT'S VIEW of the world was Wilsonian. So was that of most Americans who were concerned with international affairs. Woodrow Wilson bequeathed to the American people a philosophy of internationalism that has dominated American public thinking for most of the twentieth century. The extent of this posthumous influence has never been adequately limned. Wilson was a Democrat: yet such Republicans as Herbert Hoover, John Foster Dulles, Richard Nixon were avowed Wilsonians. Wilson was born in the South; yet his philosophy of world affairs had all the marks of the New England mentality: legalistic and moralistic—in one word, unreal. Wilson was a very complex person, who committed the United States to intervention in a European war in 1917—one of the greatest turning points in American and world history, an event that, in the opinion of this writer, was more consequential than the Russian Revolution in that year, both in the short and the long run. Both his principal political rivals, Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Evans Hughes, had a more realistic view of the world than did Wilson; but Wilson's electoral fortunes prevailed; and his particular advocacy of internationalism, a kind of world-wide projection of his liberal progressivism, had an intellectual appeal in the long run. In the short run, Wilson was repudiated. After their emotional participation in the First World War, the American people had a kind of national hangover. They were convinced that they were the greatest power in the world; but they were not at all sure that they wanted new kinds of unaccustomed responsibilities. They felt that Professor Wilson's diet of internationalism was too much. Yet in the long run they would swallow it all. During the Second World War Wilson seemed vindicated. If only the American people had listened to him! If only the United States had not refused to be part of the League of Nations! Hitler, Mussolini, the Second World War could have been, all, avoided. This is what most Americans came around to think, even though it was a myth. In 1944 and in 1945 millions of them saw the movie *Wilson* in which their former President was portrayed as the prophet of the century, a martyr. It was a maudlin kind of Hollywood confection, but it showed what most people had come to believe at the time. Their enlightened minority had, of course, never relented in their advocacy of the Wilson-

ian ideals, of an American kind of internationalism that was enlightened, liberal, and progressive. Men and women such as Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt had believed in it from the beginning. In reality Wilson's view of the world was as limited as that of, say, Calvin Coolidge, though on a different plane—just as in the Tennessee monkey trial Clarence Darrow's dogmatic belief in Science was as narrow as William Jennings Bryan's literal belief in the Old Testament. Yet these were just the kinds of thoughts that enlightened Americans preferred not to entertain.

It is not certain that Franklin Roosevelt had a third-rate mind. What is certain is that the second-rate idealism of Wilsonianism appealed to him. At the same time there was a pragmatic side to Roosevelt's mind that ought not be underrated—even though, as we shall shortly see, this enabled him to achieve a kind of mastery in domestic affairs rather than international ones. His temperament, at any rate, was more attractive than Wilson's. Roosevelt was much more sure of himself than Wilson had been. His American patrician background was invaluable in this regard. He also knew much more of the world. Franklin Roosevelt's naval experiences, his travels in Europe, his acquaintance with members of the English and continental social and political elites over many years, resulted in a knowledge of Europe that was much superior to Wilson's. Indeed, it was rare among American Presidents. All of his vanity and jealousy notwithstanding, Roosevelt was at ease with Churchill, as well as with members of European royalty who lived in the United States or in Canada during their wartime exile. They were unanimous in paying their respect to his charm. In one significant case he was inclined to pursue a policy different from Wilson's. He seems to have believed that the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after the First World War might have been a mistake. He espoused the independence of Austria, even though at the end of the war he did not protect the independence of Hungary. About Russia Wilson's attitudes and ideas oscillated wildly. At first he welcomed the Russian revolution as one of the greatest events in the history of freedom in the world, but he soon became the bitterest enemy of the inheritors of that revolution, the Bolsheviks. Roosevelt was not a dogmatic anti-Communist; he was typically inclined to think that the enemies of freedom came from the Right rather than from the Left; in the end he was willing to divide Europe as well as the Far East with Stalin. It would be a mistake, however, to ascribe these deals with Stalin to Roosevelt's pragmatism alone. His overriding belief in the virtues of an international organization, of the United Nations, was pro-

foundly Wilsonian in its idealism.¹ Wilson made all kinds of compromises with the British and the French for the sake of getting his League of Nations; Roosevelt made all kinds of allowances to the Russians for the sake of getting them to take part in his United Nations. Neither realized that their compromises were not worth the trouble; neither of them would live to see that the League of Nations or the United Nations were of little or no help in maintaining even the rudiments of an international order, that they were useless against aggressive national ambitions. Nor did they realize that their broadminded general concepts for a Parliament of Man were, in reality, projections of a rather narrowly American concept of parliamentarism. "To make the world safe for democracy" was Wilson's phrase. Roosevelt believed in it as much as had Wilson; indeed, he thought that something could be done about it, after the war. Yet, after all is said, "To Make The World Safe For Democracy" is an ideal not much different from "What Is Good For America Is Good For The World."² There is a difference in tone; there is not much difference in substance.

This mixture of broad—as well as narrowminded—idealism was not merely a mental attitude. It had all kinds of pragmatic consequences. Roosevelt and his circle would preach and believe in the virtues of American non-intervention, when this suited their minds. On the other hand they also believed in American omnipotence. Throughout 1944 and 1945 Roosevelt, and high officers of the American government, would tell their critics, and also themselves, that there was no way in which the United States could (or should) "impose its will" on Stalin when it came to such touchy problems as that of Poland. On the other hand the United States must not be left out of any arrangement between Churchill and Stalin. When Churchill, exasperated with American noncommittal attitudes in regard to Eastern Europe, flew off to deal with Stalin in Moscow, Roosevelt cabled Stalin that it was a pity that the two of them were meeting without him. "While appreciating the Prime Minister's desire for such a meeting . . . you, naturally, understand that in this global war

1 The fact that Roosevelt, in 1932, was elected espousing a platform that preached a kind of isolationism rather than internationalism, does not vitiate this argument. His isolationism of the early New Deal years—if that was what it was—was also of the liberal, progressive Left-of-center variety. His recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933, his revision of the American contractual relationship to Cuba and the Philippines in 1934, are evidences thereof.

2 De Gaulle on Roosevelt: "It was true that the isolationism of the United States was, according to the President, a great error now ended. But passing from one extreme to the other, it was a permanent system of intervention that he intended to institute by international law."

there is literally no question, political or military, in which the United States is not interested." It was not enough to be broad-minded; one must be high-minded as well, especially in public. Not to bother about Bulgaria or Rumania when, in exchange, one could get a free hand in Greece was Churchill's old way of doing business. Not to bother much about Poland but to concentrate, instead, on the higher purpose of establishing the United Nations was Roosevelt's way of proclaiming virtue as if it were necessity. Unless "the Russians can be persuaded or compelled to treat Poland with some decency there will not be [a United Nations] that is worth much," Anthony Eden said (in his private record). Churchill thought, and on occasion said, much the same; so did a lone American, George Kennan, a junior diplomat who wrote courageously from Moscow that Washington was being "negligent in the interests of our people if we allow plans for an international organization to be an excuse for failing to occupy ourselves seriously and minutely with the sheer power relationships of the European peoples."

Perhaps none of them realized at the time that Roosevelt was not merely being naive. The advocacy of high ideals was the most practical way to win friends and influence people, especially in America. His speechwriters and his circle of advisors understood this to the core. In 1944 Benjamin V. Cohen, one of Roosevelt's close advisors, suggested that Roosevelt not run for a fourth term. He knew that Roosevelt was ill but did not dare refer to this in his nine-page letter. In the true Liberal-Progressive way he suggested that the President renounce a fourth term "for a higher calling." He should become "The Chief Executive Officer" of the new international organization to maintain the peace. That is: from President of the United States to President of the World, in order to make the world safe for democracy, for what was good for America must be good for the world.

Roosevelt would rather be President of the United States. He thought he could influence much of the world from Washington. He believed in some of the virtues of the old American patronizing and missionary attitude towards the Orient. China, India, eventually Japan, ought to follow the American example. The United States would teach the world how to be democratic, independent, prosperous, educated. Roosevelt had the usual American prejudices against the surviving British, the French, the Dutch empires. Like most Americans he had fewer scruples in dealing with Asian than in dealing with European politics. Consequently he was more confident, and also more successful. At Yalta he would divvy up Manchuria, and North China, with Stalin, with no trouble either to his conscience or to his calcula-

tions. At Yalta, too, he would be eloquent on the virtues of the American, as distinct from the British, view of the world. He proposed a toast: "You see Winston," he said, "there is something here that you are not capable of understanding. You have in your veins the blood of tens of generations of people accustomed to conquering. We are here at Yalta to build up a new world which will know neither injustice nor violence, a world of justice and equity." Stalin pretended to be moved to tears. (Or perhaps he was really moved. God alone knows.)

Stalin had reason to be moved. Roosevelt and the Americans, for whom, like most Russians, he had enormous respect, were not necessarily on the side of Churchill and of the British; they were plunking themselves down in the middle. Unlike Hitler, who had known since the Thirties that Roosevelt and Churchill were in cahoots, Stalin could profit from their differences—especially since Roosevelt did his best (or, rather, his worst) to demonstrate these differences to him. Roosevelt snubbed Churchill at Teheran and at Yalta, in plain view of everyone. Even apart of its consequences, there was something slightly obscene and cruel in this spectacle: a public demonstration of new interests at the expense of the old and faithful friend or consort. Roosevelt fancied himself a man of powerful charm, an experienced and insouciant seducer. He kept telling his friends, including Churchill, that he knew how to charm Stalin: "I think I can personally handle Stalin better" than anyone else. He did not understand that Stalin was more than willing to respond, but out of motives that had nothing to do with patrician insouciance and American charm. When an American seductionist goes to the Caucasus he'd better bring plenty of money.

Roosevelt's misreading of Stalin was not the solitary source of future trouble. His misreading of Russia was involved with his misreading of the historical situation of his own country—a misreading which many Americans shared at the time. He saw the world in terms of a progressive democratic evolutionism. Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese represented the reactionary forces from an atavistic past. Churchill was admirable in many ways, outdated in others: a Dickensian figure, Tory England, Old Roast Beef and all that. Stalin and the Bolsheviks were moving crudely toward the future, rough and ready Siberian pioneers that they were, both prophets and pioneers of the collective state of the people. The United States, with its progressive liberalism, was midway between the British and the Russians, slightly left of center (that was one of Roosevelt's favorite expressions of his political bearing). There was some truth in this progressive vision of the world, but not much. In reality it

was Hitler who incarnated the most radical revolutionary force of his times, whereas in many ways Stalin's rule was reminiscent of that of Ivan the Terrible. More important, the liberal progressivism that formed the substance of Roosevelt's political philosophy was almost wholly outdated. It rested on a view of human nature and of the nature of politics that was a compound of Franklin and Jefferson and Gladstone and Wilson, very much of the nineteenth century, and in many ways more backward than Churchill's. Even more important, Roosevelt's view of the relative positions of Britain and the United States in relation to the Soviet Union was the reverse of the truth. Already during the war Britain was less capitalist, more collectivized, more of a regimented welfare state than the still considerably capitalistic United States. The power that was destined to become the principal opponent of Russian imperialism after the war was not Great Britain but the United States.

Roosevelt could be high-minded and low-minded at the same time. He was both an idealist and a pragmatist; more accurately, he was an idealistic pragmatist rather than a pragmatic idealist—not the best of possible combinations. He was a master of political expediency to the point where his art of compromising would eventually lead not only to the sacrifice of principles but sometimes to that of expediency itself. He saw in Stalin a figure reminiscent of the powerful political bosses of the Democratic Party with whom he had had to deal. There was some truth in this assessment; what was wrong with it was that the deals he would make with Stalin were more harmful, and more consequential in the long run, than the deals he had had to make with a Hague, a Farley, a Pendergast. His concern with the few million Polish-American voters who, in his estimation, could swing the 1944 election against him in certain principal states, is amazing in retrospect. He subordinated the entire issue of Poland not only to the cause of the future world government but also to this pragmatic concern with the Polish-American vote. He tried to impress this repeatedly upon Stalin, as if to make of this necessity a virtue—the occupational disease of pragmatists, who are wont to sacrifice their much-vaunted realism for Facts that in the end do not amount to much. At the same time, Roosevelt wanted to maintain his image of the high-minded statesman. He wanted to impress not only Polish-Americans but all kinds of people that he was doing the best he could for Poland. Towards this end, he would often ask Stalin to make small concessions *re* Poland, for the purpose of domestic politics (when he was asking Stalin to consider a new three-power summit conference, he wrote "Such a meeting would help me domestically"). He thought

that such frank admissions of political realism would impress Stalin and thereby strengthen his own position. It may or may not have impressed Stalin; it certainly did not strengthen Roosevelt's position. His approach to the Pope was also in this vein. He cultivated a well-publicized approach to Pius XII from the beginning of the European war, because of his concern with American Catholic voters, most of them Democrats, many of them also isolationists, and anti-Communists almost to a man. After Hitler's invasion of Russia Roosevelt wrote to the Pope that Communism was less dangerous than Nazism (something that may well have been true at the time), and that there was less persecution of the churches in the Soviet Union than in the Third Reich (which was not true). Again, he wanted to commit the Pope against Hitler not only for the sake of principle. Again, as with Stalin, Roosevelt was less than subtle; he instructed his envoy to the Vatican to tell the Pope that he was worried about the Catholic isolationists in America: (" . . . there is a Catholic minority in the United States" who are causing trouble because of their inability to distinguish between Russia and Communism; in order to avoid a deep schism among American Catholics a clarification from the Holy See would be necessary.") Msgr. Tardini, the Pope's principal adviser, understood. In a memorandum to the Pope he wrote that the President's letter "reveals clearly what Roosevelt wants from . . . the authority of the Holy See—he wants to obtain a large advantage in American internal politics."

Roosevelt need not have been concerned. He had a large advantage in American internal politics, without the help of Stalin or the Pope. He was unduly anxious about the Polish-American vote, about Irish Democrats in Massachusetts, because of his political habit of overestimating the appeal of isolationist sentiment among the American people. Consequently he found it necessary to use all kinds of political and rhetorical tricks, including doubletalk on occasion. This suggests how Roosevelt, this seigneurial figure towering over American politics, was far from being immune to not only the temptations of political prevarication but also to that most corrupting inclination to which so many high-minded and high-talking Americans have been prone: in this republic, established upon the principle that the common people can be trusted, they end up underestimating, rather than overestimating, the native intelligence of the people. Whatever is worst in American life—the practices of advertising, of publicity, of public education, for example—is the result of this fatalist inclination that, instead of being the result of a healthy conservative scepticism, is in reality the result of cyni-

cism cloaked by sentimental rhetoric: in sum, the easiest way out. The easy way out: it works, in the short run. I repeat: Roosevelt need not have been concerned. He had all the domestic support he needed, especially in 1945. The chorus of the American press, of public opinion, of public figures, after Yalta was deafeningly uniform. Yalta was the greatest hope of the world, "no more appropriate news could be conceived to celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln;" it was "the greatest United Nations victory of the war," "a landmark in human history," "a complete success." There were not only paeans of praise from liberal newspapers and commentators. *Time* magazine wrote: "All doubts . . . seem now to have been swept away." Even Herbert Hoover, who grew more and more crabby as the year 1945 went on, saluted Yalta: "a great hope to the world." Senator Vandenberg, the chief Republican in the Senate, and before 1945 an isolationist, stated that Yalta affirmed the "basic principles of justice" in the world. Like Leninism-Stalinism, Wilsonianism-Rooseveltianism seemed triumphant in 1945. Vandenberg was on the way to his public conversion to internationalism. It was the avenue of public remuneration, in more than one way.

ROOSEVELT was a leader, a leader-President such as the American people had wanted since Theodore Roosevelt. He produced the leadership that the American people needed in 1933, and for many years afterwards. His career as the leader of the American nation was, in many ways, parallel to Hitler's career as the *Fuhrer* of the German nation. They came to power at the same time, in the winter of 1932-33. Hitler was appointed Chancellor on Franklin Roosevelt's birthday, 30 January 1933. Both were officially invested with power in March 1933. Both ruled for twelve years, of which the first six were years of relative peace, the last six the years of a world war. Both Roosevelt and Hitler were more successful in governing their peoples than in imposing their designs on the world. Both died in April 1945, before the end of the war, only eighteen days apart. Whatever these coincidences, Roosevelt and Hitler were very different men. Whatever his shortcomings, Roosevelt was an American gentleman, incarnating some of the best features of the American character. Whatever his genius, Hitler was propelled by hate, incarnating some of the worst features of the German-Austrian national character. Hitler's tragedy issued from the depths of his tortured soul. Roosevelt's failures grew from the blandness of his mind. His character was exceptional, original, in more than one way. There was nothing exceptional, nothing original

in his ideas. His relationship with his wife was unusual in this respect. His temperament, his nature, his humors, his personal preferences, were quite different from Eleanor Roosevelt's; so was his approach to people, his entire *modus operandi*. Yet his political ideas, his view of the world were hardly different at all. It was not that he followed her advice in political matters (though often he did), nor was it that Eleanor was necessarily the stronger of the two. It was simply that she was an intellectual, and a vocal representative of the Liberal-Progressive world view, which was the *only* view of the world to which Franklin Roosevelt was accustomed, and to which he could not conceive of any alternative. In this respect he was no leader at all.

Most Americans loved to listen to him. His speeches projected much of that first-rate temperament of his: his voice was warm and strong and convincing. Reading them, they are all blandiloquent; his phrases taste and look like oatmeal, with perhaps a little cocoa-powder or sugar on top, but oatmeal nonetheless. His speeches were written for him by a group of people who represented a consensus of those liberal categories that were to be found in the Sunday supplements of *The New York Times* or in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. They were different men: Jonathan Daniels (a Southern Liberal), Lauchlin Currie (a one time Communist), Robert Sherwood (a successful playwright), Samuel Rosenman (a judge). No matter—their minds ran in the same grooves. So did the minds of those few men on whom Roosevelt depended for intellectual sustenance: Judge Rosenman and Justice Frankfurter, for example. They, too, thought in the same ways, as did Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest aid and troubleshooter during the war years. There is something depressing in this. On the one hand the United States was a free country, amazingly free in 1945, so free of bureaucratic regimentation that this alone filled many Europeans with admiration, envy, and wonder. On the other hand the categories of intellectual discourse were deadeningly uniform. Liberal progressivism in the United States had a monopoly of accepted ideas to which public homage had to be paid, not altogether unlike Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. Unlike in the Soviet Union, in the United States there was open, and sometimes vocal, opposition to this philosophy, voiced by certain Republicans and isolationists. Yet they were incapable of producing an intelligent alternative. *Their* ideas were not broad and flat, they were narrow and flat, like the voice of Senator Taft, their most esteemed spokesman.

And the trouble was not only that Roosevelt's speechwriters and advisers and friends would not think except in certain cate-

gories. They also kept telling the President (and each other) what he (and they) wanted to hear. This habit eventually spares men much of the necessity of thinking for themselves. It certainly does not accustom them to think ahead. And here it is no longer possible to rely on the standard argument, to distinguish between Roosevelt's temperament and his mind. Let me repeat: Franklin Roosevelt was not a naive man. But he was a master of taking the easy way out. When he knew that he was up against a difficult problem his natural inclination was to postpone facing it. This is natural for us mortals, and we must make allowances for Roosevelt's encroaching illness. Surely his habit of procrastination grew worse during the war, and especially during the last months of his life. But it was not only a habit; there was method to it. He did not merely procrastinate; he refused to admit the existence of certain problems as such. Both his denial of the existence of the problem and his procrastination were the results not of naivete or of feebleness but of calculation—not of his inability but of his unwillingness to recognize them. He was—very much unlike Churchill, but very much like his entire circle of his friends—loath to change his mind.

There is the accepted legend, according to which Roosevelt was on the verge of changing his mind about Stalin, of getting tough with Stalin, when death cut him down. There is very little evidence for this. Most of the evidence, literal and circumstantial, points to the contrary. During the two months following Yalta, Stalin showed that he interpreted the Declarations about Poland and about "Liberated Europe" in one way: they amounted to a Russian-American division of Europe, no more and no less. Because of certain circumstances, foremost among them the rapid advance of the American and British armies across Germany, Churchill thought that the time was ripe to make a fuss about this; but Roosevelt refused, even when Stalin had showed himself to be fearful and nasty, accusing the British and the Americans of talking surrender with the Germans behind his back. He did send off an indignant reply to Stalin; but, for all of that reputedly first-rate temperament, his indignation fizzled out in a day or two; it would not last. Stalin sent off a complicated answer, without much of an apology. Roosevelt thanked him for his "frank explanation." "There must not, in any event, be mutual mistrust, and minor misunderstandings of this character should not arise in the future." Harriman, from Moscow, suggested to Roosevelt that the word "minor" be deleted, "since I confess the misunderstanding appeared to me to be of a major character." Roosevelt told Harriman to leave the text as is, since it was his "desire to consider the . . . misun-

derstanding a minor incident." It was his last message to Stalin.

Those who believe—and they include most of his sympathetic biographers—that Roosevelt, had he lived, would have as acutely, and swiftly, responded to the Soviet menace as he had to the Hitlerite menace, are talking through their hats. Everything indicates the contrary. Whether Roosevelt would have changed his mind in not for us to tell. He may have had to change, indeed, he might have eventually changed, the course of the giant American ship of state: but everything indicates that he would have changed its course more reluctantly, and more slowly, than his successor Harry Truman. The latter was, after all, less encumbered with the ideological categories that ruled Roosevelt's view of the world. In this respect the Missouri background was preferable to Groton and Harvard and New York and Washington.

Roosevelt's death came before the end of the war, before the American confrontation with the Soviet Union over Europe had crystallized, a confrontation that he had avoided at almost any cost, for many reasons, including his own mental comfort. The fact of his death, at the relatively early age of 63, was a tragedy for those who loved him. Yet it may have been a blessing for his posthumous reputation. In April 1945 the war was nearly over, but ominous clouds were approaching fast. It was better that Roosevelt went before the sky got darker, before the living appreciation of his leadership faded in the minds of a generation for whom he had meant so much.

After the genuine and tremendous national experience of mourning passed, there was a strange reaction. It was not quite like the national hangover that followed the era of Wilson; it was a kind of queasy uneasiness about Roosevelt's place in history. The American people somehow found it awkward to come to terms with the memory of this President. Soon after his death millions of his followers, huge groups who had been the mainstays of his Democratic Party, deserted it. Most American Catholics voted Republican in the 1950's, and so did many Southerners. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps many millions, of working-class people who had followed Roosevelt as late as 1945 supported Joseph McCarthy a few years later. In 1951 the Congress passed a constitutional amendment, restricting future Presidents to two terms—obviously a reaction against the memory of Franklin Roosevelt. Yet no one would admit this openly. The American people were confused—about the recent past, rather than about the then present. During the late Forties and the Fifties anti-Communism became not only *the* accepted ideology but, indeed, the main ingredient of American patriotism.

This obsession with Communism included a reaction against the Second World War. For America to have been allied with Communism had been a mistake. To have forced Germany into unconditional surrender may have been a mistake. This was the opinion sometimes hinted at, usually unspoken—held by such diverse political personages as John Foster Dulles, Robert A. Taft, Joseph McCarthy, John Kennedy. By the time the latter was elected President in 1960—an event that Eleanor Roosevelt witnessed with great bitterness—things were beginning to change. Kennedy's avowed opinions had changed accordingly. People's memories are short. Roosevelt's image was sliding into the safe past. He belonged to a period about which many people were becoming nostalgic: he was a large piece of it, like streamlining, the *Twentieth Century Limited*, big bands. Nostalgic musicals were produced about the late Fiorello La Guardia and plays about the early Franklin Roosevelt. Slowly, gradually, a consensus about his place in American history began to emerge. The last President who had a strong personal memory of him was Lyndon B. Johnson. When he was a young man, in Texas, and in the Congress, he had been profoundly impressed by Franklin Roosevelt. His Great Society was to be the natural consequence, the logical completion, of the New Deal. He thought that in struggling against the opponents of the war in Vietnam he was fighting Roosevelt's struggle against the isolationists of the Thirties all over again. It was a tragic misreading of history.

Roosevelt was much concerned with his place in history. He was the first President to design his own memorial library during his lifetime—a regrettable practice that was followed at great expense after him by every President, including some who read and wrote practically nothing. About Franklin Roosevelt hundreds of books were written after he died. Half a dozen history professors made their highly profitable careers as his biographers. With all their research apparatus they were little more than hagiographers, especially when it came to Roosevelt's last years, to the war. In spite of the mountain ranges of accumulated papers, in spite of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library, much remained (and remains) unknown. The fact that Roosevelt had a love affair that lasted for long years, the fact that during the last momentous year of the war Roosevelt was a dying man, such facts were left unmentioned for decades, until popular journalists came around to write books—sympathetically, and with understanding, it must be said—dealing with these previously unmentionable subjects. By the 1970's the practices of publicity changed. There was little left

that was unmentionable. Decaying harridans climbed on the publicity bandwagon, coyly suggesting that Franklin Roosevelt had taken them to bed. Assistant professors on the make climbed on the revisionist bandwagon, composing books with theses such as that Roosevelt failed to share atomic knowledge with the Russians or that he failed to rescue the masses of European Jews from Hitler's clutches during the war. Probably all of this matters little. Probably the memory of Roosevelt will not suffer from these "revelations"; probably the contrary will be true. There was something deadeningly funereal in his image for a long time, like one of those Washington monuments cut in unearthly white, looking from a distance as if they were made of Alvastone. Plainly, he was too large for many people. By now the alternate lights and shadows that have passed across this national monument have softened some of its features, making it more real.

Many things were large about Roosevelt: his voice, his shoulders, his face. His face had, like Wilson's, a peculiarly American, preternatural nakedness about it, a dentist's expansive dream; but unlike Wilson's face that was long and narrow and puritanical, Roosevelt's was large and fleshy, at times avuncular; his pince-nez was stuck on it like a monumental twinkle in his eye. He was a monumental figure, after all. He had become President at the right time: had he not been elected, in 1933 the United States may have faced the prospect of a social revolution. Many of Roosevelt's domestic reforms were inevitable. What was not inevitable was that the United States should enter the Second World War against Hitler, a war that Britain and Russia could and perhaps would not have fought without the prospect of American support. Before this fact even Roosevelt's dubious arrangements with Stalin pale. Whatever the limits of his mind, his enlarged heart was in the right place. Had someone like Hoover been President in 1940 Hitler would have won the war.

The Invisible Landscape In American Fiction

"A dream—Still beckoning to me!"

—Langston Hughes

REED SANDERLIN

ONE DOES NOT HAVE to completely divorce the American experience from the inherited strands of European thought in order to claim uniqueness for what occurred on this continent following the settlement of Jamestown in 1607. Those institutions and ideas which Europeans brought with them to this country, as well as those which we have continued to import even up until now, put the test to the arguments of those who would too ardently claim that the Dream which became America was entirely our own making. But in acknowledging our debts, we ought not forfeit that portion of the account which does rightfully belong to us.

Besides the will and the wisdom, if not the luck, which have brought us to this bicentennial celebration, was the elemental fact of geography: space, illimitable it seemed to the earliest settlers, broad enough to house the already emergent ideas of individualism that derived from the Renaissance and culminated in the affirmed egoism of Romanticism, the spiritual individualism of Protestantism, and the political liberalism of Locke. So vast was this country that the political and psycho-social manifestations of romantic individualism could survive long past their historical prime and beyond their viability as models for other nations of the world.

As most historians and economists would agree, the abundance of land and of the resources which accompanied it had much to do with our notions about the American Dream, and continue to shape our expectations for the future, not only as consumers who live united under the credit card, but also as a people whose visions are rooted in history. But my concern

here is not with the economic or social impact of the land, but rather its place within the imagination itself. To a greater degree than most of us can imagine, our very ideals for the society and our almost obsessive concern for self-fulfillment stem from the incorporation of space as outward landscape into the imagination as invisible landscape. For most of us the frontier did not disappear at the close of the last century. Though the geography as outward fact had for the most part been closed, the internalized, invisible landscape was prominent as ever, and continues to be. It is this process of internalization which recurrently asserts itself in American literature. And it is within this internalized landscape where, for American writers, growth of the most important kind can continue unabated: the growth of the Self. The promise of America, the actualization of the Dream, appears to have been regarded less and less by American writers as a social or political possibility; instead, the Dream was of a Self which could exist in its own purity of vision and belief, in many instances a Self seen in opposition to the cultural context in which it existed.

AWARENESS OF DISTANCE as both a notion of space and a notion of time began to emerge in the eighteenth century, first in Europe, then in America. In this country the emergence of the Hudson River School of landscape painters in the early nineteenth century, represented best in the work of Thomas Cole, coincided with the perception of landscape as reflected in our first major writers—Irving, Cooper, and Bryant. Howard Mumford Jones has noted that formal literary description of the American landscape did not occur until Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*, published in America in 1788¹. But within thirty years the imaginative weight of the openness of America had become so great upon a generation of writers and painters that it became a major component of their works.

In Europe, the interest in space had also first revealed itself in regard to landscape, and then later in gardening, touring, poetry, and eventually in aesthetic theory itself.² One importance of distance was that it allowed the viewer to project upon a natural scene his own internal motives at some remove from the hard fact. In Wordsworth even dismal London can from a distance be transmuted into a picturesque scene. The roman-

1 Howard Mumford Jones, *Belief and Disbelief in American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 26.

2 John T. Ogden, "From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXXV, No. 1 (Jan.-March 1974), 66-69.

ticist's interest in the past, in civilizations and cultures which have become part of the flotsam and jetsam of history, testifies to the importance temporal distance was also beginning to assume. With the merging of spatial distance and temporal distance, both nature and history could become poetic symbols: natural object and natural fact could be transformed under the power of the poetic vision into emblems of eternity.

Coleridge, perhaps the most significant theoretician of the art of poetry to influence American writers, moved beyond Wordsworth and conceived of space as less an external concern than an internal, innermost being or state of consciousness, which though alien, ultimately, to the normal world, was most properly expressed with symbols drawn from space and time.³ This same conception of the outer world tended to occur among American writers, though in far less systematized or even conscious manner.

One of the causes of this tendency to internalize time and space seems to have been that the Dream which America aspired to actualize was too magnificent, too much of a myth in the consciousness of man, to ever become embodied as an actual, historical civilization created through human ingenuity and agency. Howard Mumford Jones, in an essay entitled "O Strange New World," has traced the roots of that Dream back into antiquity, showing how the belief in riches and perfection preoccupied the imagination of Europe long before America actually was discovered. Homer's Elysian Fields lay somewhere to the west, Greek dramatists occasionally alluded to some vague western paradise, Seneca even prophesied that one day mankind would encounter a new world somewhere in the west. Of the many versions of this dream which captured the minds of Europe throughout the centuries, one thing is common says Jones: the new world to the west was to be a blessed place, an ideal world of "eternal spring, eternal peace, and eternal plenty."⁴

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the discovery of the new world by the explorers and the exaggerated accounts of wealth which they took back home, the features of this new world became more clearly enunciated. "First, the component of wonder, incarnated, as it were, in the concept of islands where men do not die unless they want to, where it is always summer, where food is plentiful, and where nobody works. Then to a weary Europe came news that seemed to say the Earthly Para-

3 Ogden, p. 71.

4 Howard Mumford Jones, "O Strange New World," collected in *The American Scene: Varieties of American History*, ed. by Robert D. Marcus and David Burner (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1971), p. 3.

dise, Arcadia, or the Golden Age was practicable and could actually be found."⁵ The news was the American continent.

But as Jones convincingly shows, the dream of Arcadia was tarnished from the beginning. The dream of the Golden Age became the lust for gold. The Garden of Eden, the Earthly Paradise, Atlantis, were subnamed under a new name—El Dorado—City of Gold. The promotional literature published in France and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, continually sounding the note of easy wealth, contributed further to the materialization of the American dream. Far from being merely the product of the Protestant work ethic and Puritan greed, the concept of America as the land of plenty ready for the taking was almost an inevitable outcome of centuries lived in materialistic expectation.⁶

But Protestantism certainly contributed its share to the El Dorado image. Interestingly enough, however, Protestantism's role in materializing the vision was not so much direct as indirect, the result not so much of a conscious effort to justify getting and spending in the name of religion as of a set of religious presuppositions about God's activity in history and its belief that the dawning of God's kingdom on earth was imminently at hand.

Ernest Tuveson has convincingly demonstrated that even secular notions of America's role in history were dramatically affected by the reinterpretation carried on in Protestant circles during the Reformation of the millennium vision recorded in *St. John's Revelation*. From the Reformation on, major Protestant theologians, first in Europe and later in America, interpreted politically the anti-Christ symbol which they found in *St. John*. The initial step toward the millennium, which was to be the thousand year reign of God on earth, was located by many interpreters as having occurred during the Reformation, at the time of the break with Rome. America, the nation, was the fledgling arm of what was to be heaven on earth before the ultimate return of Christ. For the American Puritans, religious freedom from the "Whore of Babylon," as Protestants termed the Catholic Church, found expression in a social covenant whereby men committed themselves to realizing politically and socially, and economically, the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God. Writers such as Richard Baxter and Bishop Berkley in England, and Increase Mather, Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight, and Samuel Hopkins in America, were more or less agreed in their similar interpretation that the millennium was near at hand. Joseph Emerson, cousin of Ralph Waldo, even predicted that

⁵ Jones, "O Strange New World," p. 6.

⁶ Jones, "O Strange New World," p. 7.

according to his calculations the millennium might begin in 1941.⁷

It is important to remember that prosperity was itself to be a sign of the end-time. As Tuveson phrases it, "the period of the bidding of Satan, when the original covenant of God and humanity is in large measure restored, will be a time of unexampled material well-being."⁸ Even someone such as Alexander Campbell could decare in the Preface to the first issue of his religious paper *The Millennial Harbinger* published in 1830, that its purpose was to be "the development and introduction of that political and religious order of society called the Millennium, which will be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures."⁹

From Tuveson's study, it becomes apparent that those secular ideas of progress which characterized so much nineteenth century thinking in America had their counterpart in Protestant religious thought for at least three centuries prior. The secular testament of faith as expressed through the phrase "Manifest Destiny," first employed in 1845, was one more example in an American context of ideas about God's plan for a universal social redemption through history, which had developed earlier in a European context. Like the ancients, theologians, preachers, and secularists assumed that the millennium was to dawn in the West.

But complicating the cultural picture was an inherent, unresolved tension which had its roots in our Protestant beginnings, and which is still with us. The millennialist vision described was one that conceived the Kingdom as being ushered in through a social and cultural rejuvenation at the hands of God. Co-existing with this view of things was a position that sprang from the tendency within Protestantism to emphasize the private, individual religious experience, something regarded as distinct and separable from any conventional ordering. Ihab Hassan has characterized this tension as one of a Utopian thrust over against an Edenic thrust. The Utopian sees redemption in social terms; the Edenic, in individual terms.¹⁰

Under the Puritan oligarchy the stress tended to fall upon

7 Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 68. Tuveson provides a convincing argument regarding the millennialistic doctrines and the importance such doctrines had within Christian thought over the centuries. I am heavily indebted to his discussion.

8 Tuveson, p. 31

9 Quoted by Tuveson, p. 81.

10 Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (1961; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 39.

the Utopian hope. Though always introspective, self-searching, and somewhat guilt laden about their failings, the Puritans were suspicious of too great a dependence upon solipsistic visions or interpretations, as evidenced by their exiling of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams in the 1630's. With the eventual breakdown of the oligarchy toward the end of the seventeenth century the Utopian vision began to wane, though as indicated earlier it never entirely died out, surviving well into the nineteenth century, sometimes in a secularized form.

Within Protestantism the trend was definitely leaning toward the Edenic vision from the early seventeen hundreds on. Edward's belief in the millennium was grounded in his premise that religious conversion must be an individual, experiential event. The pietistic force which emerged from the Great Awakening of the 1730's and '40's moved southward and westward, gaining an influential foothold within almost all Protestant denominations. As a result, though there were and have been frequent restatements of the theological justifications for the Church's social mission, for the most part Protestants continue to conceive of salvation as occurring privatistically, apart from and even outside of the most significant events of history. Thus Protestantism, in its internalization of religious idealism, by default added its authority to the unhampered exploitation of America's natural space. Having successfully removed God from both nature and cultural institutions, Protestantism had cleared the way for a century and a half of materialism.

A third important contributing element to the vulgarization of the mythic Dream as a achievable possibility and the resultant internalization of the Dream by American writers was the philosophical liberalism upon which the political structures were based.

Though there is some disagreement among scholars as to what Locke really said and meant, some critics consider Locke as being primarily responsible for the mechanistic, materialistic, and atomistic view of man and the political state which characterizes the modern western perspective. In Locke's view, the primary justification of the state is that it provides the framework within which each man can exploit nature to his own ends, and can accumulate wealth to his personal advantage, without interference either from other men or from the state itself. Locke's belief that the social contract did not create rights but merely provided a means for protecting those rights which already, by natural law, existed in all men prior to their merger into social units, became the philosophical premise of democratic liberalism.

The vastness of America, with its rich store of natural re-

sources to be tapped, meant free rein could be given to the acquisitive drive of the new nation. Wolfgang Born, speaking of the frontier's impact upon the aesthetic attitude of America, says, "Americans began to see their country as the continent it really is, an immense stretch of land over which the imagination could wander unrestrictedly."¹¹ In the minds of most, when the imagination wandered unrestrictedly it saw the land through dollar signs.

Once the Union had been officially formed, the taming of the continent could begin in earnest. From 1780 to 1850 the population of the United States had leaped from somewhere near 3 million to over 23 million. Like Browning's Duchess, Americans liked whatever they looked upon, and their looks went everywhere. Even before the inauguration of Andrew Jackson into the Presidency in 1829, America was well on its way, under the banner of democratic liberalism, toward the Gilded Age. The tide of exploitation was sweeping all before it. El Dorado had been given its political sanctification. With the completion in 1869 of the trans-continental railway at Promontory Point, Utah, industrial and political power shook hands on a deal called America. The machine could now penetrate every corner of the Eden. The loss of innocence was abroad in the land. Only the internalized space of the Self, the invisible landscape, could be preserved from the fall.

PARADOXICALLY, the stress upon individualism so prominent within Romanticism, Protestantism, and democratic liberalism, a fact which contributed to the fall and the failure of the vision, was also the impetus behind the continued belief in the possibilities of innocence so prevalent within American literature. Leslie Fiedler had commented that "It is the dream of exile as freedom which has made America."¹² With the Puritans the exile was that of one community of God's people from the community of Europe. With Emerson, the first and perhaps greatest spokesman for individualism in American literature, the exile was personalized: the exile of the Self from history and culture. Only by living in exile and isolation can the Self, through its visionary powers, reconcile the contraries of the world and escape the corrupting influences of time, necessity, and history.

In one of his poems Emerson exhorts, "Build therefore your

¹¹ Wolfgang Born, *American Landscape Painting: An Interpretation* (1948; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 80.

¹² Leslie A. Fiedler, *Waiting for the End* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1964), p. 84.

own world." The implications of this and similar statements by other American writers have been explored by Richard Poirier, whose thesis is that American writers have, through various stylistic devices, tried to create an environment of words in which the possibilities of the Dream can continue to exist, either for themselves or for their protagonists. Poirier argues that the laments so often heard from American writers during the nineteenth century about the American scene being too barren of culture and tradition for them to work with—complaints made by such writers as Cooper, Bryant, and James, and others as well—were really a disguise for the real problem: the life of America was already intruding upon the freedom which the Dream has promised. In spite of their protestations, the object of American writers was never to be primarily the recorders of society or social scenes. Instead, "The greatest American authors really do try, against the perpetually greater power of reality, to create an environment that might allow some longer existence to the hero's momentary expansions of consciousness."¹³

The assumptions of Romanticism, Protestantism, and democratic liberalism are bound up together in the belief that man, through his own efforts, create out of himself the world he dreams. Citing Hegel's belief that "freedom" is not a political matter but a matter of consciousness, Poirier says, "The assumption makes it more understandable that the creation of America out of a continental vastness is to some degree synonymous in the imagination with the creation of freedom, of an open space, made free, once savagery has been dislodged, for some unexampled expansion of human consciousness."¹⁴

But a problem invariably arises for American writers when they attempt to externalize the innermost consciousness of their heroes. They soon discover that the social realities of American life intrude upon the private freedom. An entire cast of heroes who must endure the ensuing struggle stretches throughout the history of American fiction, heroes who must re-enact exile to gain their freedom: Natty Bumppo, escaping to the edge of the Frontier; Hester, exiled in Europe; Lambert Strether, slipping off silently into his artistically and aesthetically awakened consciousness; Huck Finn, lighting out for the new territory; Nick Adams, retreating into the wilds of the Big-Two-Hearted River; Ike McCaslin, divesting himself of gun, compass, and eventually the land itself; Nick Carraway, who returns west after recalling

¹³ Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 15.

¹⁴ Poirier, p. 4.

the vision of the Dutch sailors who first encountered the untainted shore; Joseph, Saul Bellow's Dangling Man, isolating himself in his room while waiting to be drafted. And on and on.

Another literary critic who somewhat shares the position of Poirier is Quentin Anderson. Anderson argues that a characteristic trait of American writers has been to elevate the Self, through its imaginative powers, to the position of dominating the outer reality by internalizing it. He says of Emerson, Whitman, and James, "their imaginative work ignores, eludes, or transforms history, politics, heterosexuality, the hope for purposive change. They avoid or omit any acknowledgement that our experience has stubborn and irreducible elements which we cannot in a lifetime either alter or understand."¹⁵ Reconciliation between the internal stresses and the outer forces occurs only when the self takes in the whole of outer reality and transmutes it into a single whole, into a poetic vision.

Anderson pinpoints the radicalism of Emerson's thought very precisely. The Concord sage went beyond the transcendentalism of his contemporaries in his notions about religious authority. He so elevates the inner authority of the individual that society and history cease to be significant except as they contribute to the Self's release from them. "His contemporaries, those who were best prepared to sympathize with him, saw institutions as passing but necessary shadows of what welled out of the self; Emerson saw them as fatal to it."¹⁶ In the isolated Self, in the undifferential consciousness, in the poet-hero—this is where the Dream will be actualized: the Self has become imperial.

As Richard Chase has observed, the novelistic tradition in America has been largely a romantic one, with realism and naturalism of secondary importance. Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, James, Faulkner, Hemingway and Fitzgerald, even when they appear to be intent upon depicting a "real" setting, have a tendency to elevate the consciousness of their characters into center stage. The world as perceived and experienced rather than the world as fact dominates the consciousness of their heroes. When the struggle to preserve the self of the hero against the encroachments of the society wanes, the novelist tends to become more of a naturalist or realist. Unable to sustain his character in the invisible landscape of the Self, the author must let the external world take over. When he does, we lose sight of the heroic Self except as victim or observer in an alien and unfriend-

¹⁵ Quentin Anderson, *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. viii.

¹⁶ Anderson, p. 3.

ly order. A tell-tale sign of nineteenth century fiction is almost the total absence or at best the poor quality of dialogue. Dialogue, as Poirier notes, presumes a reality of social existence which many of these writers have a distaste for. Dialogue is the result of social intercourse, and is the literary recognition and acceptance of "conventions in the definition of the Self, the acceptance of other selves *as* other."¹⁷

The difficulty which American writers have had in accepting the limitations imposed by a society they regarded as unfriendly—a difficulty, I would argue, which derives from their adoption of Emerson's belief in "the imperial self"—is attested to by the long tradition of expatriation which has existed among our best writers. A mere listing of some American writers who spent considerable time in Europe in hopes of better defining what it meant to be an American is telling: Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, James, Adams, Twain, Cummings, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Stein, Miller, Fitzgerald, Wright, Baldwin, Eliot and Pound. Ironically enough this flight to Europe was occasioned in many cases by an attempt to preserve in the freedom of a foreign culture the invisible landscape of the Self which the writers felt more to be threatened at home by a society which professed the Dream but which had vulgarized it. The title of Twain's novel *Innocents Abroad*, might very well do as a heading for this list.

In his study of expatriate tradition among our writers, Harold McCarthy isolates fundamental themes in the works of several writers. As McCarthy puts it, their work "is American in its idealistic assumptions: in the freedom from institutional patterns with which it conceives religion, brotherhood, justice, and individual liberty; in its way of referring all matters to the individual conscience; and in its intuitive confidence that the individual spirit will survive and that civilization must go to seed."¹⁸ The protagonist they each tend to project in their fiction is almost mythic, an Ur-American as McCarthy calls him, who "is of the wilderness and questions the pressure of any social claim upon his new-born nature."¹⁹

THIS ALIGNING of the self against the forms and institutions of society is perhaps what is most characteristic of what it means to be an American. This tendency, which can be regarded as a quality of the American mythic Self, has been

¹⁷ Poirier, p. 33.

¹⁸ Harold T. McCarthy, *The Expatriate Perspective: American Novelists and the Idea of America* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1974), p. 16.

¹⁹ McCarthy, p. 17.

defined by Hassan as a *radical innocence*. Our belief in the primacy of the individual and our seemingly unwavering faith that the purity of the Self can be maintained against any and all encroachments around us constitutes the innocence. It is radical because it is at the foundation of the American dream.²⁰

The movement within American literature has been a dialectical one involving the experience of initiation. As numerous critics have commented, the theme of innocence versus experience has been a fundamental concern of American writers for the last hundred and fifty years. Yet initiation as sociologists normally define it—the rites of passage whereby the young and inexperienced are initiated through some experience often involving trial or testing into the meaningful forms and institutions of the larger society wherein they will become functioning and contributing members themselves—never really occurs in American fiction. Instead, the hero, often an adolescent like Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield, ends up fleeing the culture instead of being absorbed into it. As we moved closer to the twentieth century and passed three-quarters through it, the flight away from culture became more and more expressed as alienation, rebellion, victimization, or even insanity. As the spaces to which the nineteenth century hero could flee diminished, more and more were the new heroes, burning in their radical innocence, forced to stand their ground in other forms. Ironically, these forms were often the antithesis of those images of success which co-existed within the American ethos, which is why American fictional protagonists end up so often looking like anti-heroes: failures, misfits, outcasts, clowns, buffoons, madmen.

Earlier I mentioned the distinction between the Utopian vision and the Edenic vision, saying that American writers, at least, have moved mostly toward the Edenic. But there is enough of the Utopian perspective left within the culture at large to create unresolved tensions. We regard man as a child of nature yet a creature of civilization; we praise intuition while respecting, to some extent, learning; we sing the spirit and wallow in matter; we extol individual freedom while we search for community. From these tensions arise other contradictions: an ideal of universal brotherhood held together by respect and trust which is often sacrificed by imposing our will upon others for personal and collective gain; a love for nature and the eagerness to rape its resources; a distrust of technology and a growing dependency upon it; an excessive regard for individualism and an exaggerated fear of anarchy; a belief in the natural self yet reliance

²⁰ Hassan, pp. 6-7.

upon the symbols of status and wealth to define the worth of others.²¹ Our innocence is our continued affirmation of those qualities which belong on the Edenic side of the ledger, even when we realize we've already lost them. American writers believe in innocence even more than the rest of us. Their belief is that it can continue to exist in the interior self, regardless of what happens in the society at large, even though the society may actively try to destroy the innocence and the Dream by destroying the hero himself.

Since the turn of the century one of the recurring motifs of American fiction has been either the destruction of a main character by forces larger than the Self or the efforts to preserve that Self. American novelists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Crane, Dreiser, Anderson, Steinbeck, and Dos Passos, became aware of large, environmental forces impinging upon us. With the receding of the frontier landscape, the city asserted itself more and more as the environment within which characters had to struggle for their survival. It was an environment "offering almost no inducement to the human vanity of controlling, much less building, the world one lives in."²² Some began to regard the Self as being so diminished that any assertion of it was futile. One sees this perception as leading to the realistic and critical treatment of man and society which predominated in the fiction following World War I.

Still, there runs through those pessimistic, moody works of the twenties and thirties the tone of lament rather than of resignation. We weep because of our awareness of loss. The old Dream still remains the touchstone for judging the tragedy which has been visited upon twentieth century man. In even their darkest works, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Wolfe, and Faulkner are at heart still romantics. They continue to affirm and assert the vision of the hero who retains his basic innocence, though he may be defeated and eventually destroyed by forces greater than himself.

In fiction since World War II there continues the characteristically American emphasis upon the Self and its capacities for reliving the dream. But for contemporary writers the problem has become especially complicated. Freudian and depth psychology, existentialism and phenomenology in philosophy, process theory in physics, relativism in the social sciences, demythologization in theology, and systems theory models of analysis in a

21 Cf. Hassan, pp. 39-40, for a discussion of these contradictions within the American cultural experience.

22 Poirier, p. 214.

number of disciplines have contributed to the increasingly difficult task of defining what the isolated Self is. Whereas the traditional romantic could pit himself against the world outside, like Manfred of Byron standing on the Jungfrau, shaking his fist at the world, the current difficulty is defining the basic Self. The essential problem now is loss of identity.

The tones of disharmony so apparent within this second half of the twentieth century are partly the result of our having lost the earlier centuries' millennialistic hope. But this loss stems itself from no longer knowing who we are. James E. Miller's statement on this point is worth quoting at length, for it characterizes many of the characters who appear in modern fiction.

All the forces in the culture seem joined in a conspiracy to deprive man of his humanity, to shrivel into insignificance the vital *selfhood* of the individual. There were immense pressures enforcing *conformity* to a mass society, there were glacial pressures that seemed gradually to *dehumanize* the individual, and there were invisible pressures which *alienated* man from his own kind, setting him off apart and alone. *Conformity, dehumanization, alienation* — these terms suggested some of the most alarming aspects of life in the United States in the 1950's, '60's and 70's. For what consolation it might afford, the resulting moral paralysis was not solely the dilemma of the United States but the concern of modern man everywhere. (Emphasis Miller's).²³

The novels of recent years, such as those by Wright Morris, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, John Updike, John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, Ken Kesey, J. D. Salinger, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Heller and Ralph Ellison, have these as their main features: 1) they tend to be free of any particular social, philosophical, economic, or moral system, and their main characters are often in flight; 2) the technique is often one of humor, marked by elements that are grotesque or ludicrous, which are portrayed in a character who is himself crazy, maladjusted, paranoid, or absurd; and 3) the main quest is for identity by a character who is a stranger in a strange land, or who is invisible, even to himself, as in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.²⁴

As Wesley Kort has observed, "Almost every study of recent fiction gives consideration to its preoccupation with personal

23 Walter Blair et al., *American Literature: A Brief History* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1974), p. 254.

24 Blair et al., pp. 257-258.

identity, with . . . the question concerning the force and meaning of the word 'I' "²⁵ In such fiction the Self is the only center for authority and meaning, and is the only thing which can provide a center for unifying objects, events, and people who otherwise stand in no meaningful relationship to one other. In such a world, though, as Kort points out, the "I" becomes problematic, for it has nothing outside itself at all whereby it can achieve some kind of definition that has relationship to others. Thus such fiction is not just an assertion, but a quest. It results from what Nathan Scott has termed "the sense that men have today of being thrust into the nudity of their own isolated individual existence."²⁶

This direction taken by modern fiction has been described by one critic as amounting to what might be called "the open decision," a phrase taken from the German phenomenologist Max Scheler, who said, "Man is a creature whose every essence is the open decision."²⁷ Absolute reality is the responsibility of the human individual, a reality he creates throughout his intercourse with the world. Like Emerson's view in that it places authority within the Self, this view is significantly different in that it no longer believes, as Emerson did, in some eternal Over-soul toward which the isolated, independent Self was moving against the currents of society. Once released from the restrictive and distorting masks of Protestantism, man could, Emerson believed, find his own divinity within, and become attuned to the Spirit manifesting itself in the world. As Hawthorne and Melville suspected, such release might reveal to us a nightmare. Having lost the god of Protestantism, we were left with the god of Self. European existentialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had to show Americans the implications of the American Dream, which Hawthorne and Melville had both understood. Hassan clearly sees the relationships and the similarities between European and American novels. "Europe in the twentieth century has come to know what America seemed to be born knowing: that in comparison to the Self, all things become subordinate." He adds, "The modern soul is eternally on the eve of Creation. This is the song American literature sings."²⁸

If there is a distinguishing feature between contemporary

25 Wesley A. Kort, *Shriven Selves: Religious Problems in Recent American Fiction* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 5.

26 Nathan Scott, "The Broken Center: A Definition of the Crisis of Values In Modern Literature," *Chicago Review*, XIII (Summer 1959), 196.

27 Jerry H. Bryant, *The Open Decision: The Contemporary American Novel and Its Intellectual Background* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), pp. 4-5.

28 Hassan, p. 326.

American and European fiction it is the sense of loss which our writers tend to exhibit, and the almost persistent, though sometimes ironically expressed, hope they hold out for their characters. This optimistic note shows up in our critics too. Jerry Bryant, whose book *The Open Decision* I cited a moment ago, sees the evidence of modern fiction as "affirming the human condition."²⁹ The ancient Protestant privatism which held that through the individual religious experience the whole social order might be redeemed—an idea still prevalent in the preaching of Billy Graham—surfaces in Bryant's efforts to reconcile this even deeper retrenchment into the invisible landscape of the Self with some kind of ultimate social significance. He supposes that by discovering one's true self, the individual will change the order outside: "Only when the individual can do that can he effectively influence his world."³⁰ In my estimation, Bryant is much too sanguine in his interpretation. In the novels I've read there is the retreat behind comic masks, victimization, invisibility, defeat, and anonymity, or other tentative shelters where the self can hopefully be discovered. But the retreat sounds very much like a permanent one, and not just a temporary withdrawal for a regrouping of energies. And certainly contemporary writers are themselves much less optimistic about the ultimate impact of such maneuvers upon the society at large.

By and large, one could argue that most contemporary writers reflect the continuation of the American Dream, in a negative if not positive manner. They also tend to share the common starting point of liberal humanism. The dilemma they exhibit through their characters is the dilemma of liberal humanism itself, a humanism grounded in the romanticism, Protestantism, and democratic liberalism I noted at the beginning.

The weakness of liberal humanism is becoming more apparent each decade. Since the first half of the nineteenth century, though humanism could still supply a standard or criterion by which to measure and evaluate the course of Western civilization, it no longer had the power to direct that course. The over-emphatic stress upon the individual, and the tendency to move more and more inward in its emphasis, undermined its ability to treat the larger context within which the Self had to define itself—the economic, political, and social order. Liberal humanists, by agreeing to the notion that individuals should be allowed to pursue their own welfare with as little interference as possible from the culture and the state, and that the collective good

²⁹ Bryant, p.4.

³⁰ Bryant, p. 285.

of the entire society would result by some magic of what was termed "natural law," abandoned the external landscape to political and industrial power blocs. The cumulative effects of that abandonment have, in the twentieth century, become manifestly apparent.

Though the American Dream continues to be expressed by our writers, they are struggling with the haunting suspicion that the liberal humanism out of which it grew may be impossible to sustain. This struggle can be illustrated by the work of one of the major novelists of our day, Saul Bellow. Beginning with his first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944), Bellow has on numerous occasions pinpointed our current crisis as stemming from the romanticism inherent in the Reformation. He again and again shows the futility of trying to live within one's inner landscape, isolated and apart from the society outside, though he continues to assert that it may still be possible to humanize the society and redeem it in some way.

The interesting speculation which arises is to what extent the existence of the romantic self depends upon the continuation of unsettled outer space, such as existed at the beginning of this country. The American romanticist, in the various postures he has assumed, has been opposed to industrialization and technology. He instinctively recognizes that these impose upon mind, body, and spirit a discipline which counters his belief in the possibilities of the unencumbered Self. Ironically, the frontier spirit manifested itself through the machine, and destroyed the frontier against which it was directed. Man's will to dominate, so much a premise of Lockean liberalism, magnified and extended itself by harnessing the power of the machine. Surviving long past its time, the frontier spirit continues to reproduce in our technology the frontier rhythms of existence.³¹ The opposition to technology has carried over into an antagonism towards those social institutions which the discipline of the machine demanded: the business and corporate structure. The question we face now is this: Is the struggle to define selfhood which is so important a motive of current fiction merely the death throes of a romantic individualism which cannot survive the loss of our spatial frontiers and our spatial freedoms?

In the mind of the romanticist, craftsmanship, as opposed to mass production, is linked to potency in work and in sexual relationships. The displacement of craftsmanship by industrialization often foreshadows and accompanies the increase of im-

31 Thomas R. West, *Flesh of Steel: Literature and the Machine in American Culture* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), pp. 21-34; p. 49.

potence in both. The turn to sex by so many modern writers is perhaps an attempt to reaffirm our sense of power which has been overwhelmed by our dependency upon technology. Yet even here the sense of frustration and inadequacy is apparent. Though he re-establishes contact with his own body, the hero often fails to understand its meaning, and finds himself unable to overcome his self-conscious alienation from his own material being.

The promise of America becomes in twentieth century fiction its despair. The openness to new possibilities in the untamed land has led under the pressures of romantic individualism to the chaos in the words of Jacob Horner, the protagonist of John Barth's *The End of the Road*, whose opening statement is, "In a sense, I am Jacob Horner." It appears in the sad melancholy of Bellow's dangling man, Joseph, who laments, "But I must know what I myself am." The expectant Pilgrim of Plymouth Plantation has become in the twentieth century the crippled pilgrim, forced to live within the desolation and isolation of his own inner landscape.

IF AMERICA was the land of promise, the New Eden which man had anticipated for centuries, the nation soon began to grow aware of something having been lost. And from that knowledge emerged a sense of guilt. Hassan has argued that our innocence takes the form of a "persistent escape toward freedom," a flight which itself is a testimony of guilt.³² By constantly reenacting the exile, we are unconsciously admitting that the past is a failure, that the utopia and the Eden we had envisioned has been lost somewhere in the past and must be redeemed and atoned for in the future. American writers weep for the sins of the nation, and try to redeem it through the consciousness of their innocent heroes. The vision, it seems, is a timeless one. And at the heart of the dream is a belief in the possibilities of immortality, of the Radical Self rising above the social and cultural impingements which are the mirror forms of ultimate death.

Wright Morris has elegantly phrased this same idea in his book *The Territory Ahead*: "For more than a century the territory ahead has been the world that lies somewhere behind us, a world that has become, in the last few decades, a nostalgic myth."³³ But this abiding belief in our innocence manifests itself more than just through our writers. The cults of youth in this country attest to our desire to keep alive the belief in innocence.

³² Hassan, p. 40.

³³ Wright Morris, *The Territory Ahead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), p. xvi.

Adults, suspecting that they have lost the dream themselves by taking on the responsibilities of adulthood—which of necessity means compromise, adjustments, recognition of limitations—project that innocence back into the past, into the youth and childhood which time has already swept behind them. Our celebration of youth in this country is our vicarious attempt to preserve the Self against the encroachments of restraint, age, and death. By constantly redepositing our hopes upon a newly emerging generation, we enact imaginatively what we cannot achieve actually, either for ourselves or for the culture. Not being able to retain our own invisible landscape—unless we're visionaries, poets, or dreamers, insane or criminal—we divest ourselves of it, wistfully, and project it onto those not yet part of the adult world. If any youth should mistakenly believe he can bring the Dream with him into that adult world, our society chides him in various ways. If he persists, the society forces him into exile, the place of exile usually being within his own consciousness. Nick Carraway at the end of *The Great Gatsby* perceived how far we had come since those Dutch sailors first spotted this unscarred and unpolluted land. As Fitzgerald recognized, it is the very nature of our Dream to "run faster, stretch out our arms farther." The last sentence of the novel summarizes our persistent romanticism: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

During this bicentennial year we are pausing to ask ourselves, partly out of nostalgia and partially out of our persistent belief that somewhere out there in the future our invisible landscape will become embodied in history, the same question Whitman asked himself in his poem "Facing West From California's Shore":

But where is what I started for so long ago?

And why is it yet unfound?

If we believe our major American writers, what we are looking for can be discovered only in ourselves. But how to reconcile that invisible landscape which permits the dream to exist with the actual landscape in which we live remains a problem for all of us. The problem for future generations is whether such a reconciliation is even possible. Perhaps the pain of being an American is believing in the dream, and at the same time knowing that it must be lost, has already, in fact, been lost, perhaps forever.

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Marginalia . . .

(continued)

Not a sound, anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaming; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far . . . you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods . . . being a wood yard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song birds just going it!

But most of all, it is the spoken language of people who lived close to nature. It was the kind of language Emerson had called for almost fifty years earlier, a language suitable to the free individual, not imitative of the literary language of England. Twain taught American writers how to listen for and reproduce authentic sounds of American voices. That is what Hemingway was talking about when he said, "All American literature comes from a book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn."

Huck's language is rich enough and flexible enough to convey his way of seeing, which in itself is highly American. At times it has the innocence of a Henry James heroine. ("Human beings can be awful cruel to one another.") At other times it has the realistic, no-nonsense ring of the Westerner. "I reckoned he believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different," Huck says, rejecting Tom's quixotic vision. Huck reflects the paradox of the American character: pragmatic, yet moral, sensitive, and idealistic; realistic enough to recognize sham and hypocrisy but romantic enough to dream of a better life, free from the artificial restraints of civilization. Huck is a walking Declaration of Independence, dramatizing in his adventures what is meant by life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is fitting that this great book about the nineteenth century American experience should have been written by a man who himself personified so many facets of that experience. A Westerner with his roots in a small town, Sam Clemens early in his life became a representative American roamer—a forshadower of today's mobile society. He went east to the older cities like New York and Philadelphia while still a teenager, went west to California and from there to Hawaii, made an

irreverent pilgrimage to Europe, and finally settled in the East to write about the West. Clemens was a Presbyterian by upbringing; he inhaled Calvinistic pessimism and exhaled scathing denunciations of fraud and hypocrisy that would have done Jonathan Edwards proud.

Clemens was seldom satisfied with what he saw around him: people were always falling short of his ideal of human nature, which at bottom was more Emersonian than Calvinist. He believed in the ideal, despite his efforts to display his cynicism in the later works, but he was, like Huck, too much of a realist to close his eyes to the failings of human nature. Romantic and realist, Clemens was also torn between idealistic morality and opportunistic materialism. At the same time he was satirizing the "get-rich-quick" syndrome of *The Gilded Age*, he was himself victimized by the disease and lost thousands in speculations calculated to make him an overnight millionaire. Huckleberry Finn owes its moral viewpoint, its vitality, and especially its uneven and unpredictable quality to its creator, a nineteenth century American who was happily, and sometimes sadly, discovering the answer to Crèvecoeur's question, "What is an American?"

In the twentieth century, there have been a great many excellent novels, but again only a few which expressed a distinctive American experience. William Faulkner's *Absalom!* *Absalom!* is one of these. Faulkner has made Sutpen's effort to create his "design" a metaphor for the larger American experience. Sutpen's epic failure is caused by his relentless individuality, which leaves no room for love or respect for the individuality of others. And the failure of Sutpen's design is linked with the failure of ante-bellum Southern culture, both of them caused by the corrupting greed of ownership and the denial of brotherhood in favor of the ultimate in ownership—slavery.

As young Quentin Compson sifts through the multiple points of view regarding Sutpen's story, he compulsively confronts a past which he can neither understand nor escape. Americans today may find themselves in a similar position. We must live with and be a product of a past which includes not only the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution but also racism, sexism, imperialism, exploitation of the weak by the strong. *Absalom! Absalom!* is an American novel because it uses the microcosm of Yoknapatawpha County to dramatize the American tension between liberty and individualism on the one hand, and responsibility and interdependence—both on the land and on other people—on the other hand.

The novel which best glorifies yet indicts the state of the American Dream in the twentieth century is F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. No other novel unites so many archetypal themes of the American experience. Both its narrator, Nick Carraway, and its protagonist, Jay Gatsby, are products of the West who have come to believe that the American Dream is no longer the pastoral dream focused on the land. They come East in search of the dream, unknowing converts to the religion of Henry Adams' dynamo, worshipping the power of machines and money.

Gatsby, for all his involvement in illegality, is still an American innocent with "an extraordinary gift for hope." His idealistic faith in life transcends the shallowness of his goddess, Daisy; transcends the shabby Wolfsheim, the false friends, and his materialistic pride in his car, the machine which serves as the instrument of his destruction.

The "greatness" of Gatsby is his faith in life, which is never destroyed, even by the unworthiness of his idealized woman or the vulgarity of his materialism. The pathos of Gatsby is his attempt to recapture the Eden of his brief affair with Daisy, a paradise all the more perfect because it was brief in actuality but infinite in his imagination. "Can't repeat the past?" he says. "Why of course you can."

The ending of the novel is the high point of Fitzgerald's art. The memorable final page draws together the novel's themes, uniting Gatsby's dream with the Utopian dream of those who first saw this New World, a chance to begin anew in hope—truly "something commensurate to his capacity for wonder." That dream is now Gatsby's empty, imitation, Old World mansion, with an obscene word scrawled upon its steps. The dream, Nick realizes, "was already behind him," and he sees us similarly in pursuit of a dream of past or future Eden. Marius Bewley has said it well: "The American Dream, stretched between a golden past and a golden future, is always betrayed by a desolate present." "The essence of the American dream whose tragedy Gatsby is enacting," says Bewley, "is that it lives in a past and a future that never existed, and is helpless in the present that does."

These are three of the novels I think of when pondering the uniqueness of the "American Novel." Surely there are arguments to be made in favor of some others, but I suspect the number would not be large. Nevertheless, the very existence of such novels is impressive evidence of the coming of age of American literature.

—J. J. K.

The Bicentennial Number

The theme, of course, is America and its people, and we've tried to give this special Bicentennial—25th Anniversary issue a range as diverse as the nation itself. The contents include some moving portraits of individual Americans in the writings of E. N. Holmquist and Michael Waters. Eminent historian John Lukacs gives us his provocative picture of a president whose triumphs and failures were rooted in the paradox of American idealism and American pragmatism. Barbara C. Millard and Reed Sanderlin offer insights into the making of the American mind, while Claude Koch and Phillip Mahony present contrasting poetic landscapes. Caryn M. Musil traces a revolution that has a long history and finds reasons for some present optimism. We're especially grateful to the contributors to this special issue, and we'd like to offer special thanks to reference librarian Karen Avenick for preparing the author index and to Joyce King for typing it.

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