Wisconsin Academy review. Volume 26, Number 3 June 1980

Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, June 1980

Volume 26, Number 3
June 1980
ISSN 0512-1175

WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

Published Quarterly by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

A SALUTE

As a librarian, I had been primarily concerned about Wisconsin authors in regard to bibliographic control: the need to identify them all, to list all their works wherever and whenever published, to pick up those small press runs of 300, or that poem published in a literary magazine that folded after one issue.

Of course, the letters issue of the *Review* makes no attempt to present a compendium of Wisconsin authors or even to single out the most important ones; we've simply not enough room. We mention a few who have achieved some measure of fame in the past, and we publish a larger than usual number of poets currently engaging in the art. For compendiums we can turn to such fine bibliographies as Orrilla Blackshear's *Wisconsin Authors and their Books: 1836-1975* (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1976). As for recognizing important writers, the Council for Wisconsin Writers does a good job, and so does the Wisconsin Library Association's Literary Awards Committee in their "Notable Wisconsin Authors" annual list. As Jim Batt so aptly said of the *Review* anniversary issues: "Each represents a salute to contributors to Wisconsin sciences, arts, and letters—not a parade of all those involved."

With this issue I doff my librarian's cap, put aside my desire for complete bibliographic control, and donning my editor's cap, I salute Wisconsin authors both mentioned and unmentioned in these pages. While I'm standing at attention, I'd like to salute Elizabeth Durbin for the excellent parade of *Reviews* she has organized for the past three years.

—*Patricia Powell*

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EDPRESS

Published quarterly by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 1922 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705

Correspondence related to the REVIEW or other Academy publications (change of address, single copy orders, undelivered copies, Academy membership) should be sent to the W.A.S.A.L. office listed above.

Second class postage paid at Madison, WI.

Printed by Community Publications, Inc. McFarland, WI

The date of this issue is June 1980.

Volume 26, Number 3
June 1980

ON THE COVER . . .

Ronald Daggett, cover artist for the anniversary issues, is both scientist and artist, an especially felicitous combination. A professor of engineering at UW-Madison, now retired, he heads his own plastics firm in Verona. Perhaps his most publicized achievement in plastics was the development, with Dr. Vincent Gott of UW-Madison, of a heart valve for implantation in humans with faulty hearts. With new developments in heart surgical techniques, artificial valves are no longer as widely used as they once were, but Daggett and Gott can take credit for ushering in the era of exciting developments in Wisconsin in the new field of bioengineering.

A watercolorist, who finishes his work at the site, Daggett spends weekends and vacations visiting small towns where he sets up his ingeniously-designed (by him) combination seat and easel before an evocative village street scene, an old mill, a harbor busy with boats or a railroad yard. When he repacks his easel/seat/suitcase to leave, he has usually not only made a picture but a new friend or two as well.

WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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Marge Steingraber

John Stark

John Stark, author of "The Gallery of Wisconsin Writers," has a Ph.D. in English and a J.D. from UW-Madison. He has taught English at UW-Eau Claire and Kent State. Now a Legislative Attorney for the Legislative Reference Bureau, he published the feature article, "Wisconsin Writers," for the 1977 *Wisconsin Blue Book* put out by that Bureau. He has also published two dozen articles (one in the December 1978 *Review* on William Ellery Leonard) and three books of literary criticism including *Pynchon's Fiction: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information* to appear this summer.

The *Review* receives many more poems than we can publish in four issues a year. Poetry submitted is sent directly to poetry consultants Art Hove, Rosella Howe, Mark Lefebvre, and Edna Meudt. They individually read and vote on poems; the editor may cast a tie-breaking vote. There is no infallible method of poetry selection, but the close attention of five people does take into account differing tastes. We are pleased in this issue devoted to letters to present a sample of the high-quality poetry which we received and, given space constraints, were able to accept.

Mark Bruner's last book of poetry, *Around the Cracker Barrel*, was published by Moonfire Press in 1979. He has recently begun his own literary journal, *Jump River Review*, 819 Single Avenue, Wausau, WI 54401.

Iefke Goldberger, originally from Holland, is a member of the Madison Area Writers' Association. She and her husband will be spending the 1980-81 school year at the Stanford Think Tank.

Michael Allen Kriesel, who lives in Aniwa, is a recent graduate of Wausau East High School.

Charles Rossiter, long-time Milwaukee resident, was recently transplanted to Maryland. He was co-founder and editor of *Third Coast Archives*.

Josephine Hillebrecht Greer teaches at UW-Whitewater in the English Department.

Stephen Miller lives in Madison and works for the UW Press.

Rick Penn, one of many fine North Country poets, lives in rural High Bridge in Ashland County.

Tom Montag lives in Fairwater, and despite his autobiographical statement, is a serious poet with several books of poetry to his credit.

Gianfranco Pagnucci teaches in the English Department at UW-Platteville.

Dale Kushner is a Madison poet and is currently working on fiction.

Helen Fahrbach lives in Menasha and has long been active in the Fox Valley Writers and the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Association.

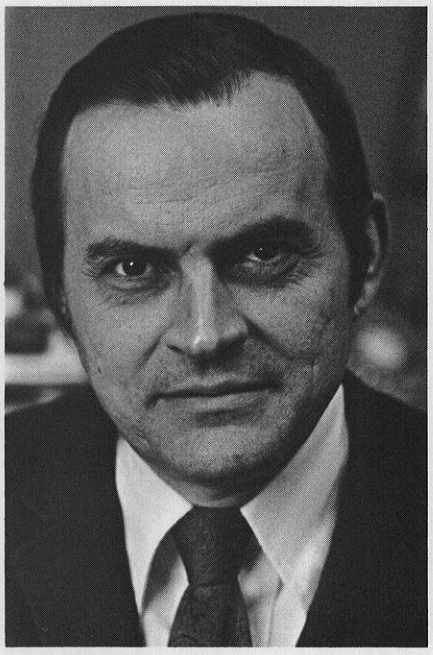
June A. Zwickey lives in Appleton.

Isabel Wilder was graduated in the first class (1928) to receive certificates from the Yale School of Drama. In her early thirties, she wrote three novels and then became "so involved acting as my brother's literary agent, with its various responsibilities, that I found myself engaged in a very interesting occupation." She dealt with publishers the world over and took Thornton's place at play rehearsals. When *Our Town* was the first American play to be taken to London after World War II, Isabel, not Thornton, went along to see it through rehearsal.

Answering mail was another way Isabel helped her brother; some years she personally wrote over 2,000 letters, an experience which she says was "exhausting but always interesting." Her contribution to Thorton's success must have been prodigious.

Richard Boudreau questions whether a writer can find happiness and success in Wisconsin in his "Hello Success, Good-bye Wisconsin." An assistant professor of English at UW-La Crosse, he has published numerous articles on Wisconsin authors in magazines and newspapers and did a twenty-part series on the topic for WHA radio.

Richard Boudreau



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"Who is Poetry For?"

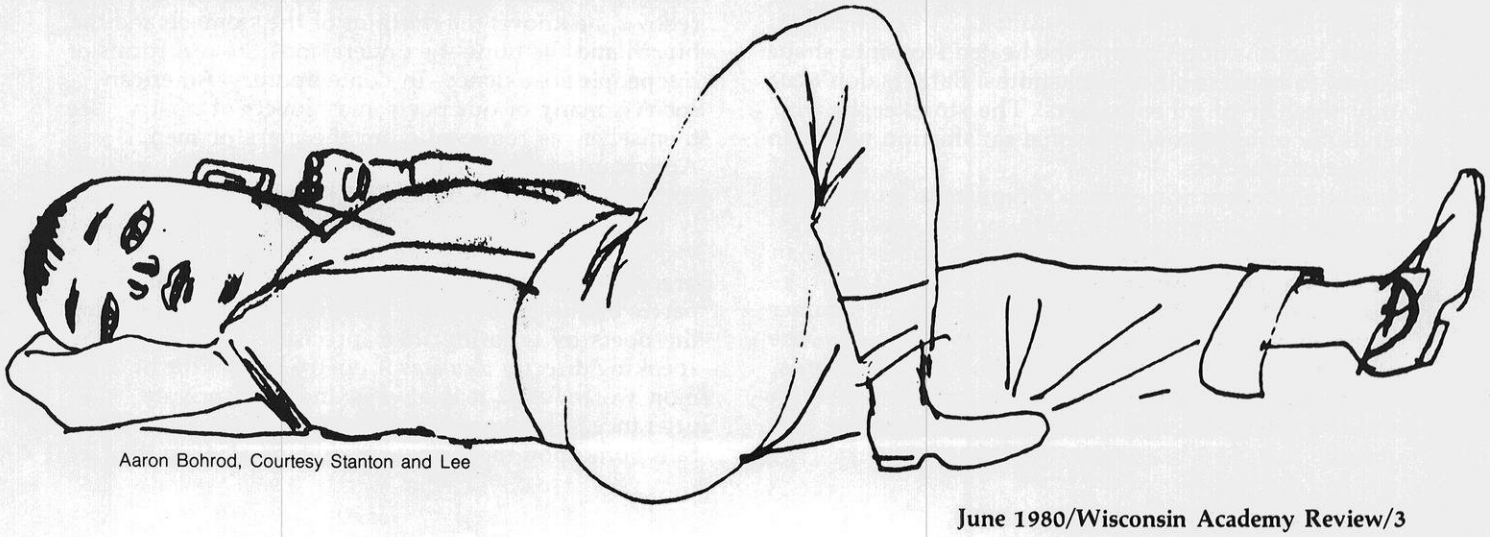
by Tom Montag

I.

At dusk, the sun: its last long rays filter through the grove around the farmstead. A farm boy, patient in the cycle of days and chores and seasons, looks west and begins to understand the sun's loneliness. Or, rather, the settling sun and the sweep of color along the horizon, the shimmering splotches of light coming through the trees to mark the boy and the ground around him, the special, dancing quality the air takes on in the last light of day. These he begins to recognize as emblems of feelings he has had: a loneliness which is not the usual loneliness, for he has good family surrounding him; a longing which is not a longing because he is content in his life; rather, he comes to a budding awareness, perhaps, that the surface is not all that is, to a realization that life is not simply the endless repetition of days and tasks. Standing alone in the grove, the farmer's son is standing in awe of something mysterious, as if the universe has just yawned and he knows it. Breathing in, breathing out, he is feeling the pulse of a world in which seeds burst from their casings, sprouts drive upwards through soil towards light, drive downwards for moisture; of a world in which green leaves take from the sun its essence and fill and grow and fruit swells and ripens; of a world in which death must come, where cornfields after harvest are littered as battlefields; where snow in winter becomes the sheet pulled up and over the face of the dead earth. Breathing in, breathing out, he is feeling the same rhythm he has seen pulsing in the newborn calf, coughing itself to life, testing its wobbly legs, the sun gleaming off its still-moist coat; in the sow's surging litter, each of the pigs shoving blindly towards the teat. And sometimes the calf is born dead; there is no slapping it to life. And sometimes, off to the side of the litter, a small pig goes still, becomes stiff. And sometimes there is no saving the desperate cow, for every knife blade snaps, breaks off on the tough, taut hide in the attempts to puncture the bloated belly—the farm boy looking into the wild, hopeless eyes of that cow going down, this time for the last time. Standing alone in the grove, now, he wonders at the universe, experiences awe.

Who is poetry for? Poetry is for this wide-eyed farm boy and for those like him who, beyond their control, fill with a slow wonder at the world and its rhythms.

A warm wind plays through the cottonwoods. Beneath those trees, in their sandpile, several children play, brothers and sisters, lost in their most serious business, child's play. One part of the sandpile has become a house, old boards laid out to mark the rooms, the sand swept smooth as floors. Beyond this house lies the farm the boys work: twigs stuck in the sand and string strung twig to twig become the fences; roads are patted firm, ditches hollowed out; the fields are plowed and tilled and sowed and—though nothing ever sprouts in this sand—harvested. The sun, of course, climbs the sky as is its habit; and yet time stands meaningless for the sandpile household, the



Aaron Bohrod, Courtesy Stanton and Lee

sandpile farmers: they do not hear the roar of the M Farmall out behind the barn and they fail to see their mother—but twenty feet away—hanging clothes on the line. These are the children of a farmer who has not known wealth; still, they don't know they're poor, for their eternal moment is so rich because their play is so fruitful. The clock ticks off the hours until lunch—"dinner" as it's called on the farm—comes as a surprise. To have to eat, when they are called to the house, is a simple inconvenience on such a day; the afternoon, like the morning, will be large enough to get lost in. They will sink again, into play, as into sleep, will sink into the dreams of a summer afternoon. And the wind will sing through the cottonwoods.

The smell of hay is thick in the morning air as the farmer and two of his sons unload a flatrack of bales into the barn. Even well greased, the old elevator creaks and groans as it carries bale after bale into the darkness of the haymow. The sky is so blue it lends the newly painted buildings squatting around the farmstead even greater brilliance. The rhythm of the work is disturbed when a car pulls into the farmyard and the local tax assessor sets the dog to barking. A farmer paints his buildings, and his taxes go up. In farm country, tax assessors are no more welcome than revenooers are in the Kentucky hills. This one, snooping around the farmstead, must be especially naive, for he tries to make small talk—"Think it'll rain?" he asks. The farmer replies—"Be a hell of a long dry spell if it don't."

Who is poetry for? Poetry is for this farmer who speaks only what he has to, who knows the weight of words and how to measure them. Poetry is for such a man and for others like him who recognize that language is meant for serious communication, not for small talk or gossip.

II.

Blacksmiths don't pound the heated steel into shape simply to impress other blacksmiths. Barbers don't cut only the hair of other barbers. The storekeeper who tends shop for his own personal satisfaction will soon be out of business.

As the conjunction of man's impulse to wonder and worship and his impulse to play, poetry serves an essential function, giving utterance to the noblest human sentiments and sometimes to the meanest. The blacksmith knows how much driving force of hammer is just enough, and his arm comes down precisely; the poet understands the worth of our homely little words, has learned to use them exactly. The good blacksmith and the good poet share, I think, more than we ever imagine.

For, contrary to what some poets and some readers of poetry might believe, poetry is not an obscure form of scrabble, indulged in simply for the pleasure of the game. To be sure, there are poets who choose to play games with words and nothing more, too many such poets. And there are teachers of poetry for whom the task is, they think, to uncover the poet's hidden and intricate puzzle. Yet great poets of every language write not for some elite of gamesters and puzzle-mongers, but for people, their people, whose world view they have shared and whose view of the world they wish to alter.

I would not argue that poetry must have a readily accessible "meaning," a "sense" that can be translated into everyday speech. Much of the magic of the poem is to be found in those elements which have no literal equivalents outside the poem. That which is complex in life requires complexity of expression—and the corollary is that everything in life is complex. Good newspaper reporters, essential as they are to the smooth functioning of society, differ from poets in that they portray the most knotted issues in relatively simple terms because they deal, necessarily, with surfaces, the shiny appearances of the world. Good poets, by contrast—reporting the news that stays new—recognize that even the simplest of ideas, emotions, and events are webbed so thickly as to strain the capacities of language. Yet this is no more remarkable than the fact that the good blacksmith can take steel to its limits. Language is, to the poet, what steel is to the blacksmith, what wax is to the candlemaker, what wood is to the whittler, what meat and vegetables are to the chef. A cheese soufflé should not mean, but be; taste can create it, and only taste can appreciate it.

Among the Polar Eskimos, the shaman or visionary must also be an accomplished hunter. He does not see himself alienated from his society; his songs and stories and histories fit the forms of the Eskimo existence—tell, for instance, where game may be found. The gift of such vision earns him status, but no free lunch. Because he is a hunter, because he has gone hungry, because he labors side-by-side with his fellows, he knows the rhythms of the stomach and the breath and the hunt—he understands the real forms of his people's existence. In contemporary American society, many of our poets and "lovers of poetry" see themselves as removed from the mass of men. American poetry often lacks a sense of kinship and community which would allow it to speak meaningfully to the ordinary person, partly because our poets' visions and forms may be too frightening for the unprepared common man to look at and fathom, and partly because our culture has succeeded in alienating the poets by ignoring them precisely when they are speaking directly to us, as if poetry holds little of common worth, as if it is always and only private utterance. The weight of blame for such a condition falls both upon those poets who stand aloof in the face

of the dirty world and upon a cultural system which fosters ambiguity as a virtue and neglects the worth of vision and the well-worked language expressing it. If we are fuzzy thinkers, it is because our language has grown fuzzy; the antidote would be a double dose of good poetry. And if our poets cannot communicate with the rest of men, it may be because the poets have lost touch with the ordinary world, its rhythms, its speech, its rituals, its forms and, hence, are incapable of employing in their poetry modes of discourse appropriate to a larger, nonliterary milieu. I don't blame the factory worker much for his lack of interest in poetry because our practical culture and practical education drive from him the possibility of such romance and because our poets so seldom speak to the needs and rhythms of his ordinary existence. His ranking at the vanguard of literature seems to hold more importance for the poet than having his work speak to and about his fellow man. I fear too many poets are concerned with re-making a literary form, rather than expanding the possibilities of the human spirit. Is it any wonder, then, that we seldom see hymns to the ordinary men and women who hold the world together. How seldom we find in poetry any flickering awareness that the workaday world exists at all. Our poets are not shamans because they have removed themselves from our world, or we have excluded them from it. Each has little communion with the other.

I recognize that great poetry requires suffering—as does all great art—but I worry that many of our poets have taken hold of their own fear and trembling as the only proper subject for poetry, to the neglect of the other elements in their lives which they share in common with others. They stare into their navels and, instead of seeing a metaphor for the world there, find only a dark hole. I am naive enough to believe that the ordinary in the poet's life and the lives of the common people around him can be the stuff of poetry. Our culture would benefit from the poet's examination of the elements all of us share. If there be a poet sensitive enough to comprehend what joy is to be found in lives continually pounded by the unrelenting necessities of the world, that poet, for one, could speak clearly to the mass of men. In classic Greek drama, the audience came away purified somehow by what it had seen; the contemporary American poet, on the other hand, might be charged with worrying too much about what he feels, too little about the effect his literary creations will have on readers. As Greek drama spoke to the forms and concerns of its audience, that is, to a community, American poetry today—one would think—ought to fit the American life in some fashion. I'm not asking the poet to compromise his vision but instead to redirect it, refocus. We are a generation of "minor" poets because, one and all, we are more concerned with "literature" than we are with man. Our work would take on new dimensions if we could conquer our fear of becoming part of a community. We accept almost unthinkingly our tradition of the writer's "alienation," and few of us are willing to share what is common, as well as what is extraordinary, in our lives and visions. Few of us seem willing to admit that we are, finally, like the rest of men.

For its part, the community to whom the poet would speak must relinquish the notion that "poetry is too deep for me." As human beings, we do require songs and stories for sustenance—that need is part of what makes us human. Poetry is simply one kind of song or story—a demanding sort, to be sure, because the sound, the rhythm, the feel of the language, the interplay of image, emotion, idea, and voice, the poem's tactile qualities, are as essential to the telling as what is being "said." If the audience merely admires the poem's metaphors, then the poem fails, for the listeners have not experienced the poem but merely "heard" it. All good poetry aims at that total sensuous experience. Trying to "understand" poetry, latching onto particular elements rather than yielding to the total experience, American readers take poetry not for what it's worth but for much less. Any true, pure fisherman will tell you that catching fish is but a minor part of the experience. And you don't read poetry to catch some readily accessible "meaning." Yet our cultural system and our schools would lead us to think otherwise. As a culture, we are inordinately devoted to measuring things, to weighing things, to marking boundaries. Is it any wonder that the community to whom the poet would speak is ill prepared to appreciate his efforts to say the unsayable?

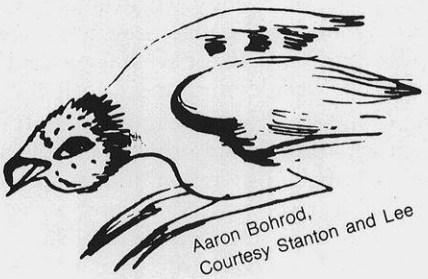
Who is poetry for? Poetry is for the poet who has experienced wonder, who has lost himself in the moment, and who struggles to find a language and a form sufficient to convey what he has seen. Yet it must also be for the rest of us—philosophers and mechanics, engineers and clerks, foundry workers and fishermen, teachers and ditchdiggers, printers and brewers, even tax collectors—who accommodate ourselves daily to the mysterious universe and who, in our accommodation, may have lost our sense of awe, our sense of play, our sense of the worth of human experience and of a language large enough to contain expression of that awe-full experience. Poetry is for all of us, common and uncommon imaginative human beings if we—and our poets with us—honestly face our common and uncommon needs and dreams. □

The Garden

So she works the garden, again,
the wind flapping her coat the way
I'd like to slap her butt when she
bends to pull weeds out. Every year
I have to turn the plot, work it
some, but then her wide hands and her
long hoe can do the rest. She is
a farmer's wife tending garden;
her vegetables will fill our shelves
and we will eat well all winter.
She is my wife who smells of earth,
that musk. Look—I've stopped my work now,
to watch how the very curve of her
fits the roll of land as she stoops,
laboring where our food grows and grows.

The Hawk

A lone hawk circles
above the field.
It rides a wind
all its own, until it
plummets into violence.
The world fills
with these small deaths.
Sometimes the sky is
wide with mercy,
for those whose
necessary end comes
quick and clean,
whose bones become
the living earth.



Aaron Bohrod,
Courtesy Stanton and Lee

Dear Sister—

I shall not return.
We set out, the two of us,
to make a new life here,
for ourselves, for the children.
Now fate may be dealing
from a marked deck, but I
shall play out the hand.
I am thick-skinned as
prairie, and as patient,
waiting for the next card
to fall, placing my small
wager against death—the same
gamble we all must take.

A Prayer

May the Lord forgive my curses. My cross words with balky horses. An angry cry at the fox who got a couple of chickens—who killed more than he ever needed. My lingering despair, alone in bed, listening to wind sweep through the grass, stirring the darkness. My shortness with the children—who need nurturing as much as the animals, the fields, or the small orchard. Lord forgive me. Some of your trials, I fear, stretch farther than most of my patience.

—Tom Montag

Thornton and Isabel in the 1930s

Thornton Wilder: the anchor of midwestern beginnings

by Isabel Wilder

EDITOR'S NOTE

Miss Wilder mentions many names which should be familiar to Madisonians from street signs if not from history. To learn a bit more about the people behind the names, we talked to the Rev. A. W. Swan, minister of the First Congregational Church between 1930 and 1965. For identification of those before his time, Rev. Swan turned to the Parkinson sisters, Kathryn Parkinson, UW '14, and Mary Parkinson Rehfeld, UW '21, who knew the Wilder family well and who still live in Madison.

John Bascom, president of the University of Wisconsin from 1874 to 1877, turned the small college of less than 500 into a university. Lucius Fairchild was governor of Wisconsin from 1866 to 1871. Col. William F. Vilas was postmaster general under President Grover Cleveland; his home stood where the National Guardian Life building is now on Wisconsin Avenue. Marshall Parkinson, who was in lumber, was the father of Kathryn and Mary who were schoolmates of the Wilder children. Charles E. Buell, an attorney and realtor, built "Buell's Folly," the first house on University Heights, in 1894 at 115 Ely Place.

L.L. Olds was a graduate of Beloit College and the founder of Olds Seed Company. David Atwood, founder of the *Wisconsin State Journal* and its editor and publisher from 1864 to 1899, brought Amos Wilder to Madison to succeed him as editor. Dr. Charles Sheldon was the physician who presided at the birth of the Wilders, the Parkinsons, and many others on "Yankee Hill." E.B. Steensland, a banker, built the large house at 315 N. Carroll Street which is now the Bethel Lutheran Parish Shoppe. Nelson Whitney was professor of railway engineering; his daughter, Helen Whitney Sanborn, is the last nineteenth century member of the First Congregational Church. Professor Allan Conover of engineering helped design Science Hall in 1894, the first steel-framed building in

the country. Fyfe Frederickson, son of a lumberman, had a large bobsled for young folks. Professor Amos Knowlton came to the English department in 1890 from New Hampshire. In 1895 he built the house still standing at 1717 Kendall Avenue. His daughter, Gertrude Knowlton Wilson, is still a pillar of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

●●●●●●

"Give us a child until the age of seven and he will be ours forever" is the frequently quoted challenge of the distinguished Teaching Order of the Jesuit Fathers.

Thornton Niven Wilder was born at 14 West Gilman Street, Madison, Wisconsin, April 17, 1897. Shortly before his ninth birthday he left to move with his family to Hong Kong, China. Thus Madison and Wisconsin "had" this boy for the seven years recommended for the winning of a young mind and heart, plus twenty-three extra months and some odd days. What did this environmental and civic nourishment give him to last a lifetime?

The question was put to my brother often. Since his death over four years ago, I am still sifting through his letters, papers, and the family archives hoping to find written in his own hand one answer I have heard him give. I can give now only a paraphrase: *It was good fortune for me to have been born in Wisconsin. I was a bookish, musing, sleeping-walking kind of boy. The young man I grew up to be might have turned too easily into an intellectual snob. How much I would have missed! But thanks to the anchor of my midwestern beginnings, I've had the best of several worlds. I was blessed with a certain sense of freedom I could never have known if, with my New England heritage, I had been born and locked into a New England pattern and reached only to the New York art, music, theatrical, and literary scene as the ultimate achievement.*

However, to make the complete human being takes more than the wisdom of the learned Fathers and more than the riches any environment can supply. Although the newborn comes into the world naked and empty-handed, not one arrives safely without a built-in design for survival; he or she is the sum of a long line of progenitors. In my brother's life, heredity and environment made an easy adjustment.

A second question with a different approach covers all issues and its answer brings confirmation. It is the formal interrogation of an interviewer for publication in the *Paris Review,* winter 1957: "Do you feel that you were born in a place and at a time and into a family. . .all of which combined favorably to shape you for what you were to do?"

Thornton responded in the same formal tone, speaking into a recorder: "By the standards of many people, and by my own, these dispositions were favorable, but what are our judgments in such matters? Everyone is born with an array of handicaps—even Mozart, even Sophocles—and acquires new ones. . . .The most valuable thing I inherited was a temperament that does not revolt against Necessity and is constantly renewed in Hope (I am alluding to Goethe's great poem about the problem of man's 'lot'.)"

Three formative experiences

The dossier of a child—even a happy one like Thornton—can seldom be more than meager pickings. His opening item states that he was born an identical twin; both were premature and frail. The brother did not have the strength to draw breath. In the family we held him in affectionate memory as Pax, an idea of our father who took the loss with paternal sentiment and would have named a third son Theophilus.

Madison supplied Thornton with his earliest schooling, and here he discovered the wonders of a library. The librarian of the children's room reported to mother that he was always "disappearing" but could be found contentedly wandering the aisles of bookstacks open to staff only. He was led back to a chair set before a little table piled with books suitable to his tender age. As an adult he asserted with enthusiasm that it was this Madison Free Library that awakened his passionate devotion to books. A third experience of equal magnitude was being taken by mother to Milwaukee to see his first play, *As You Like It.*

Other vivid childhood memories were the exciting and noisy city Water Works where father took us Sunday afternoons, or the steps of the towering State House, a challenging climb for short legs, or the promenade along Lake Mendota. Best of all was to go to the offices of the *Wisconsin State Journal,* where he could watch the printing presses in action and push the keys on father's typewriter to see words come out on paper. Long summers at our Maple Bluff cottage left indelible memories; the clear water lapping on the pebbled beach, the trips across Mendota on the launch nicknamed "The Putter." It was always a holiday when we drove back to Madison for church and Sunday school in a buggy with a fringe on top drawn by our horse, Billy Bones.

Baby carriage and poetry book

A picture of this period shows mother pushing a large wicker baby carriage. Amos, going on six, small boy in pants, walks beside mother; Thornton, still dressed in a smock for boy or girl, pulls himself along by holding to the underpinnings of the vehicle. Above, Charlotte, a beautiful toddler, sits like a queen at the foot of the carriage while I, on a sea of pillows, wave to the world. Years later I learned from Miss Orvis, a neighbor on Langdon Street, that the picture was incomplete. Day after day, when the photographer was not present, mother pushed the carriage up and down the block, airing and exercising her children,

with one hand only; with the other she held a book at eye level, preparing a program for the Poetry Club or learning Italian grammar so that she could read Dante in the original.

The names of cherished friends of his parents' early Madison days were a legacy Thornton honored. Sometimes we made a game of recalling them: Bascom, Fairchild, Winslow, Vilas, Parkinson, Buell, Olds, and Johnson. And impossible to forget the Atwoods with their wonderful octagonal house and its suspended stairway that made your heart flutter as it swayed when you put your foot on the first step. Or Dr. Sheldon who brought all four of us into the world. How, indeed, forget father's trusted lawyer, Emerson Ela, and the dear Steenslands, neighbors at Maple Bluff, and the staff at the *Journal*? One winter the Whitneys were surrogate parents for Amos and Charlotte as well as two lively LaFollette sons.

Young man returns to Madison

During the six years Thornton taught at the University of Chicago, beginning in 1930, he returned to Madison several times. I have to date only bare notations of once for a lecture and again for a football game. In 1940 the Reverand Alfred W. Swan of the Congregational Church of which our father had been a Deacon, arranged for my brother to lecture under the auspices of the church. Here are some quotations from an enthusiastic letter he wrote mother:

> Hotel Lorraine, October 6th . . .You'd think it was yesterday the way people are asking after you, recalling how bright and pretty you are, assuming you'd just returned from a summer vacation. . . .I was able to tell an attractive blue-eyed Mrs. Conover that I honestly remembered playing at her house. . . Mrs. Knowlton remembers you at the Poetry Club. . . .I shook hands with Fyfe Frederickson who lived on the shore at Maple Bluff right by our dock. Then two of Papa's "Boys" (from the *State Journal*), Bridgmen and Holmes who had called on me also at this hotel about ten years ago . . . . Mr. Ela couldn't come to the party Dr. Swan had for me after the lecture but I'm calling on him this afternoon . . . . As the train comes around Lake Monona, Madison appears to be a city of skyscrappers. But you'd be surprised how many landmarks are still standing. A very nice town. I've never been able to find my birthplace on Gilman Street. . . .The Sorority up at the corner where I used to sing and dance for the girls is still there. . . .

An author draws on many sources to tell his truth; each must find his own way. For an example I look to another Wisconsin writer Glenway Wescott, who wrote out of his native heritage the stunning books, *The Grandmothers* and *Good-bye Wisconsin*. Thornton admired them profoundly. His own early novels grew from knowledge acquired through a prodigious reading in several languages of literature and history. But in *The Bridge Of San Luis Rey*, 1927, he explored with poignant intensity the relationship of twin brothers, a subject close to his heart. A fourth novel, *Heaven's My Destination*, 1935, is the first set in middle America. The almost nine years in Wisconsin, two at Oberlin, Ohio, more at Chicago, and crisscrossing the country on several lecture tours gave him not only the inspiration but the courage to confront the American scene. The play, *Our Town*, came next. To be sure, it is laid in New England, but so universal is its theme and "tone" that it is probably playing tonight in Tokyo, Helsinki, and San Diego. Perhaps his major fiction work is *The Eighth Day*, 1967. Firmly based in southern Illinois, it carries also a portrait of Chicago and stops at way-stations en route to South America before completing the circle. I think one must assume that he would not and possibly could not have produced these books had not that umbilical cord, although it was so early severed in leaving Madison, continued to nourish him.

Thornton did not set a play or novel in Wisconsin; he did not write an autobiography (though he was the victim of others who outrageously authorized themselves to do so without access to the archives). He found that writing of himself the endless required I's, and the Me's, and the Mine's silenced him. But a last novel, *Theophilus North*, 1973, is a kind of memoir in which he recounts an imagined story of his never-never twin Pax, whom he missed all his life. Pax is Theophilus North (note the anagram of T.H.O.R.N.), his alter ego. What fun he had writing that book in his seventy-fifth year! And that book contains a heroine named Myra from Wausau, Wisconsin.

Thornton Niven Wilder, died peacefully in his sleep in his own bed in his home of over forty-five years which we called THE HOUSE THE BRIDGE (of San Luis Rey) BUILT, 50 Deepwood Drive, Hamden, Connecticut, December 7, 1975. □

Thornton and Isabel leaving their summer home on Martha's Vineyard in October 1975, two months before Thornton died.

A Notation of the Heart

by Sara Rath

Amos P. Wilder was a graduate of Yale and one of the first recipients of a doctor of philosophy degree in political science (1892) in the United States. He married Isabella Thornton Niven, from Dobbs Ferry, New York, and they moved to Madison, Wisconsin where he became the editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal.*

Thornton Niven Wilder and a twin brother were born in Madison on April 17, 1897. His twin lived only a few hours, and Thornton, the frail survivor, spent his first year on a pillow that his mother carried with her around the house. He had an older brother, Amos (1895), and would eventually have three sisters: Charlotte (1898); Isabel (1900); and Janet (1917).

Madison at that time was described as "a safe, secure environment for small, growing children . . . an oasis of culture surrounded by dairy farms and sausage factories."

Wilder's father was a strict, puritanical man. Thornton recalled being "one of the four Wilder kids sitting stiffly in a pious front row of the old Congregational Church . . . . To keep us still, Father would stretch out each of his arms and let us draw pictures on the cuffs of his shirts."

Amos P. Wilder was also considered forthright and uncompromising: a man who found self-fulfillment in the exercise of power. And Wisconsin at the turn of the Century was not in tune with Amos Wilder's brand of conservative Republicanism. Editor Wilder clashed with Senator Robert M. LaFollette, and in 1906 he accepted an appointment as consul general to Hong Kong, though he would not terminate his connections with the newspaper in Madison for another five years.

Isabella and the children accompanied Wilder to Hong Kong, but after six months she took the children to Berkley, California, in an attempt to remove them from their father's strict Calvinist influence. The family was reunited in Shanghai when Thornton was fourteen. After that, the young author's schooling took place in varied locations: the China Inland Missionary School at Chefoo, Berkeley High School, Oberlin College, Yale, and Princeton.

When Thornton Wilder "came home" to Madison in the autumn of 1940, he was welcomed as a celebrity by a city that was proud of his success with the play, *Our Town,* which had been on Broadway two years before and which, in fact, had filled the new Wisconsin Union Theatre to overflowing that very spring when it was produced by The Wisconsin Players.

However glamorous the life of a successful author and playwright may have seemed that October weekend of 1940, few Madisonians were aware that the play, *Our Town,* had originally opened in Boston where it had been a miserable flop and closed after only a week. Nor did the local gossips realize that the first screenplay for *Our Town* had been written by Lillian Hellman and that Wilder, so displeased with her treatment, offered to rewrite it, gratis. (The producer rewarded Wilder with a new Chrysler convertible on Christmas, 1939, a gift that left the usually loquacious Wilder speechless as he had no license and barely knew how to drive.)

His first "extravaganza" had been written in the margins of his schoolboy algebra text. Years later he would state, "The whole purpose of literature is the notation of the heart."

He had written a few plays and several novels early in his career including *The Cabala, The Woman of Andros,* and *Heaven's My Destination.* But his first big success was the book, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* written while in his mid-twenties. It won a Pulitzer Prize in 1928. *Our Town,* though bombing in Boston, was a hit in New York and won a Pulitzer in 1938.

A new Wilder play, *The Merchant of Yonkers,* had opened and closed in New York in December of 1938, but that made no difference here in Madison where Wilder was a successful home-town boy, a famous celebrity to be welcomed with open arms.

He was scheduled to speak at the First Congregational Church on Saturday night, October 5, 1940, as part of their three-day Centennial Celebration. That afternoon Wilder was escorted around Madison by Robert Stallman, a graduate student whom he'd known when he'd taught creative writing at the University of Chicago. Invited to lunch with the UW English faculty, Wilder watched for William Ellery Leonard, but due to the poet's unconventional behavior, Leonard had not been invited. Wilder insisted on meeting him, however, and the eccentric Leonard was found at his home nearby. Later, Wilder searched in vain for the place he himself had lived forty years before.

Stallman, anxious to be a conscientious guide, arranged for Wilder to meet with another well-known writer who happened to be on the staff of the UW English faculty that fall. It was planned that Sinclair Lewis and Wilder would meet for a drink at a downtown Madison bar. Evidently Wilder was friendly enough, but Lewis was

arrogant and competitive. Any literary friendship that might have blossomed from the introduction was nipped in the bud.

The speech at the Congregational Church went well, although many listeners claimed it "was the deepest we have ever heard." Wilder's topic was "Religion and Literature," or, as he explained, "Some of the resemblances and differences between the artistic and religious expressions of life and literature."

His talk that night obviously contained the germ of the new play he was writing:

"But why is it worthwhile to talk to you of poetry and literature in a world of such distress to our fellowmen? It's because the compulsion for ecstasy strikes all of us, and perhaps with this talk, one or two of you will have a vision . . . . Two hundred years from now your one or two will have grown to larger groups. In 500 years the message of the vision will become commonplace and enacted into law. Eight hundred years hence it will be the tacit assumption of the man on the street."

After his talk, Wilder was approached by a reporter for the *State Journal* who described the author as "just folks," "a nervous little man, with a firm handclasp, eager eyes, energetic personality," who carried with him "a copy of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* with more words of marginal notes than appear in the text."

The reporter mentioned that Wilder would "take a run over to see the Wisconsin Union Theatre where *Our Town* played to record-breaking audiences last Spring."

But his next play, Wilder promised the reporter, was "going to be like the Keystone comedies, like 'Hellzapoppin,' and a few other madcap productions . . . . In it are all the scrapes the world has ever gone through, from the Ice Age on down, with plenty of reason for my naming it *In the Nick of Time*." The idea for the play came about, he said, after a year and a half of "casting about for something suitable in the days of such headlines as our papers carry now."

Indeed, the *State Journal* that very day carried headlines of the war in Europe, with advice to Madison's draft-age men about the upcoming conscription and a photograph of the capsules that would be used for the National Draft Lottery.

Following his visit to Madison, Wilder moved on to Quebec, where he worked on his new play. He was exhilarated with his progress but distracted by the state of the world. Named *The Skin of Our Teeth*, instead of *In the Nick of Time*, the play was completed at 3:00 P.M. on New Years Day, 1941. Pearl Harbor had been bombed three weeks before, and Wilder now aged 45, with very poor eyesight, volunteered to join the Army. He wrote a screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock (*The Shadow of a Doubt*) while waiting to be called up and received orders to report to the Army Air Corps for duty in June of 1942.

The Skin of Our Teeth became the most talked about play of the season and starred Tallulah Bankhead, Fredric March (a UW graduate, Class of '20) and a newcomer to the stage, Montgomery Clift. It won Wilder his third Pulitzer Prize in 1943.

But after the war, Wilder's creative energy seemed to diminish. He wrote several major articles for *The Atlantic*, and a couple of novels, including *The Ides of March* (1948). He lectured for a year at Harvard (1950-51) and wrote his last full-length play, *A Life in the Sun* (also known as *Die Alkestiade*), but the play was well received only in Germany. A series of one-act plays was written, concerned with the seven deadly sins and the seven ages of man: a few were produced and they were given mixed reviews.

So far in his life, Wilder had proved remarkably resilient to failure. But at the age of fifty-one he lost both his mother and Gertrude Stein, women with tremendous influence in his life. And Wilder struggled to keep writing, keep moving.

The Merchant of Yonkers, a failure when it first opened in 1938 was rewritten and re-produced in 1954 as *The Matchmaker*, starring Ruth Gordon as Dolly Levi. It was a wild success and eventually turned into the musical *Hello Dolly* in 1964.

To Wilder's dismay, in the years after the publication of *The Ides of March*, he became more of a public figure and less of a writer. He found this lack of creative productivity discouraging and he isolated himself in Arizona, coming back east a year later with a long novel, *The Eighth Day*, the history of two American families in which Wilder, consciously or not, made a final statement about his relationship with his father. The book was subjected to indifferent reviews at its publication in 1967.

In 1973, at the age of 76, Wilder published *Theophilus North*, a fictionalized, nostalgic memoir. The book was on the best seller list for twenty-one weeks.

Amos Parker Wilder, upon viewing his son's early literary efforts, felt that his son was wasting his time. He wanted his boys perhaps to aspire to a religious vocation and considered Thornton a self-indulgent, unpromising failure. Amos Wilder's assessment of Thornton's early work was the claim that he was only "Carving olive pits! Carving olive pits!"

Thornton Wilder, however, kept writing in spite of his father's disappointment, in spite of personal frustrations when his work did not equal his own vision, and in spite of critics who, whether predatory or indifferent, were always ready to assert their awesome influence. He felt that "Human nature is like the ocean, unchanging, changeable. Today's calm, tomorrow's tempest—but it's the same ocean. Man is as he is, as he was, as he always will be. . . Works of art are the only satisfactory products of civilization."

—from *The Eighth Day*.

□

hello success: good-bye

by Richard Boudreau

We don't have to go all the way back to Charles King, Charles Stewart, Zona Gale, or even August Derleth to argue that success in writing can be achieved without abandoning residence in the state. Or to Hamlin Garland, Edna Ferber, Gladys Taber, or Glenway Wescott to argue the opposite. But the careers of these writers suggest the complexities and ambiguities at play in gauging the influence of the publishing world on the choices of domicile of Wisconsin authors. And let us not discount the vagaries of the human condition that demand their due as well.

When Charles King, son of Iron Brigade commander Rufus King, graduated from West Point in 1865, for example, he looked forward to what he thought would be a lifetime military career, but a bullet from an Apache rifle forced his retirement 14 years later. A chance dare to tell a luncheon group back in Milwaukee about his frontier experiences began him in his avocation of writing (best of over fifty novels: *The Colonel's Daughter*, 1883, and *Fort Frayne*, 1901) and his training and experience got him his vocation, organizer and commander of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Such happenstances might also have been at work in the case of Charles Stewart who was raised in Milwaukee but who went west for adventure. If George W. Peck, editor of the *Milwaukee Sun* ("What vaccination is to the smallpox, Peck's Sun is to the Blues"), had not published some work by the young man, Stewart might never have returned to the state, and we might not have been able to claim the author of *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, 1905, and *Fellow Creatures*, 1935.

But chance was equally effective in taking away some of our most promising writers. After the extreme anti-Semitism experienced by the Ferber family in Iowa, Papa Ferber was probably attracted to Appleton because of its large Jewish community. Anemia returned young Edna to a convalescent bed there where she wrote her first fiction, the novel, *Dawn O'Hara*, 1911, loosely based on her experiences as a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter, and the collection of short stories, *Buttered Side Down*, 1912. But it was chance that her father died in those early years, causing Edna's mother to move the two daughters back to the maternal household in Chicago.

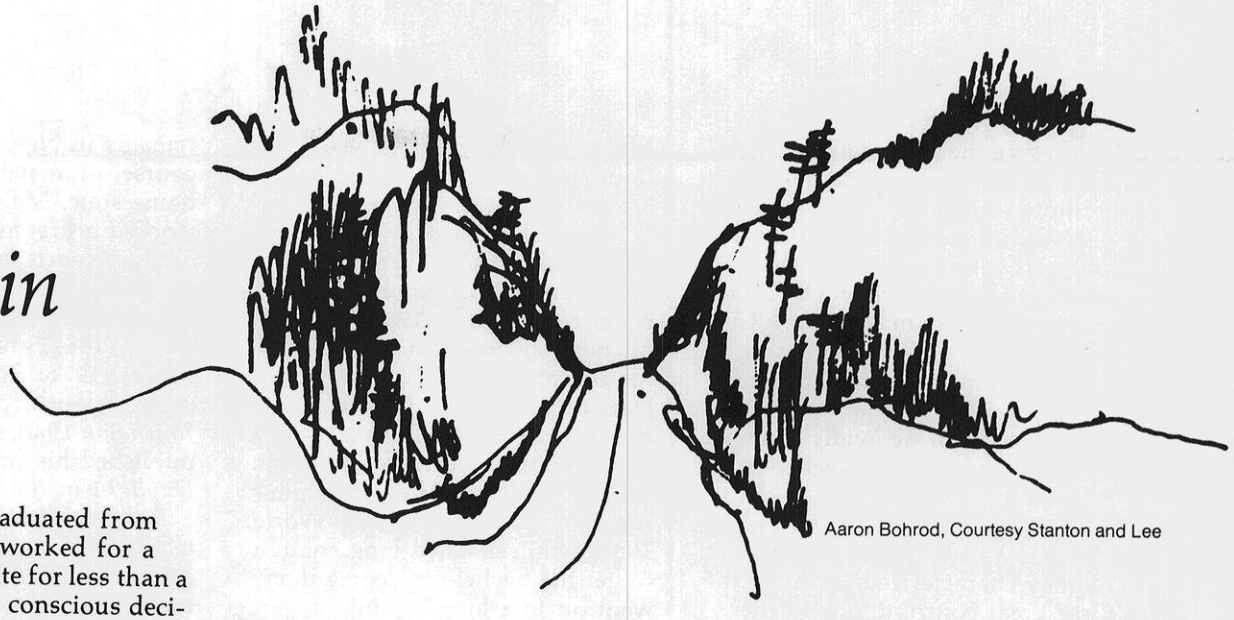
Gladys Taber might still have ended up in the Big Apple because of her strong bent for writing, but she got there and to her renowned Stillmeadow in reality by marrying an Easterner who moved to New York City because of his work and her further schooling. As she recounts in her autobiographical *Harvest of Yesterdays*, 1976, she met her future husband while she was at Wellesley College, and she was at Wellesley because her strong-willed father, professor of geology at Lawrence, disapproved of her attachment to a certain young man back in Appleton.

Graduating from UW-Madison in 1895, Zona Gale began her career as a reporter on the *Evening Wisconsin*, later moving on to the *Milwaukee Journal*. At the turn of the century she went directly to New York City, ready or not. In 1911, with one novel and three volumes of short stories already published (including the first and best of her Friendship Village series), Zona Gale won a $2000 prize for the best short story submitted to *The Delineator* magazine. That money and her growing reputation among publishers allowed her to return home to Portage for good. She became one of the few fictionists to write of the here and now, and her honesty soon changed from the sentimentalism of Friendship Village to the realism of *Miss Lulu Bett*, 1920, which as a play won a Pulitzer Prize the following year.

Contrast that with the career of Hamlin Garland, enunciated for us in his Middle Border books. Having lived in Wisconsin only as a child, Garland had no strong ties here until his parents, with his urging and his help, moved back to their native West Salem in 1893. Spending his summers there (he wrote the bulk of his best novel, *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, 1895, in that house), he made Chicago his home base the rest of the year. After his marriage in 1899 and the death of his mother the following year, Garland spent about five months of the year at the "homestead." But when his father died in 1914, Garland decided that Chicago had never become the publishing center it had promised to become, and with a penchant for kowtowing to the mighty in writing and publishing circles, he abandoned Wisconsin for New York City.

If the contrast is at least evident in the cases of Gale and Garland, it is crystal clear in the cases of Derleth and Wescott.

Wisconsin



Aaron Bohrod, Courtesy Stanton and Lee

August Derleth graduated from Madison in 1931, worked for a publisher out of state for less than a year, and made the conscious decision to return to his home town, assured that the Sauk City-Prairie du Sac area afforded him material enough for a lifetime. By the time of his death in 1971 he had published over 150 books, trying nearly every genre available to the writer: poetry, best presented in his *Collected Poems*, 1967; short stories, in his *Sac Prairie People*, 1948; novels, in the Sac Prairie Saga, *Winds Over Wisconsin*, 1938, and in the Wisconsin Saga, *The Shadow in the Glass*, 1963; adolescent novels, in *The Moon-Tenders*, 1958; nonfiction, in *Walden West, 1961;* mystery, detective, sci-fi, and Gothic stories, among others. If Derleth's canon of writings suggests unbridled production, the fault lies not in the fact that he stayed in his home state but that he was, almost exclusively, his own editor.

Glenway Wescott, raised on a farm near Kewaskum, could not wait to get away from his home state. Though his short story collection, *Good-bye Wisconsin*, 1928, suggests his formal farewell, he had actually left just after high school graduation eleven years before. Westcott, of course, joined that mass exodus of writers and artists to Europe between the wars, but it was Wescott's Wisconsin background that provided the material for his best novel, *The Grandmothers*, 1927. That book, too, delves into his reasons for leaving his home state. He felt that the Midwest was devoid of any artistic climate, that it was uncultured and uncouth, that it destroyed sensitivity instead of nurturing it. So he left but not because of the lure of publishers.

Add to these various other examples, and several conclusions can be drawn concerning the responses of our writers to the influence of the publishing world: Writing almost invariably begins as avocation; when it becomes vocation, writers tend to follow their instincts, both economic and geographic. Fiction writers seek out admiring editors and publication centers; poets seek out other admiring poets. Playwrights seek out the stage with the largest potential clientele; nonfiction writers seek out the largest libraries. Early successes move on; latebloomers tend to stay put. Poets write about the here and now; fiction writers write about the there and then.

These maxims are not hard core, but they are hard to come by because the complications are great. There are, for example, writers, such as Edward Harris Heth and Herbert Kubly, who moved out of state for an extended time, then returned. Heth, best known for his novel, *Any Number Can Play*, 1945, went right from UW-Madison to New York City, making his way as a free-lance writer by placing himself close to the editors and to the markets. At the height of his career he suffered a physical breakdown and was exiled to his home state by his doctor. It was an enforced return, but one that Heth reconciled himself to as revealed in his autobiographical collection, *My Life on Earth*, 1953.

Kubly originally left the state following his graduation from UW-Madison to become a newspaper and magazine columnist. After eleven years of that he turned to teaching, the vocation that gave him the chance for a Fulbright to Italy from which came his first book, *An American in Italy*, winner of the 1955 National Book Award. Kubly eventually returned to his home state apparently to take over the ancestral farm near New Glarus and to pursue teaching as vocation and writing as avocation (or vice-versa). Now at UW-Parkside, he published his ninth book, the novel *The Duchess of Glover*, in 1976.

Then there are Margery Latimer and Stanley G. Weinbaum, writers who never had the chance to make clear whether they would succumb to the lure of New York or not, both dying at the age of thirty-three. After graduation from UW-Madison in 1922, Margery Latimer went on to New York City, and there she saw through publication her first novel, *We Are Incredible*, 1928, and her first collection of short stories, *Nellie Bloom and Other Stories*, 1929. Returning to Portage and joining a communal farm near Briggsville fashioned according to Gurdieffian principles, she met and married Jean Toomer, author of *Cane*. The following year in Chicago, she died in childbirth,

just before the appearance of a second novel and a second collection of short stories.

A student at Madison at the same time as Latimer (they both had a common friend in the poet, Horace Gregory, for whom New York City was the center of the universe), Stanley Weinbaum left to take on a prosaic nine to five job in Milwaukee. But he avidly pursued his writing nights and weekends. In the mid-1930s his stories began to appear in sci-fi magazines, and they had a new quality which Isaac Asimov characterized as one of the three great contributions to the field—Weinbaum created believable, fantastic, generally lovable aliens. Only months later he was dead of throat cancer before Dame Fortune could ask him whether he would go east or no.

And, of course, there are the writers who came into the state to work or teach and stayed. Aldo Leopold originally came to Wisconsin to work at the United States Forest Products Laboratory, stayed on to fill the newly created chair of game management at the University, bought himself a sand farm along the Wisconsin River near Portage, and put together the manuscript for his renowned book, *Sand County Almanac*, published in 1949, a year after his death. Robert Gard came to the Madison Ag-Extension Department in 1945 and has remained, fostering such things as the Wisconsin Idea Theatre, the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Association, and the Rhinelander School of Arts. His best books are filled with Wisconsin folklore such as *Down in the Valleys*, 1971, and *Wild Goose Marsh*, 1972.

Even then we have not covered the entire ground. There remain the playwrights, such as Dale Wasserman and Ben Logan, both obviously dependent on the New York market for their stage and television creations. And the poets, who, whether they wish it or not, cannot be said to pursue commercial success and therefore have no lure to respond to. Except for the work of the small presses in the upper Midwest, poetry would scarcely flourish at all.

And finally the writers of nonfiction, Pulitzer Prize winners all: Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of Sections in American History*, 1933, who left his native Wisconsin in mid-career for the prestige and rewards of Harvard; Russel B. Nye, *George Bancroft: Brahmin Rebel*, 1944, who left in his teens to attend an eastern academy; Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World*, 1964, who remained long enough to get his bachelor's degree then went on to a long life in academia—out of state; and John Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 1970, who moved away after high school.

Such complications, entanglements, and qualifications, however, formidable as they may be, do not put an answer forever beyond our reach. Since Derleth is the outstanding example of those who stayed, we might look for an indication of a trend to his contemporaries: Sterling North (*Rascal*, 1963), Mark Schorer (*Pieces of Life*, 1977), Jerome Bahr (*Five Novellas*, 1977), and Heth, all left early; Eleanor Green wrote four fine novels, two set in Wisconsin (*The Hill*, 1936; *Pastoral*, 1937), then dropped from sight, presumably out of state; only Derleth and late-blooming William Steuber (*The Landlookers*, 1957), remained. Heth returned some years later, as we have seen, but he did so for health reasons, not literary. Bahr, the only survivor of his generation, continues to write in his home in Santa Fe and shows no sign of returning.

The next generation is less conclusive. Robert Bloch tasted early success after an apprenticeship with the Milwaukee Fictioneers, a group including Weinbaum and Arthur Tofte, a current sci-fi writer, and after a long delay in his career, moved to California primarily for the filming of his book, *Psycho*, by Alfred Hitchcock. Logan turned to nonfiction recently with his popular *The Land Remembers*, 1975, and will soon publish his first novel, but he remains in New York. Kubly, of course, ultimately returned to his home state. Mel Ellis stayed and worked a lifetime fascination with outdoor sports into a writing career that now numbers a score of books, among them *Wild Goose, Brother Goose*, 1969, and *The Wild Horse Killers*, 1976. Robert W. Wells came to work for the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1945, stayed and has just published his fifteenth book, *Daylight in the Swamp!* 1978.

Even the younger writers attached to the universities reflect the same inconclusiveness about residence. Mark Dintenfass at Lawrence came to Wisconsin from the East (New York, ironically) following the lead of a number of our writers, Helen C. White (*Dust on the King's Highway*, 1947), Samuel G. A. Rogers (*Dusk at the Grove*, 1934), and Warren Beck (*Into Thin Air*, 1951). Now working on his fifth novel, he has indicated that if he had a commercial success, he might leave teaching and perhaps the state. Thomas Bontly, a native son, professor at UW-Milwaukee, has published three novels (the best, *The Competitor*, 1966), none great commercial successes. If his fourth hit the best-seller list, would he take up writing full time—and would he then leave the state?

Two other contemporary writers who reflect the dilemma and who might provide a touchstone for the future are Milwaukee-born Peter Straub and Mary Leader of Mequon. Straub has just published his fourth book, *Ghost Story*, a novel of the occult which made the best-seller list last spring. Leader has just published her second novel of the occult, *Salem's Children*. Her first, *Triad*, had good publicity but did not sell up to expectations. Both have the same New York publisher, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. Straub, an early success, took on writing as vocation in Dublin and has just returned after seven years in London to live in Connecticut; Leader, a latebloomer (if she will graciously forgive the expression), took on writing as avocation and so far remains in Wisconsin.

Those writers who tend to remain in the state seem to be genre or specialty writers—Tofte and Gene de Weese in science fiction; Anne Powers in historical romance; Ted Olson, under several pseudonyms, in westerns; his wife, Beverly Butler, in juveniles. But for every Beverly Butler or Marion Fuller Archer who has stayed or come in we can name double the number in that genre who have left—Maureen Daly, James Summers, William Gault, and one of the finest writers about horses in the country, Marguerite Henry—more than double; add Jacqueline Jackson, Robert Krause, and Ellen Raskin (whose latest novel, *The Westing Game*, won the Newbery Prize) who left Wisconsin early, the latter now residing in Illinois, the former two in New York.

Would Raskin or Straub have achieved the same success if they had stayed in the state? We'll never know, of course, but that side of the question must be considered, too. If Edna Ferber had remained, she might have written fewer, better novels, or she might have written merely fewer. If Glenway Wescott had stayed and never become an expatriate or had returned to Wisconsin to settle down instead of New Jersey, would there have been more writings from his pen than there have been during these last thirty-five, generally arid, years—or would he have merely been forced to give up full-time writing? An allegiance to the home turf is no guarantee of anything, either good or bad, just as moving toward the centers of publishing is no guarantee of anything either.

But one thing is certain; the tally sheets do not balance. More successful Wisconsin authors leave the state than remain, and more go out of state than come in. Without writer-professors or writer-journalists, without some publishing houses in the state, including numerous small presses (thank the muses!), and without late bloomers or land lovers, and without our prolific poets, the picture would be gloomy indeed.

It took Garland a little over twenty years to come to the conclusion that his return to the Midwest had been a mistake. It took August Derleth double that to provide ample and lustrous vindication (we have yet to take full measure of the man) that fighting against the popular current has its own rewards.

Would there were more Derleths; they tell us the greatest truths about ourselves and about our land. □

October Poem

Guarding the porch
with shivering candle-light grins,
the pumpkins squat
like trolls beneath a bridge.

Flat dismembered hands
of twitching leaves
spin pinwheels in windy yards.

Clothesline ghosts
scurry across the lawns,
to gather in doorways
that open a moment:
spilling peppermints and nickels,
then snapping shut
like tired oysters.
Filling themselves,
the ghosts go filtering home. . .

with a sinister flicker,
the jack o'lanterns
vanish in blackness. . .

an abandoned sheet flaps in the street.

Simply This

After a storm,
two girls
in red rain capes
stamped puddles.

The sluggish farmer swore
and scraped mud
from his shoe.

The farmhand
sitting on a
wet tree stump and
rolling a cigarette
mildly smiled and
watched,
with his
muddy colored eyes.

—Michael Allen Kriesel

Aaron Bohrod, Courtesy Stanton and Lee

Tribute: Lake Superior

He paces late at night smoking a last simmering cigarette in the November heat wave. His chain saw is broken. Travel becomes a job in itself. The friends who brought cake have left, going home, back to women & daughters.

& he dreams of the ancient lake bottom striking back, demanding tribute of the invaders, reasserting the right to overpower. The invaders shudder, hoping for drought, capping artesian wells, hoarding beer. Their small towns shrink. The women & daughters sacrifice men & sons. The lake bottom is pleased & spreads its arms back to the rugged sandstone shore. The women strut. The daughters gather wild blue asters for their hair.

Closing the Roads

Crossing old snowshoe tracks he breaks
his own. It is winter's fault—this loss, &
lifted leg after lifted leg makes his way home.
His trail zig-zags like the dog's, only the dog
is home & he struggles through the final ravine.

& the fire, also final, is out.

Angrily splitting kindling his breath choking
the forgotten. Opening fragile letters, fingers
rough as bark, he remembers, for an instant, the
gentle rush of winter on his neck, the chill kiss.

The inside of the house shimmers in an empty
gaze.

—Rick Penn

Photo by Pat Powell

This Wisconsin Historical Marker, south of Poynette, marks the spot where John Muir often stopped to rest and admire the view on his 50-mile walk between his farm in Marquette County and the University in Madison.

By John Stark

Project a writer,
sketch in a scenic backdrop,
and create portraits for

A Gallery of Wisconsin Writers

Most of the significant Wisconsin writers have written primarily about, and therefore are readily identified with, a small space: a building or a limited geographical area. This is not to say that they are insular or irrelevant to the rest of the world. On the contrary, like Faulkner they make of a small postage stamp of land a world. Because of this quality one can imagine them in specific locations, thereby creating a portrait gallery of Wisconsin writers, each posed in front of a Wisconsin background.

John Muir

The first portrait is John Muir's, who is glimpsed at a spot now marked by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin that is beside Highway 51 near Poynette. From it he viewed a paradisiacal valley stretching away toward a bluish ridge. This place is appropriate for Muir partly because it lies on his route between locations that symbolize the two main aspects of his personality. One location is rural Marquette County, where Muir's ascetic father built and worked two

farms after the family moved from Scotland when John was eleven. The farms to Muir meant natural beauty, a quality to which he responded even at a very early age, as he shows in his description of his arrival at the first farm's site: "David and I jumped down in a hurry off the load of household goods, for we had discovered a blue jay's nest, and in a minute or so we were up the tree beside it, feasting our eyes on the beautiful birds—our first memorable discovery." For the rest of his life he viewed nature with the astonishment characteristic of a child or poet, so he wrote countless precise and beautiful descriptions of natural scenes, defended untouched nature against despoilers and helped found the national park system. He sought natural beauty, often at the cost of hardship and danger, throughout his life: in the rural settings of his boyhood, on the 1,000-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico that he began immediately after his years at the University, in Yosemite and Alaska, even in more developed areas such as Madison: the view of Lake Mendota from his room in North Hall and a locust tree on the campus fascinated him.

The other end of the journey that took him past this vista, the University, symbolizes his qualities that are more sedentary, less itinerant; more intellectual, less emotional; more immediately practical, less esthetic. Muir entered the University in 1861, but that phase of his life actually began in 1860, when he left his family's farm to go to Pardeeville in order to catch a train for Madison. Because of his intellectual acuity, especially his ability to fashion elaborate inventions and limpid, graceful prose, he extended that trip beyond the neighboring village to Madison and eventually over much of North America. He left home an unknown farmboy but ended, according to many, including Emerson, a great man. The most obvious indication that day of his intellectual powers were the inventions he carried, which he had carved from wood during the time allotted to him for sleep. He worked then because his father would not diminish his working hours. That day he had two clocks and a thermometer, but Muir writes that, earlier: "After completing my self-starting sawmill I dammed one of the streams in the meadows and put the mill in operation. This invention was speedily followed by a lot of others—waterwheels, curious doorlocks and latches, thermometers, hygrometers, clocks, a barometer, an automatic contrivance for feeding the horses at a required hour, a lamplighter and fire-lighter, an early-or-late-rising machine, and so forth."

After leaving Pardeeville he caused a sensation in Madison at the fair and, a few months later, he entered the University. He used his skill at invention less often after an industrial accident, but he later demonstrated facility in geology and, surprisingly, in business.

The intellectual skill that guaranteed his fame, however, was his writing skill. Pedestrian prose could have been expected from a person who lived as actively and wrote as prolifically as Muir, but such an expectation is not fulfilled. His prose is as sparse as his physical existence on his family's farm and as exact as the interactions of his inventions' parts, yet it provides a feast for the imagination. For example, of glaciers he writes: "The grandeur of these forces and their glorious results overpower me and inhabit my whole being. Waking or sleeping I have no rest. In dreams I read blurred sheets of glacial writing, or follow lines of cleavage, or struggle with the difficulties of some extraordinary rock-form." Some of his best writing is in his Wisconsin book, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth.* An edition of his work contains ten volumes, including that book, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* and *The Mountains of California. Stickeen,* a juvenile book, is another of his notable works. He also wrote a few other books, several dozen articles and a journal. The totality is impressive both for its quantity and its quality.

Hamlin Garland

I see Hamlin Garland striding down a coulee, a narrow valley in unglaciated southwest Wisconsin, in a scene resembling one he portrays in "Up the Coulee": "The sun had set, and the coulee was getting dusk . . . . He walked slowly to absorb the coolness and fragrance and color of the hour. The katydids sang a rhythmic song of welcome to him. Fireflies were in the grass. A whippoorwill in the deep of the wood was calling weirdly, and an occasional night hawk, flying high, gave his grating shriek, or hollow boom, suggestive and resounding." For a while it seemed that that area would be irrelevant to his work. He was born near West Salem in 1860, but nine years later his family moved to Iowa. In 1884 he moved to Boston, where he probably thought rarely of his origins. The turning point of his career was Joseph Kirkland's advice to turn those early years into literary material, to portray Midwest farm life.

His trips to Wisconsin and neighboring states during 1887 and 1889 inspired his best known book, *Main-Traveled Roads,* six of the stories of which are set in Wisconsin. In 1893 he bought a home for his parents in West Salem, where he frequently visited, particularly after he moved to Chicago in 1899. His best novel, *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly,* takes place in the coulee region, in Madison, and in Chicago. In *Son of the Middle Border* he recounts his experiences in the state. A comparison of that book with his fiction indicates many similarities. Thus, much of his best work derives from his life in Wisconsin. In addition to the books already mentioned, only *Crumbling Idols,* a collection of essays on literature, has endured.

Garland saw in the land of his birth not only a beautiful natural setting but also social and economic problems. Many of his characters lead lives of anything but pastoral serenity. He writes of the soldier in "The Return of a Private": ". . .he faced the fact that with the joy of homecoming was mingled the bitter juice of care. He saw himself sick, worn out, taking up the work on his half-cleared farm, the inevitable

mortgage standing ready with open jaw to swallow half his earnings." Garland, influenced by Henry George and the Populists, blamed on a plutocratic economic system much of the suffering of the persons among whom he grew up. This attitude is clear in a didactic story, "Under the Lion's Paw," and in "A 'Good fellow's Wife' " Garland attacks a dishonest and exploitative banker. Garland reacted emotionally to such problems, and he developed a type of literature, veritism—scrupulously realistic accounts of experiences that have emotionally stimulated the writer—to present them.

One of Garland's most attractive traits is his empathy with women. During his trips to the Midwest in 1887 and 1889 he noticed the hardships endured by many farm women, particularly his sister and mother. His sympathy for rural women is evident in *Son of the Middle Border* and in "A Branch Road," which describes the poverty that grinds down one woman until the hero rescures her. His most remarkable work treating this theme is *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, a feminist novel. Rose, declining to stay home and care for her widowed father, attends the University of Wisconsin and builds a career as a writer in Chicago. She also foregoes marriage until she finds a man who will not stultify her. Well ahead of their time, they even draft a marriage contract. Garland makes clear Rose's need for freedom and, considering the conventions of the time, he is reasonably clear about her sexuality. He also demonstrates her urge for intellectual and vocational fulfillment, a theme that is developed partly in relation to her two female mentors: a doctor and a lawyer. Garland's handling of this theme, as well as others, owes much to his ability to look carefully at and to feel strongly about life in the coulees.

Zona Gale

Zona Gale has to be remembered in Portage. She was born there in 1874 and, except for a brief interval in Minnesota, she lived there until she went to the University of Wisconsin. Her bookish childhood, lived in a warm and supportive family, helped make her home town attractive to her. At the age of eight she decided to become a writer, but it was not clear then that she would be a Wisconsin writer. After her stay at the University, where she wrote a senior thesis on "The So-Called School of Wisconsin Writers," she spent six years as a journalist in Milwaukee. Her next

Zona Gale built this house in Portage in 1908 for her parents and initially lived there herself. Her husband William L. Breeze presented it in trust to the Women's Civic League.

Photo by Dale O'Brien

three years (1901-1904), however, were spent in New York, working as a journalist and free-lance writer and being part of Clarence Stedman's literary circle. A turning point in her life occurred in 1903 during a visit to Portage. Listening to banal talk, she realized that "this is wonderful! This is the sort of thing people talk about, not only in Portage, but everywhere. Yet in this talk, they give you vivid glimpses of their tastes, habits, character, heart." She commented that this experience "made me see that my old world was full of new possibilities." The die was cast. She had the material she needed for her writing, and the next year she moved back to Portage. Let us imagine her, then, sitting in a parlor in Portage around the turn of the century, listening to the talk.

Whether she called it Burage, Friendship Village, Prospect or something else, Portage was the setting for nearly all her works. These include the Friendship Village stories, with which she made her first mark. Many of them center on Calliope Marsh, who saw the foibles and charms of her home town. In some of Gale's less well known works she attacks social ills: for example, anti-Semitism in "The Story of Jeffro," exploitation of workers in *A Daughter of the Morning* and World War I in *Heart's Kindred. Portage, Wisconsin and Other Essays* is an interesting collection of pieces on herself, her home town, and her vocation. The title essay illustrates her response to the natural beauty in and around Portage and to the town's strengths and weaknesses. This essay ends by stating Gale's conception of herself as a writer: "And now I wonder whether there is here involved a consideration not of emotion, not of the group soul—but rather of a new physics intimating that love-association does actually unveil properties and perhaps surfaces unknown to the sense of the casual passer-by." But it is three novels—*Birth, Faint Perfume,* and *Miss Lulu Bett*—that mark the high point of her career. The last is the best known, and her dramatization of it won a Pulitzer Prize, but *Birth,* the story of a father whose quiet heroism goes unnoticed and of a son whose artistic bent makes him an alien, is her best work.

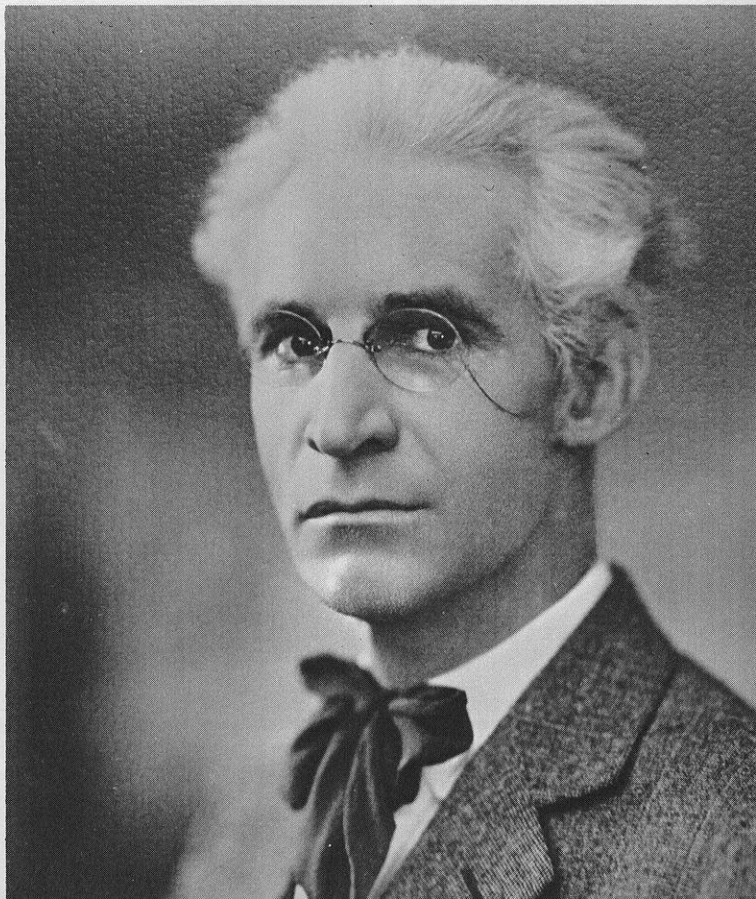
She was a vigorous supporter, by writing and speaking, of the LaFollettes and other Progressives. A meeting with Robert LaFollette jolted her out of her conservatism, and his opposition to World War I increased her admiration for him. She served on the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin, where her most notable accomplishment was persuading the Board to appoint Glenn Frank President. When Philip LaFollette began to oppose the controversial Frank, Gale was torn between the two men. She was also an important member of the National Women's Party and an effective advocate for the legislative impetus that in 1921 produced the Wisconsin Equal Rights Law and, less successfully, she lobbied for similar legislation in other states and for the nation. Those women's voices she heard in Portage influenced her to work politically to solve a problem she described repeatedly in her fiction: the frustration of women caused by a lack of opportunity. This congruity among her hometown, her life, and her work makes her one of the most impressive and attractive Wisconsin writers.

William Ellery Leonard

The place most naturally associated with William Ellery Leonard, an apartment at 433 N. Murray in Madison, where he lived for twenty-one years, is restrictive because of its smallness and because its boundaries were virtually the boundaries of his world. Aldo Leopold and Edward Lueders lived in small cabins, but they did so temporarily and voluntarily, returning when they wished to active lives elsewhere. Leonard's psychological difficulties, however, confined him to that apartment and to an ever-shrinking area near it. A trauma caused by a locomotive when he was a child, an experience many years later near Middleton that released the repressed emotions and neuroses caused by that earlier experience—without revealing their cause—and the suicide of his first wife were more than Leonard could handle. As a result he became incapable of venturing far from the sanctuary of his apartment. But his neurosis did not terminate his writing; art can be made from neuroses. Moreover,

William Ellery Leonard's proper setting is his psyche, through which he searched for its malfunctions.

Photo by the DeLonge Studio; Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin



Leonard was a scholar, so he did not need experiences to use as material: imagine the apartment filled with books. And he had his psyche, through which he searched for its malfunctions.

Some of Leonard's life and many of his books are not related to Wisconsin. He was born in Plainfield, New Jersey, in 1876. During his early adulthood he earned a doctorate, taught, traveled in Europe, and worked on a dictionary. His pre-Wisconsin phase ended in 1906, when he began teaching at the University. His non-Wisconsin works include translations from several languages, most notably a popular translation of Lucretius' *Of the Nature of Things*. He also published scholarly books and monographs, and some of his poems are about his early years. Aside from the Lucretius, this work merits only a passing glance.

Several of his Wisconsin works are also unimportant, including two plays, *Glory of the Morning* and *Red Bird*. However, Wisconsin has a prominent part in his major works. *The Locomotive God* (1927) is a prose account of his search for the cause of his neurosis. It is a fascinating story revealing Leonard's perceptiveness and his courage in directing it onto himself, even when the results were shocking. Important events in his life that Leonard explains in that book had been narrated in poetic form earlier in *Two Lives*, which he wrote in 1913, published privately in 1922, and published in 1925. In that sonnet sequence he recounts arriving in Madison, rooming at the home of a wealthy and prominent colleague, and marrying the colleague's daughter, who killed herself two years later. Although she had a history of mental illness, many Madisonians believed her parents' charge that Leonard was responsible, and they made him suffer accordingly.

His themes in *Two Lives*—his emotional reaction to his wife and her death—and his poetic style, which is somewhat archaic but, when his emotions are engaged, very effective, are evident in this passage: "The low haze/Dims the scarped bluffs above the inland sea,/Whose wide and slaty waters in cold glaze/Await yon full-moon of the night-to-be./(. . . and far . . . and far . . . and far . . .)/These are the solemn horizons of man's ways,/These the horizons of solemn thought to me."

Aldo Leopold

Like Leonard, Aldo Leopold was born outside Wisconsin but spent much of his life and wrote his most important work here. Leopold was born in Burlington, Iowa, in 1887, graduated from Yale, and then worked in the Southwest for the United States Forestry Service. He moved to Madison in 1924 to become the associate director of the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison. Nine years later he assumed a newly created chair of game management at the University of Wisconsin, and during that same year he published his influential text on that subject. The most important event in his life as far as his writing is concerned is his purchase in 1935 of a dilapidated shack in the "sand counties" about fifty miles north of Madison near the Wisconsin River. Imagine him sitting on a stump outside the shack during the day's first light, in one hand a coffee cup and in the other a pad of paper on which to note the sounds he hears. He spent a good deal of time at this shack and died there in 1948 while helping a neighbor fight a fire. In addition to his technical books and papers, Leopold published (posthumously) *Round River* and a book that certainly belongs on the list of environmentalist classics: *A Sand County Almanac.*

A Sand County Almanac is first-rate because in it Leopold reconciles two disparate skills: perceptive observation and incisive theorizing. He observed nature so well becase he was both trained as a scientist and emotionally attached to nature. As to the latter trait he writes of his book, "There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot." His prose style reflects both traits. In scientific fashion he goes to the heart of the matter, eliminating superfluities and seeking presicison and clarity. His emotional attachment is evident in the grace and color of his prose, for example in this excerpt: "To arrive too early in the marsh is an adventure in pure listening; the ear roams at will among the noises of the night, without let or hindrance from hand or eye. When you hear a mallard being audibly enthusiastic about his soup, you are free to picture a score guzzling among the duckweeds. . . . And when a flock of bluebills, pitching pondward, tears the dark silk of heaven in one long rending nose-dive, you catch your breath at the sound, but there is nothing to see except stars."

In the almanac section of this book Leopold theorizes briefly, and the final part of that book is a long theoretical discussion of three themes that he states in his forward: "That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but lattely often forgotten." His conception of the land is broad: "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land." Land is a community in that none of its components has a right to dominate another, a point he dramatically makes in "Thinking Like A Mountain," where he argues for an end of the humans' war against wolves, claiming that, as the ecosystems of mountains are disrupted when wolves are killed, so, too, will humans suffer from that slaughter. He claims that conservation is not only expedient but also ethical, and he aims to replace a purely monetary basis for decisions affecting the environment with a belief that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." By alluding to the eons during which our

Photo by Paul Vanderbilt: Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin

The early morning beauty of the Wisconsin River has inspired many Wisconsin writers living along its path: Zona Gale, Aldo Leopold, August Derleth, and Mark Schorer.

environment has been developing Leopold makes this change in perspective seem imperative. The land's cultural effect is also vital because "wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization."

Glenway Wescott

Glenway Wescott, unlike Leonard and Leopold, was born in Wisconsin and grew up here, wrote his best work (with one exception) early and about Wisconsin, and then left. His change in attitude toward the state is the key to his career. One image of him that persists from a reading of his work derives from his account in *Good-Bye Wisconsin* of his dismay when two workers failed to defer to him when he attempted to look and act like a poet. That occurred on a trip by rail to Kewaskum, his home town, but because, as the title of his book indicates, Wescott was through with the state, it is more appropriate to imagine him, bitter and sulky, on the train going back south and away from Wisconsin.

Wescott was born near Kewaskum in 1901 and left the state for the first time in 1917 to attend the University of Chicago, where he stayed less than three years. Wisconsin is the setting for his first three fictional works: *The Apple of the Eye, The Grandmothers,* and *Good-Bye Wisconsin.* The first of these has two memorable characters: Hannah, a woman vital and alien as the marsh near which she lives, and Dan Strane, a sensitive, aesthetic young man. *The Apple of the Eye* is a fine first novel, and it brought Wescott national attention during the 1920s. *The Grandmothers* chronicles the lives of several generations of a family. In it he effectively uses the Wisconsin scene, as in this passage, which also demonstrates his prose style at its silky best: "Low fields were flooded in spring with water full of frogs, where wild birds of every sort gathered to paddle and flutter, to stalk and doze, hunching their shoulders. Beyond those fields there lay a swamp over which the horizon was draped with melancholy tamaracks." *Good-Bye Wisconsin* contains short stories and the essay describing Wescott's train trip, in all of which he tries to justify his decision to leave his home state. In the best of the stories, such as "In the Thicket," Wescott's setting, characters, and themes resonate with each other.

After leaving the University of Chicago Wescott was very rarely in Wisconsin and wandered considerably: to *Poetry Magazine*; to New Mexico to stay with Yvor Winters, a literary critic who probably influenced Wescott's belief that literature's function should be truth-telling; to Paris, where he knew other American expatriates; and to various other places in Europe. In 1943 he settled in New Jersey. After the three Wisconsin books, Wescott returned only once to the novel, writing *Apartment in Athens*, a didactic work. He also wrote a one-act play, social and literary criticism, a short story, and a novella. The novella, *Pilgrim Hawk*, is his best work. The most effective passages in his writing draw meaning from images. *Pilgrim Hawk* and "The Babe's Bed" focus on images well suited to his intended meaning and prose style, so these two works are first-rate.

Sterling North

Sterling North is best remembered as a boy of twelve in a scene at the end of *Rascal*, his best known book. In it he is paddling in a canoe with his pet raccoon to release it into the wild. At the time he was living near Stoughton. Following Wescott by a few years, he attended the University of Chicago. Later he worked as a journalist, edited an excellent series of children's historical books—including one on John Muir by Justice William O. Douglas—and wrote novels and biographies. Some of these books are for young people, and *Rascal* is sometimes put into that category, but it is sophisticated and meaningful enough for adults.

Rascal was a raccoon that North and a friend found during 1918. North describes the capture: "Oscar . . . was quick enough to cup one kit in his cap, our only reward for our labor—but reward enough, as time would prove." Rascal joins North's menagerie and soon becomes the monarch of the North household. Because North treats him like a human—for example, putting him in a high chair at the family's table for meals—he becomes almost human. Much of the humor in this book is created by the contrast between North's treatment of the raccoon and the treatment that others give it. For example, Theo North returns to visit her father and brother, and during the first night Rascal "went confidently to our bedroom and crawled in with her. My father and I who were sleeping upstairs were awakened by a blood-curdling yell. We rushed downstairs in our pajamas to find Theo standing on a chair treed by a complacent little raccoon who sat on the floor below blinking up at this crazy human being who was screeching like a fire siren." This discrepancy in treatment becomes a problem when Rascal starts to roam and help himself to the neighbors' corn. Finally North realizes that it is best for the neighbors and Rascal, but not for himself, that he return his pet to the wild. The result is his memorable final trip with Rascal, who finally leaps from the canoe, swims ashore, and joins a female raccoon. The book ends with North's laconic comment: "I paddled swiftly and desperately away from the place where we had parted."

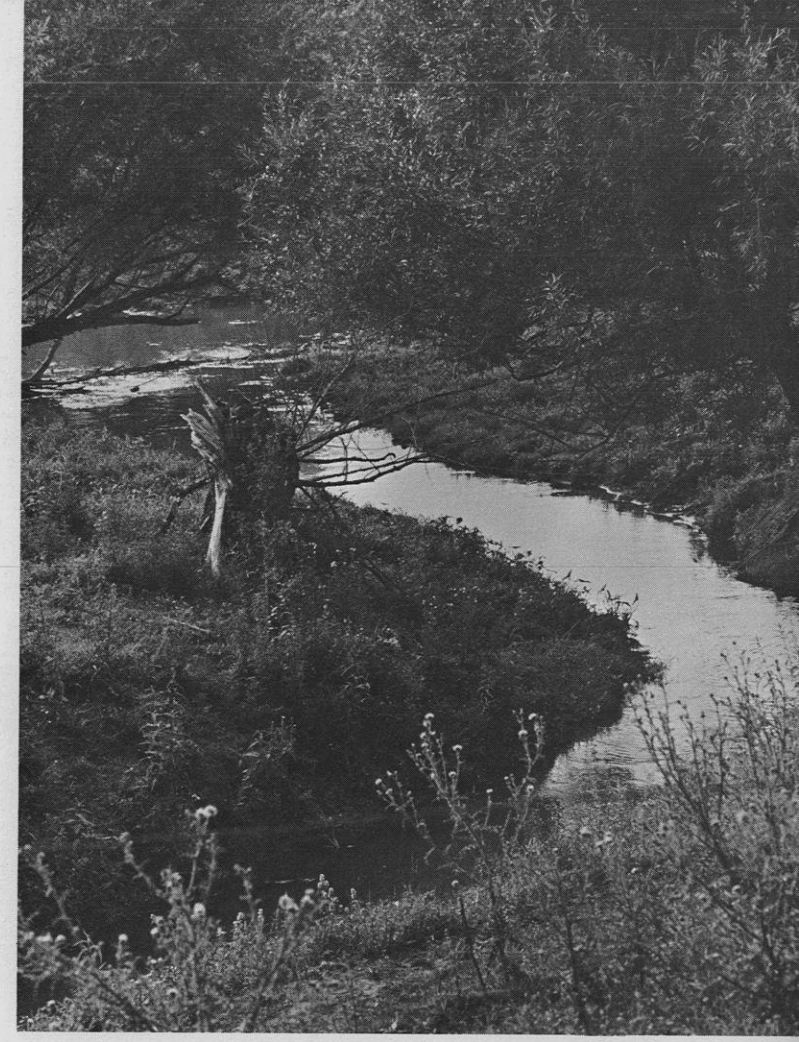


Photo by Dale O'Brien

Imagine Sterling North in a canoe paddling desperately off leaving behind Rascal to pursue a female raccoon.

Less obvious in *Rascal* is the story of North's development of the talents that he would later use to write this and other books. His family had much to do with that development. His indulgent father, an excellent amateur geologist and natural historian, gave him free rein to experience the world around him and encouraged his love of, and ability to observe, nature. His sister Jessica was a poet and linguist and probably encouraged him to write. His mother, although dead when the story happened, provided the warmth and security he needed. The small town and the surrounding countryside gave him his subject matter. His sense of craftsmanship and skill also was pertinent to his development as a writer. He could skate, swim, fish, and do the other things typically done by small-town boys, and he also built canoes, did carpentry work, and read books. Clearly, the young boy portrayed in *Rascal* could make something of himself, and so he did.

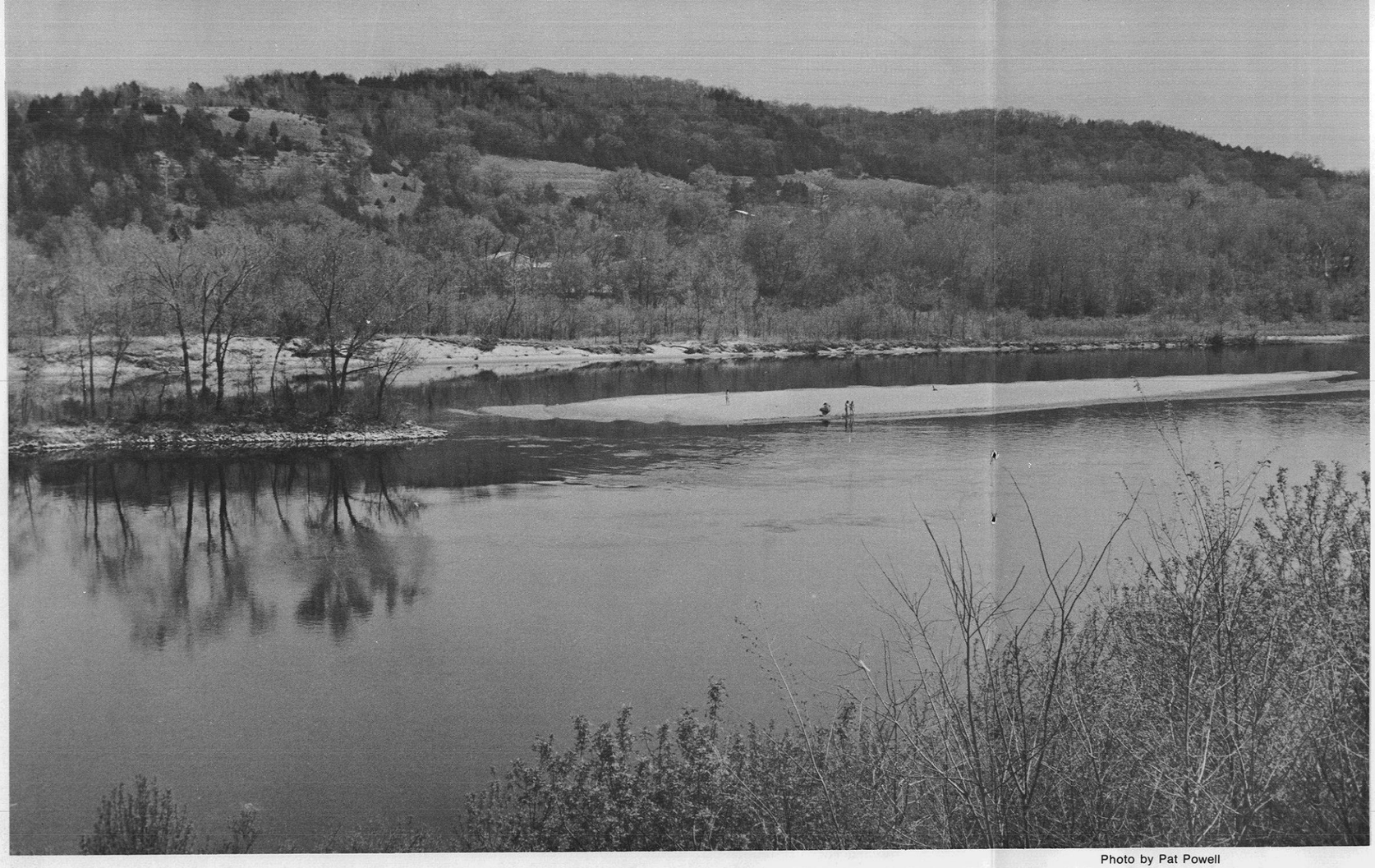


Photo by Pat Powell

The bluffs across the Wisconsin River from Sauk City-Prairie Du Sac make a striking background for Mark Schorer as well as August Derleth.

A quiet farm on a creek in northern Dane County was a familiar sight to Leopold, Derleth, Schorer, and others as they traveled south to Madison.

Photo by Richard Vesey; Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Mark Schorer

Mark Schorer was a distinguished literary scholar and writer of fiction, although he is known primarily for the former. After growing up in Sauk City he attended the University of Wisconsin, did graduate work at Harvard, and then returned to Madison to earn a Ph.D. in English. He made a reputation as a scholar by publishing a book about William Blake and then published a number of essays on literary subjects and the definitive biography of Sinclair Lewis. Schorer was for many years a professor at the University of California-Berkeley but also taught at other major universities. He published novels and short stories, including his two Wisconsin books, *A House Too Old* and *Pieces of Life*, both of which use as material his experiences in his home town. Another benefit he got from Sauk City was a childhood friend and literary collaborator, August Derleth. All these aspects of his life are part of a description in *Pieces of Life* that is a suitable way to remember him. Of himself and Derleth he writes, "Our friendship very likely began because, even as grade-school students, we both haunted the one-room public library on Saturday afternoons, when it was open. Miss Helen Merk presided as librarian. She and Miss Josephine were the. . .sisters of the distinguished Harvard American historian Frederick Merk."

A House Too Old is based on the life of Agostin Harasczy, whom Schorer calls Karanszcy, one of the most colorful persons ever to live in Wisconsin. After leaving Hungary because of the political tumult of 1848, Harasczy founded Sauk City and near it planted a vineyard. His attempts to become a vintner failed, but he moved to northern California and ran the Buena Vista winery with such success that he is considered to be the founder of the California wine industry. In addition to the obviously interesting romantic exploits, Schorer saw in Harasczy's story a parable about a more impressive era. Harasczy's dream is to found a just community that would be very different from the society he left. To that end he financially aids other settlers. Soon, however, the greed of others foils him, and he realizes that "except for himself, there had never been one person who saw the dream, not one who with deliberation and cunning had not killed it." Schorer chronicles the further degradation of that dream and the intensifying greed by focusing on several generations of the persons who live in Harasczy's house and operate the business he began. Occasionally there are signs of hope—a character responds to nature; Robert LaFollette offers political remedies—but the town's decline is steady.

In *Pieces of Life* ten short stories alternate with brief essays, most of them about his childhood and youth in Sauk City. Several of the stories, such as "A Lamp" and "The Unwritten Story," are excellent, but none of them is set in Wisconsin. Most of the autobiographical interludes describe his experiences in the state but have little relation to the stories. Schorer correctly calls the autobiographical material "more shadowy, bleaker" than the stories. He describes the town and is frank about his family life, including the "horrid tension that at most times positively vibrated" in his home. In contrast, he fondly describes friends, school, and summers spent with relatives near Spring Green. One of the more interesting pieces is about Derleth. Schorer comments on their youthful collaboration and Derleth's portrait of the two of them as young men in *Evening in Spring*. Schorer's final attitude toward his fellow townsman is quite generous: "He died too early, and his death left a real hole in my life, even though, in his later years, I no longer saw very much of him. It was a strange friendship, to be sure—part affection, part jealous rivalry on both sides." This book ends with a tender essay on his wife. The final words of the book, which unless more of his work is published posthumously will be his final published words, are: "I don't think that she has ever recognized my devotion to purest grace of body and of mind, any more than she has ever been aware that she is the total mistress of that double blessing. I feel like crying."

August Derleth

August Derleth, too, must be remembered in a Sauk City background because, except for his years at the University of Wisconsin and an interval of less than a year in Minnesota, he lived there all his life. This restricted geographical scope did not restrict his writing; as his idol Thoreau traveled much in Concord, Derleth traveled much in Sauk City. Some of his enormous output, such as mystery stories, are set elsewhere, but the great majority of his work has a Wisconsin setting, usually Sauk City. He wrote historical novels, other kinds of novels, poetry, biographies (including one of Zona Gale), journals, and juvenile books. The sum is a most extensive literary account of Wisconsin's people and landscape. To represent that accomplishment the best choice of a background for Derleth is the bluffs across the Wisconsin River from his home town: "Here in this high place with dark woods spread far below under tired eyes,/ sentient with hyla voices, jacksnipe booming, swamp owl's dulcet cries,/ the village lights along the northeast rim, the river winding soundless by."

Some of his Wisconsin books are historical novels set in the period around the time Wisconsin became a state. Most of the main characters are famous: Nelson Dewey *(The Shadow in the Glass)*, Hercules Dousman *(Bright Journey* and *House on the Mound)*, Alexander Mitchell *(The Wind Leans West)* and Agostin Haraszcy *(Restless Is the River)*. Other novels, such as *Wind Over Wisconsin*, have nonhistorical main characters. Derleth based his historical novels on considerable research—he even uncovered new information about Dousman—and he strikingly portrays those times. One of his purposes in these historical novels is to

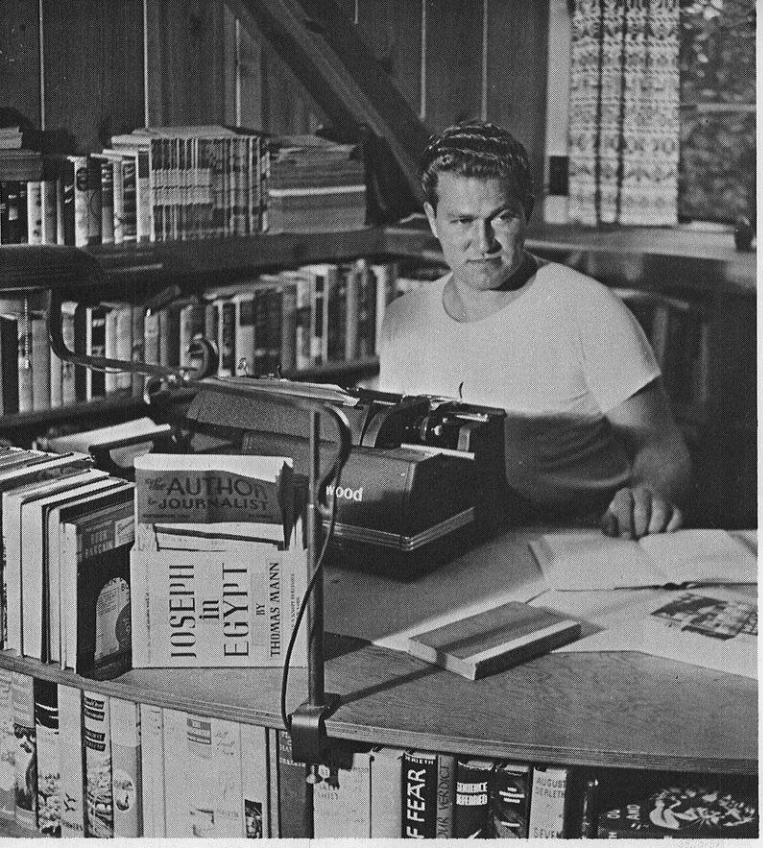


Photo by E.B. Trimpey; Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin

August Derleth should be remembered in his study in Sauk City, the town in which he spent all his life except the years at UW-Madison and less than a year in Minnesota.

dramatize the virtues of his main characters. For example, he suggests that Dousman was one of the most successful and most admirable persons in the state's history because of his willingness to compromise. He emphasizes Nelson Dewey's honesty and endurance of hardship, Alexander Mitchell's business skill and ethics, and Haraszcy's determination and public spirit.

Derleth also sets books in twentieth-century Sauk City. Among them is an early novel, *An Evening in Spring*, in which, according to Mark Schorer, Derleth paints a highly romanticized picture of himself as a youth, his family, and his girl friend. His diary-like books, such as *A Countryman's Journal*, and many of his poems also belong to this group. The most notable book of this type is *Walden West*, in which he alternates descriptions of the landscape with sketches of Sauk City residents. Sometimes the structure appears random; at other times a description of nature casts light on the character sketch that precedes or follows it. At the beginning of this book Derleth points out that his themes are "I. On the persistence of memory. II. On the sounds and odors of the country. III. Of Thoreau: The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." He does indeed give many instances of quiet desperation, usually caused by loneliness, unhappy marriages, or the inhumanity of others, to which nature's splendor contrasts. Through this scene moves Derleth, noticing everything and getting it down in words, making of his small hometown a microcosm.

Derleth is buried in St. Aloysius German Catholic Cemetery, across the street from his former home, beneath a white marble sundial.

Photo by Pat Powell

Ben Logan

Like Sterling North, Ben Logan, whose *The Land Remembers* is reminiscent of *Rascal,* should be remembered as a boy. The proper background, however, is not the rivers, lakes, and small hills of southcentral Wisconsin but the more rugged scenery of the driftless area in the southwestern corner of the state. The scene that, because of Logan's book, has stuck in the memory of thousands of Wisconsinites is a farm: "The farmstead stood on a hilltop, like a castle, like the center of the world. A dusty road went straight into the woods to the west and around over knolls and swales to the east until it disappeared down the big hill that led to Halls Branch Valley. Look in any direction and there were other ridges, with dots of houses and barns, and the blue shadows of other ridges still behind them."

Logan in one sense left that scene to attend the University of Wisconsin, where he knew Aldo Leopold, to wander over much of the Western Hemisphere, and to assume the position he presently holds as a media specialist for United Methodist Communications in New York. But in another sense he has not left that scene. As he writes in the first words of his book: "Once you have lived on the land, been a partner with its moods, secrets, and seasons, you cannot leave. The living land remembers, touching you in unguarded moments, saying, 'I am here. You are part of me'."

At first glance his environment seems austere: the Depression, a one-room school, an isolated farm. Upon closer examination—and, like all good books, this one urges closer examination—it turns out to be rich. The Logan boys learn solid values from living during that era, and the one-room school is perhaps "the best educational system ever devised." The isolation is not complete: books come into the house; the surrounding countryside is full of interesting people and storytellers; nature is always at hand. Most important, the human resources on the farm are immense. The household consists of four boys, a hired man, and the parents. The most impressive, the mother, is warm and wise; her untimely death is poignent. This group reading, gathered around single lamp, is, in Christopher Marlowe's words, "infinite riches in a little room."

In this environment the young Logan flourishes and finds his identity. His mother tells him, " 'You don't find who you are all by yourself. We find out who we are with other people'." As always, she is right. He learns to see meaning beneath surfaces: "When you are working with the soil, the plants, and the seasons, any conversation can lead you into philosophy." He learns a sense of stewardship for the land and the motivations of humans. He develops skill at observation and a way with words: "Most of the wildflowers were gone from the hillside by the time the scraggly sumac trees began to grow there. In a few more years, the poplars with their restless, singing leaves, had started. Soon the young oak trees began to spread from the woods, edging into the sumac and poplar, a final hint of the day when the entire piece of land would be back in hardwood timber." One can watch him mature into someone capable of writing a book as fine as *The Land Remembers.*

Photo by Dale O'Brien

Ben Logan experienced no dead-end effects from growing up on a farm in southcentral Wisconsin during the Depression. He remembers the land and times with warmth and affection.

Edward Leuders

The proper background against which to remember Edward Lueders is a cabin near Clam Lake in Ashland County. The scene has to be winter, as it is in Lueders' *Clam Lake Papers.* At the time he wrote that book, however, Lueders had never been there during the winter. His family owned the cabin; he came there from Chicago while he was growing up and continued to spend time there but always during other seasons. Having spent sixteen winters in Ashland County, I vouch for the accuracy of his account and thereby for the prodigiousness of his imagination. This literary achievement was not unprecedented, as Lueders has a Ph.D. in English and has been a professor of English for nearly thirty years, most recently at the University of Utah. He has written literary criticism (two books on Carl Van Vechten, an American writer of the 1920s) and poetry and edited collections of contemporary poetry.

Lueders pretends that *The Clam Lake Papers* are the jottings left behind as a kind of rent by an intruder who lived in the cabin one winter. Lueders admits to editing the fragments and adding a prologue, an epilogue, and epigraphs. But the intruder is really imaginary or, better, is Lueders' imagination. This book combines meticulous descriptions of nature and philosophical meditations on them. This mixture calls to mind Muir's *Story of My Boyhood and Youth* and Leopold's *Sand County Almanac,* but Lueders makes more diverse use of the material he draws from nature. A better analogue is Thoreau's *Walden,* another book ostensibly about a few months spent in and near a cabin but also about the glory of language, the functions of the human mind, literature, and the good life. That it and *Walden* can sensibly be discussed in the same sentence is an indication of the quality of *The Clam Lake Papers.*

This book bristles with vivid images drawn from nature: "Few scenes in nature coax as elemental a response as a heavy snowfall starting at dusk. There is such understatement in the quiet and the cold and the slow buildup of substantial blue-white mounds that materialize on all surfaces and erase the edges from the external world."Often an image is the occasion for an aphorism. For example, a description of the night sky is followed by "we must learn to see the stars in the daytime." This passage resembles scores of passages in the work of Emerson and Thoreau who, as a corollary of their belief in the essential unity of which humans and nature are parts, believed that nature symbolically teaches moral lessons. Lueders makes the same progression from image to a statement about how the human mind works or about how best to live, but whereas the other writers imply that this connection is there to be found—albeit requiring insight—Leuders emphasizes the role of the mind moving from image to idea. The mind accomplishes this, he writes, by creating metaphors. One of his basic beliefs is that "our most profound seriousness and our most

profound humor spring from the same metaphorical acceptance of contradictory perceptions: that everything in our experience pretends, that everything *seems*, while at the same time everything in our experience is isolated and disjointed."

It is fitting to end this gallery with the author of *The Clam Lake Papers*. First, it is one of the better Wisconsin books. Second, it is about metaphors: yoking of discordant entities. These Wisconsin books serve, among other things, as halves of metaphors. By, in the most profound sense, creating an image of their authors, a process made possible by careful reading, one can establish the differences between himself or herself and those authors. Then a flash of the metaphorical imagination clarifies both author and reader. Lueders, as part of his literary strategy, dramatizes himself in another form, as the intruder, and at the book's end he playfully pretends to try to conjure up that imaginary author's image: "I have formed my own picture of the author of the Papers, but I should not in the least be surprised if my picture could never be duplicated by anyone else, for that is clearly in the nature of the situation."

May I suggest that you read or re-read these authors and set up your own gallery? □

Edward Leuders must be remembered in winter in frozen Ashland County.

Courtesy Department of Natural Resources

Writers' Time Line

1838 John Muir is born in Dunbar, Scotland
1849 John Muir and his family arrive in Wisconsin
1860 Hamlin Garland is born near West Salem; John Muir exhibits his inventions at the Wisconsin State Agricultural Fair
1861 John Muir enters the University of Wisconsin
1863 John Muir leaves the University of Wisconsin
1869 Hamlin Garland and his family move away from the state
1871 John Muir meets Ralph Waldo Emerson in Yosemite
1874 Zona Gale is born in Portage
1876 William Ellery Leonard is born in Plainfield, New Jersey
1887 Aldo Leopold is born in Burlington, Iowa
1891 Hamlin Garland publishes *Main-Traveled Roads;* Zona Gale enters the University of Wisconsin
1895 Hamlin Garland publishes *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*
1901 Glenway Wescott is born near Kewaskum
1903 John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt go camping together: one of the major events in the development of the national park system
1904 Zona Gale returns to Portage after a brief interval in Milwaukee and New York
1906 Sterling North is born in Edgerton; William Ellery Leonard begins to teach at the University of Wisconsin
1908 Zona Gale publishes *Friendship Village;* Mark Schorer is born in Sauk City
1909 William Ellery Leonard recites his ode to Lincoln at the unveiling of the statue on Bascom Hill at the University of Wisconsin; August Derleth is born in Sauk City
1912 William Ellery Leonard publishes his play *Glory of the Morning*
1913 John Muir publishes *Story of My Boyhood and Youth*
1914 John Muir dies in Martinez, California
1917 Hamlin Garland publishes *Son of the Middle Border;* Glenway Wescott leaves for the University of Chicago
1918 Zona Gale publishes *Birth;* Sterling North makes a pet of a raccoon
1920 Zona Gale publishes *Miss Lulu Bett;* Ben Logan is born in the southwestern corner of the state
1921 Zona Gale's dramatization of *Miss Lulu Bett* wins the Pulitzer Prize
1922 William Ellery Leonard's *Two Lives* is published privately; Hamlin Garland visits Zona Gale in Portage
1923 Zona Gale publishes *Faint Perfume;* Edward Lueders is born in Chicago; William Ellery Leonard's *Red Bird,* a play, is published
1924 Aldo Leopold becomes the associate director of the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison; Glenway Wescott publishes *The Apple of the Eye*
1927 Glenway Wescott publishes *The Grandmothers;* William Ellery Leonard publishes *The Locomotive God*
1928 Glenway Wescott publishes *Good-Bye Wisconsin;* Zona Gale publishes *Portage, Wisconsin and Other Essays*
1930 William Ellery Leonard publishes *This Midland City*
1935 Aldo Leopold buys a shack and some land in a sand county; Mark Schorer publishes *A House Too Old*
1938 Zona Gale dies; August Derleth wins a Guggenheim Prize and publishes *Wind Over Wisconsin*
1939 August Derleth publishes *Restless Is the River*
1940 Hamlin Garland dies; Glenway Wescott publishes *Pilgrim Hawk;* August Derleth publishes *Bright Journey*
1944 William Ellery Leonard dies in Madison
1948 Aldo Leopold dies helping a neighbor extinguish a fire; August Derleth publishes *Sac Prairie People*
1949 Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* is published
1953 Aldo Leopold's *Round River* is published
1958 August Derleth publishes *The House on the Mound*
1960 August Derleth publishes *The Hills Stand Watch*
1961 August Derleth publishes *Walden West*
1963 August Derleth publishes *The Shadow in the Glass;* Sterling North publishes *Rascal*
1971 August Derleth dies in Sauk City
1974 Sterling North dies
1975 Ben Logan publishes *The Land Remembers*
1977 Mark Schorer dies; Mark Schorer's *Pieces of Life* is published; Edward Lueders' *Clam Lake Papers* is published

Seal

Seal

black
tar-baby of the underworld

Obsidian
sleek
slivers through waves
sits upon rock-crowned islands

Your pudding face makes me laugh:
That awkward curve of belly, such preposterous feet
a dimwitted strut
like a gluttonous reveler
returning from the fair.
That nub of a nose
balances the ball
and captures our hearts.

How you surprise us with your clowning grace
performing feats of acrobatic perfection.
Make us clap
applaud the skillful transformation.

—Dale Kushner

Instinct

Inside the bird's head
is it there flight begins,
there the ribbon of survival
calling them back
to the camouflage of leaves?

Ducks brake down
to a smooth water landing,
redwing blackbirds scarcely bend
fragile reeds when they perch,
gulls soar on a carnival
of air currents.

Do they know the ground
robs them of grace
as they walk stiff-legged, tiptoe
across my grass?

—Helen Fahrbach

The Childhood Sky

A time ago there was a childhood sky;
A man inhabited the moon; and there were stars
That hung like silent, distant pendulums
To mark the time; and tales of mariners were told
Of seamen who set moorings by those stars
Suspended in the childhood sky.

And there were pock-marked meteors in that sky
Stone fireflies, cast to spin adrift or seek a home
As if, flung from steep and remote escarpments,
They broke in trails of flashing, slimming light
Golden as willow boughs in springtime sun
To burst like brittle bubbles on the Earth.

That early sky of wonder and delight
Has changed. We've reached the moon; there's no man there.
And fire trails down from rocket probes of space.
The star that functioned as a clock or guide
Now dangles—a potential goal to reach—
A world to claim. The childhood sky is gone.

—Josephine Hillebrecht Gree

From a Railed Balcony

Last night I dreamed
I saw my father in an old city square.
It was morning, the sky uncertain
like days in late October.
He was young as ever I
remember him, brown mustache clipped,
a grey fedora low on his forehead.
Aimless as pigeons pecking crumbs,
the crowd drifted around him.

Standing on a railed balcony,
I kept shouting his name,
"Rollie, Rollie," just as my mother
often called him from his garden
but he never turned. When I awoke
I wondered why I hadn't called "Dad,"
and if I had
would he have looked up?

—Helen Fahrbach

dark clouds

dark clouds
pass under a radiant moon
that casts deep shadows
across the sleeping earth,
I turn to you
with sad and liquid eyes
and tell you
I do not know
the cause of it all
or the reason.
in your pillow dazed
you move
to raise your head
open your arms,
accept this soft denial
with your kiss.

—Charles Rossiter

Over the Register

I slept between two featherbeds
in that cold upstairs bedroom
in the big white house
at the end of the block on Ninth Street.

Every morning when Grandma
shook the ticking into place
and covered them with a spread,
the bed looked like a loaf of
her home-made bread that
had risen way above the pan.
There was no heat in that room
except what escaped from the dining room below
through the register in the floor.

Mama kept the register closed,
but sometimes at night
after I'd fluttered a nest for myself,
I'd hop out of bed,
kneel on the floor in my flannel nightie,
quietly open the register
and look and listen to
what was going on down there.

Then, when I began to shiver
I'd cautiously close the vents,
jump back in my feather pocket and consider
the first time I heard Father swear,
Mama's conversation with a neighbor
all about babies,
the stories Uncle Bill told
that he heard at the barbershop,
what a mortgage was
that could snatch away a house,
why Edna Klein took the twins and
went back to live with her folks in Detroit,
what Rev. Engel said when he came
to ask for contributions for the poor;
and I wondered who the poor were.
Maybe they were little girls
who didn't have even one featherbed.

—June A. Zwickey

Hearing the Sea in the Midwest

for Martha

i.
I put a conch
to my ear in the Midwest,
in Wisconsin,
and hear the rumble of a tractor,
the climb of a gravel truck,
and outside voices.

ii.
Above the winding
of a loaded gravel truck
fading over a highway hill,
beyond where a tractor
rumbles over the next field,
like sound in voices
outside a closed room,
the sea.

From a car
north along County P toward Poplar—
Great Superior spans,
a piece of fallen sky between green patches
and smoky blue-green sea hills beyond,
mingling in the blue like the sea,
green of prairie grains and grasses
flowing upwards into forests distilling
into blueness.

First Picnic

Each Ascension Thursday
we'd celebrate, our knapsack bulging
cheese, hard-boiled eggs,
onions, and sweet cake,
atop the highest flat rock
above Pian' Bello.

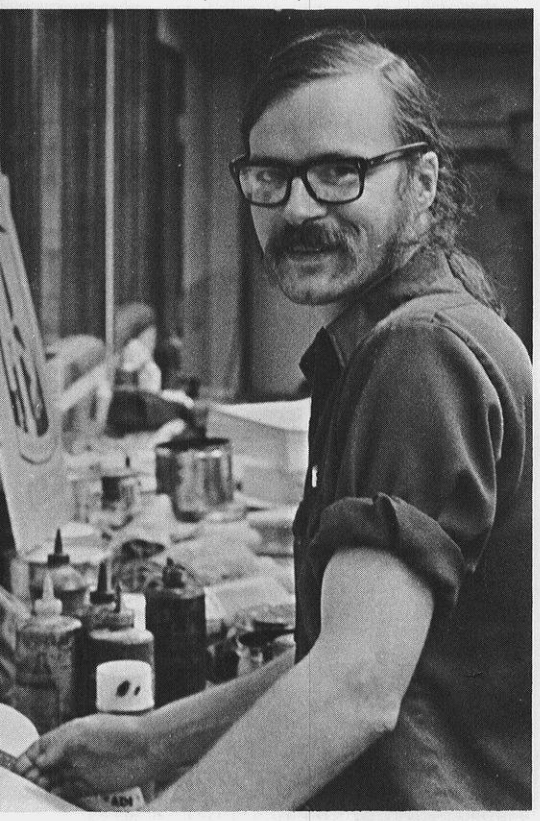
Calling in the spring, we'd sing,
and I would search for tiny bells
as though they marked that past:
I saw him rise again.

I'd ask you then, and each year
was the same, for me—the thrill
of seeking out those yellow marker
bells. Even now I stir with
expectation as I bring my find,
held gently in my palms, to you.

—Gianfranco Pagnucci

continued from page 2

Terry Bolda/Ripon Commonwealth Press



Tom Montag

We asked **Tom Montag**, author of the essay, "Who is Poetry For?" and a long poetic sequence, "Married to Prairie" with excerpts in this issue, to come forth with a bit of biographical information. This is how Tom describes himself:

"Tom Montag lives in Fairwater, Wisconsin, with Mary, who was dumb enough to marry him, and with daughters Jenifer and Jessica, who seldom believe his fanciful explanations about how the world is put together. His hobbies include doing the dishes (too frequently), laundry (on Saturdays), and cleaning the house (when there is no way he can get out of it). Sometimes he cooks; and when he's really cookin', he can't be bothered.

"Montag works full-time as a sheet-fed pressman in Ripon, Wisconsin, utilizing to its fullest the B.A. in English it took him seven years to earn; his job helps, somewhat, to keep his family from starving. Sometimes he writes poems and stories and essays and sometimes these are published; what he earns from his writing does not help at all to keep his family from starving, which should be a lesson for anyone with literary aspirations: Marry a nurse. Poets, he says, haven't got a fly's chance in a frog's belly of earning their livelihood as poets.

"Until he was thirty years old, Montag took himself and the world seriously. At thirty, he learned to laugh at himself. Two years later, he learned to laugh at the world. Today, they are calling the men in the white coats to come get him. He bids you adieu."

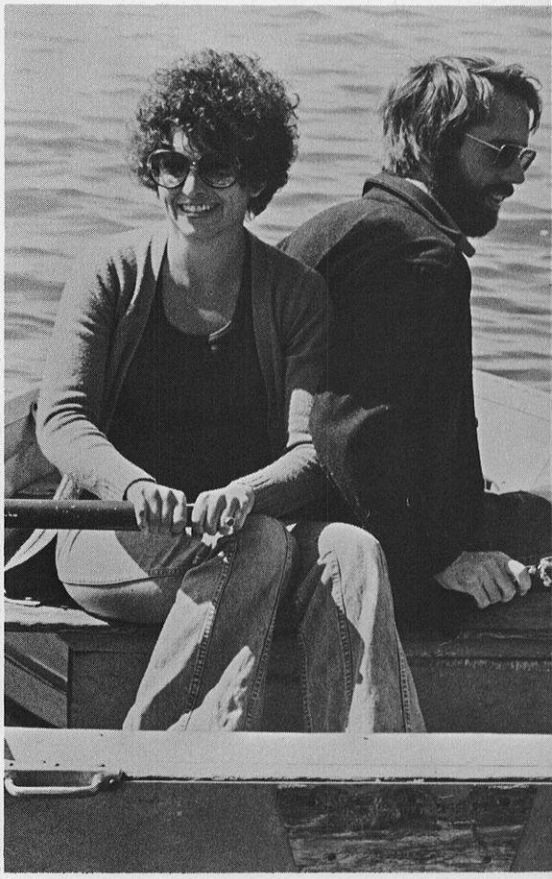
Sara Rath's first publication was a poem in August Derleth's literary magazine, *Hawk & Whipporwill,* in 1963. Derleth became her mentor, and they remained good friends until his death in 1971. Rath has published short stories, articles, and poems in magazines; two books of poetry, *Whatever Happened to Fats Domino and other poems* (Wisconsin House, 1971) and *The Cosmic Virgin* (Wisconsin House,1973).

With her husband, Rick Smith, she collaborated on *Easy Going—Guide to Madison and Dane County* (Tamarack Press, 1977) and *Pioneer Photographer—Wisconsin's H.H. Bennett* (Tamarack, 1979), which won an honorable mention award in April from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. Rath is currently working on another book of poetry and a book on Wisconsin's tourist industry.

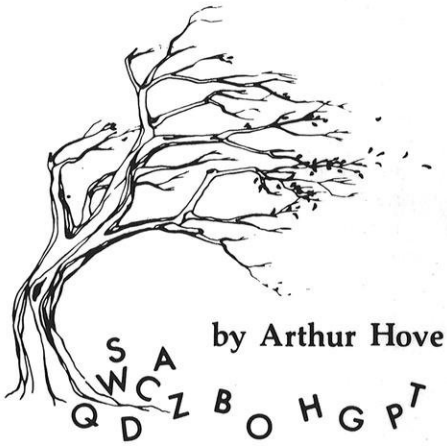
During the past several years, she has conducted writing clinics for UW-Extension, the National League of American Penwomen, and the Wisconsin Junior Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. For four years she was involved with the Poets in the Schools program and visited schoolchildren throughout the state.

Rick, Sara, and her two children live in a seven bedroom house in Madison on which they've lavished much time and love to restore it to its original gracious style. When she's not writing or wallpapering ceilings, she's painting (pictures!), running ten miles a week, and lifting weights to get ready for a summer women's softball team.

Sara Rath and Rick Smith



WINDFALLS



Stringing sentences together

by Arthur Hove

The venerable Cambrian prelate, Gerald of Wales, noted in the 12th century that "those who can string sentences together in a pleasing way are much to be admired." Such talent is still to be envied, and the skill is just as elusive today as it was in Gerald's time.

Writing a decent sentence is a challenge in itself. Stringing a series of them together effectively is an even more formidable undertaking. Samuel Johnson has duly noted that even "Shakespeare never had six lines together without fault."

The difficulty of creating readable prose has caused generations of students to freeze up when it comes to writing themes or exams. The phenomenon is familiar to those who confess ineptitude in other areas: "I can't draw a straight line with a ruler". . . . "I have a hard enough time putting two and two together, much less balancing a checkbook."

Some people can. Some cannot. A contemporary presumption when it comes to letters is that most people cannot. A loud ululation can be heard across the land. It is the banshee-like lament of those who believe the condition of our language and, consequently, the state of our letters is in shambles.

It is said that no one reads anymore. The contention is underscored by the fact that the language skills of high school and college students have declined appreciably in the past decade. The notion is further documented by the statistical revelation that more than 20 million adults in this country are functionally illiterate—lacking even the rudimentary ability to read a street sign or the headlines in a newspaper.

Electronics, particularly television, are supposedly to blame for this sad state of affairs. Today, information is literally thrown at us. Television, films, radio, tapes, records, and cassettes are used to bombard our visual and aural senses. Few are therefore inclined, much less inspired, to set their thoughts down on paper in an articulate and esthetically pleasing manner.

And yet. Each day as we go about our normal business, most of us are all but inundated by the alphabet. Letters, words, sentences, paragraphs come at us from all points of the sensory compass. A random sample includes instructions on a bottle of pills, signs that instruct us to "stop," "merge," or "yield," the contorted, jargon-filled prose of a tax form or insurance

policy. We are continuously confronted with words that force us to respond to various printed admonitions.

Letters, in both the literal and figurative sense, are consequently a basic component of the way we do things. Some people capitalize on this reality and write to make a living. Others write for enjoyment. And still others write because they have to. Something inside them has to get out—a tapeworm of words, a demon that must be released to give its host a feeling of inner peace, even if the result is only a fleeting sensation. The words pour out, the paper piles up. The aggregate becomes a nation's letters, part of its testament to itself.

In earlier times, this archive consisted largely of the official documents of the ruling class, the writings of the clergy, or the ruminations of a landed and leisure class. The evolutionary rise of universal literacy and the growth of democracy expanded the scope to include offerings from all classes and ethnic groups.

We can trace the expansion in the maturing of the American republic. The Federalist Papers provided a basis of argument for framing the Constitution. One hundred years later, Chief Joseph eloquently pleaded for a Native American Bill of Rights: "Let me be a free man—free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself—and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty.

"Bartolomeo Vanezetti's 1927 speech to the Court, delivered before he and Nicola Sacco were executed for murder, serves as a similar and haunting call to action for civil libertarians: "If it had not been for these thing, I might have live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. . . .Never in our full life could we hope to do such a work for tolerance, for joostice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by accident."

Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel, *Invisible Man,* made many realize how indifferent they had been to the condition of the American Negro. ("I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.")

In a worldly context, the professional man of letters (*person* of letters in this more sexually sensitive era) has seldom enjoyed a particularly high repute. Although the popular tendency has been to portray the man of letters romantically on television and in the movies or pot-boiling novels, the calling is not generally lucrative or noble. It can, in fact, involve a substantial element of drudgery. Eighteenth century London's eponymous Grubstreet was the home of what Dr. Johnson identified as a "tribe of mean and needy authors, or literary hacks."

One of Grubstreet's more noted residents, Ned Ward, observed that "The condition of an Author, is much like that of a Strumpet. . .and if the Reason be requir'd, Why we betake our selves to so Scandalous a Profession as Whoring or Pamphleteering, the same excusive Answer will serve us both, viz. That the unhappy circumstances of a Narrow Fortune, hath forc'd us to do that for our Subsistance, which we are much asham'd of."

As John Gross points out in his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters,* the nineteenth century generally saw a momentary rise in the stock of the man of letters. Professional respect was short-lived, however. The man of letters soon became typed as "a writer of the second rank, a critic, someone who aimed higher than journalism but made no pretence of being primarily an artist."

The current splintering of our lives has compounded the situation. Gross notes that "Instead of men of letters, there are academic experts, mass media pundits, cultural functionaries." These, plus thousands of others banging away at typewriters, scratching words on paper with pen or pencil, or keyboarding their thoughts into a computer which has the facility to belch them back in a form ready for the printing press.

The modern litterateur is not likely to be a genteel individual seated in a study composing thoughtful essays or epistles for a select few readers in positions of influence. He or she is more likely to be a columnist writing for a national audience, or a hired editorial gun blazing away to promote the cause of some special interest group.

Whatever the case, writers are seldom trusted. They are a potentially troublesome lot. They deal in ideas. Ideas can be dangerous. The results can be noisy, something in keeping with Washinton Irving's observation that "The republic of letters is the most factious and discordant of all republics, ancient or modern."

The fear of writers seems overdramatized if one measures it in relation to the quality of political rhetoric that has come our way over the past several years. The collected speeches and writings of most present day politicians would more than likely produce somnolence rather than stimulate revolution. What happens in the streets is more significant today than any message that comes our way via the printed word.

Letters, as a result, have lost an important grip on our national consciousness. At first blush, good language seems irrelevant in the face of terrorist attacks, rampant inflation, or grinding poverty. In reality, however, the times cry out for rational, lucid explanations of the forces that swirl around us and shape our lives. The alternative is dark and tragic, as Thomas Hobbes has noted: "No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

The ultimate measure of any society then is arguably found in the quality of the letters it produces. □

bones of ice

on this morning
slicing bright
after this year's
first freezing rain
ice
cast thick around
green marrow blades
bones stiletto grass
swords wars of lights
exhibits and mirrors
like the cut of
mint on lips
even when pleasing
disturbing

—*Mark Bruner*

old woman

old woman with
Polish nose
cold in your
snow babushka
let me
wrap you in my
tired brown quilt
and thaw you by my
black pot stove
old woman with
Polish nose
this lasting
winter's color's
gone
but I have filled
a washtub
for your feet
there is rust in
the water
but the water is
warm
and we can
imagine
it is
clear
and blue

—*Mark Bruner*

Fifteen

A young woman
all of a sudden
her Greek profile
like a satyr's grin
on a faded sherd
just unearthed

olive skin tight
over fine cheekbones
untamed curly hair
pulled back relentlessly
in a mature dark knot
soft velvet eyes

dreaming no doubt
of her beginnings
the green musical island
chilly tile floors
an orphanage with a view
of the Ionian

considering future
inroads on the past
to follow curiosity's
painful clues
through the maze of
identity

to the "know yourself"
on Apollo's temple
dusty wisdom of Delphi'

preparing for that search
in a sprinkling of years
her small ear hums bewitched
by bouzouki.

—*Iefke Goldberger*

The Other Side of Marriage

A workaholic
her husband
hibernating in front of
his built-in loaded desk
graying among books, old maps
absorbed in equations
statistics spiced with Bach
wit-propelled lectures
back bent
legs stiff
from insufficient circulation
smoking in cycles
not a whirlwind could break

in her small study
across the weedgreedy lawn
leaning over her own messy desk
she struggles for a life
of recognition, imagination
the other side of marriage
the dream reality
sketched in elusive wordplay
until she throws a casual glance
over her writer's shoulder
to see him through dim windows
at work—worlds away—unaware of
the reddening leaves

lifting his head he smiles though
and turning in her direction
sends her a lover's light kiss
humming with promises
and intimate facts.

—Iefke Goldberger

This Stranger

for Marijke, my sister

Worn, almost lifeless
like an exhausted swimmer
his creased face pillowed-in
loose skin over dry bone

bluish transparent hands
that would encourage mine
if they remembered me
his daughter

thoughts churning around
in distant past
searching for links
between end and beginning

words like small birds
just learning how to fly
popping out of that soft throat
hesitantly

faded restless eyes
afraid of letting go
defending a heart inclined
to pump forever

I look away and think
of his rare charm, strict morals
I touch his fleshless fingers
unused talents

going to seed
I hope his warmth for others
that complicated wit
have taken root in me

I know this friend and father
this stranger
is close to crossing broders
beyond my grasp.

—Iefke Goldberger

25th

BOOKMARKS/WISCONSIN

THE WIND IS RISING by Viola Wendt; Carroll College Press, Waukesha, Wis., 1979. 75 pp. $4.50.

"The wind is rising. . . ./we must try to live."

—Paul Valery

In fifty-one poems Viola Wendt makes it clear that to be alive is not enough. She is engaged in celebrating life while not mincing words about the struggle entailed.

The Wind is Rising is her second volume of poetry. The first, *You Keep Waiting for Geese*, was published in 1975. It left many of us eager for more and elicited critical praise. However, some critics suggested that it dwelt too much on old age. Make no mistake, in the second book she deals with old age and also with much else. In reading the new poems we are aware that the poet has lived fully and that she faces all of life with delight as well as with honesty and irony.

In the first section, "Seasons and Synapses," we encounter "knowing old women" finding "the view, desperate and dear,/ is as lovely and fresh/ as if they had never seen it before." A poem about the Christmas tree describes "His scarcely dusty ritual tree" as "amid a culture's clutter."

Writing "On the Art of Poetry" she tells us that "the poet's identity/ is a cricket cage" and that "crickets sing as they must,/ caged in their signatures." Two poems are devoted to "Transcription of Dreams," and finally we find "Fragments from a Literate Life." Throughout, the music of poetry is never neglected. She mastered the discipline of poetry and made it serve her art.

Viola Wendt has lived a literate life. A lifelong reader and writer of poems she is Professor Emerita and poet-in-residence at Carroll College. To many Wisconsin poets, who are privileged to know her through the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, she is a generous and uncompromising critic who can be counted upon to want others to write well and to take pleasure in the success of others, perhaps the definition of a great teacher.

Her poems, like Viola Wendt herself, are elegant and witty. We leave reading her book with smiles and with questions.

A WOMAN TO HER SOUL

Little Soul, O engaging one/ little wanderer/ white questing dove/ little holy ghost/ little secular ghost/ Little butterfly/ at my nostrils/ little warty toad/ in my breast/ Little merry one/ Little solemn one/ My host; my guest/ Who will be severed from whom/ when Time runs out of breath?

—*Lenore M. Coberly*

Lenore M. Coberly is a published poet and free-lance writer living in Madison.

ANATOMY OF DECEMBER by R.E. Sebenthall; Juniper Press, La Crosse, Wis., 1978. 38 pp. $8; Softcover $3.50.

". . . there are poets you must read/ because they tell your mind to stand/ up straight, to pay attention to all/ the sardonic turns of the world's/ will and its predilection to trap/ you or trip you into half-trusts and/ half-thinking."

—John Judson

In an essay included in *Voyages To The Inland Sea 3*, one of Juniper's series on contemporary midwestern poetry, the late R.E. Sebenthall has commented, ". . . the best poetry is always timeless; it speaks not merely to the poet's time but to all time." Nor does the best poetry speak to one kind of person, one kind of experience.

Betty Sebenthall's work is not feminist, though indeed she was a feminist; it is not narrowly regional, though indeed she was a native of Wisconsin and much of her imagery is rooted in midwestern experience. It is a work in which the perception of our time is amusing, frightening, sometimes even depressing in its accuracy; but the voice of her poems is a voice beyond time and for all of us because it rehearses—with a courage that belies her harshest vision—the terrors, vulnerabilities, antics, violence and, as well, the grace of human experience.

We are a people (in "Midnight") with "their cargo cast to/ the

moody mercy/ of an infamous twelve//moon high, shadows/ busier than muggers/ as tomorrow rolls up/ like an empty boxcar." This world, this "rabbit run/ between two holes," is "an old bear chasing its/ silly bee-bitten tail" in "The Times I Think," but it is the same world in which "the clumsy clod/ comes up with a birch tree/ or the delicate bones/ of a child or the color/ of chicory."

The injury is closer to the surface in the poem, "At The Clinic," where we are "stripped to our medical facts" and we "examine our bundle of importance,/ find with a shock that it has dwindled," and where tests are being decoded by "a stranger who couldn't care less," while "outside, the day/ is succeeding nicely without us." In this poem we are set adrift. The loss of identity, the indifference, seems inexorable: "How simply the rotten ropes let go!/ How easily the waves commit treason!/ Ashore, no one is looking our way."

There is sternness in Sebenthall's resistance to the merely romantic which so often deceives by unearned excess. At her best, she has that agile and unflinching strength of New England's Emily Dickinson or Wisconsin's Lorrine Niedecker where disappointment and bitterness are relieved by wry humor and ironic restraint.

As early as *Acquainted With A Chance of Bobcats* (Rutgers University Press, 1969) that vision is at work which seems to exorcize the effects of those all too human flaws and to ease the injury of the world's indifference. For "Some Nature Lovers," she observes, "the master/ does not lean as dearly/ from a sky the color of damp plaster."

The demythologizing, a little less unwavering, perhaps, goes on in *Anatomy's* "The Black Woods Fairy Story": ". . .we know/ . . .the phoenix flaps like a barnyard goose,/ has never soared from the ashes." In the poem, "At The Clinic," the world's insouciance has slipped past her defense of irony: "Three days will stand by seriously,/ forming a recent ring around the matter,/ but our friends will conquer their grief/ as they hurry away to martinis."

But even in that inconstant world there are compensations. In its finest moments there is the "Still Life" in which "nothing's agreed to be still" and "even we indigent ones/ pick up a few plums/ as we go along": a Degas Ballerina, Williams' red wheelbarrow, and "for almost nothing" we can "splash/ in the sparkling spray of the Trout Quintet" or "visit the town/ Durer would have seen reason to like" ("Private Collections"). There are always Bach, Watteau, the Guggenheim, El Greco saints, Wallace Stevens, and "dull novels/ jeweled with bedroom scenes."

Immersed in such moments, she can rehearse a "Marianne Moore" in such a way that she shows us how one "exasperating, rigorous, cutglass stanza" can "brim with plasma, glisten with truth." And there is always "the splendid common rain."

Sebenthall's commitment as a poet is clearly to life and to this ordinary world with all the attendant risks, frustrations, joys, disappointments—a world whose "deferred power" may well be "suspended tigering." But then there are moments "I almost begin to think/ (the old bear of a world) knows what it's doing,/ that in their own way/ the big paws are even trying for patterns, for meanings" ("The Times I think"), "and turning/ and turning like a jewel/ in the hands of a savage/ the idea of God/ keeps flashing its prisms" ("Incorrigibles").

If her material is the ordinary world—the crowd, the villages, the children, lovers, an old man fishing—then her language is the language of that world. The wry humor which informs many of the poems roasts some old chestnuts to a turn: "The Artful Dodger," based on Joseph Conrad's comment on the inherent threat of self knowledge, "knows the strings/ to pull for the pickle we're in," and "hurrying/ through a park bulldozers/ missed, here's spring/ loitering for a week/ like a nervy old hooker."

On reading *"The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens,* she says it is "strange to think/ of mopping the kitchen floor/before sitting down/ to the jeweler's tray of exotic words./ Strange to think," as Betty Sebenthall, the Mt. Horeb poet, has done, "of plums and pagodas made/ from so much ordinary weather."

Finally, lamenting the "Last Words" of Schubert (striking the wall by his bed, "Here, here I end") and Rilke, "stung to death by his roses" ("Oh, the hells. . ."), Sebenthall remarks, "When, brought like any man/ to the bitter brink, they contradict/ a lifetime of noble transcendence,/ our hearts sink We grieve to see them/ dragged from the heights, marooned,/ and doing no better than we would."

"But out of our own great need," she adds, "we, as they once, will connive,/decree that those/ final wrung remarks/ remain with the wrung dead flesh,/ while the poems go straight on up, larks/ and the man alive."

—Mary Shumway

Mary Shumway is a published poet and free-lance writer living in Plover.

THE STILL POINT: HAIKU OF "MU" by Raymond Roseliep: Uzzano Press, 511 Sunset Dr., Menomonie, Wis., 1979. 51 pp. $2.50.

Raymond Roseliep has written many excellent poems, yet my overall reaction to his work is mixed. While his high points are very high, many of his poems leave me unmoved. *The Still Point,* his latest book of haiku, has not altered this impression.

"Mu" we are told, means "nothing; none; empty." These poems result from the author's six-month effort to explore that emptiness—"the honeycomb and

catacomb of *mu* as themes for the haiku moment."

The best succeed admirably. They are vivid and reflect a zen-like consciousness of "things as they are." "the wheel/in motion/fades/ Sobi-Shi rides/the water buffalo/ but Sobi-Shi is walking".* In the first poem Roseliep shows his awareness of the somethingness and nothingness of the moving wheel as it simultaneously can and cannot be seen; in the second, his awareness of universal oneness. He rides the water buffalo yet, as a sentient being, part of the universal system; he also *is* the water buffalo. Each of these poems gives a glimpse of *mu*, the nothing that is something; and each says much while seeming to say little. They are straightforward yet interestingly complex, hence poetically valid.

Other poems fail for a variety of reasons, usually an excess of some sort. The weakest suffer because they are too explicit, too cute, or because they seem contrived. "no man around/ narcissus/ in the pond/ every thing/ is/ no thing/ seed under the nails/ of the dollmaker"

This book of fifty-three haiku is published with the assistance of a grant from NEA as a special issue of *Uzzano* magazine. It is nicely produced on quality paper with a clean, crisp cover. The poems are presented effectively, one to a page.
*Sobi-Shi is Roseliep's *haigo* or haiku-name.

—*Charles Rossiter*

Charles Rossiter, associate professor of English and Communications at Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, a published poet and writer, is co-editor of Third Coast Haiku Anthology and remains intimately involved with small press activities in Wisconsin.

WHERE IS DANCERS' HILL? by Robert Schuler; Lame Johnny Press, Hermosa, S.D., 1979. 32 pp. Softcover, $3.00.

Some poets of the "middle border" country who are not American Indian are now encountering the Indian imagination through spiritual recognition. Robert Schuler does in *Where is Dancers' Hill?* most conspicuously by chanting the image-evoking names "Hawks Visit/ Eagle Trail/ Thunder Ghost," "Tatanka Yotanka/ Tashunka Witko"/, "Dull Knife".

His intense notations open the high prairie where "Skidi Pawnee/ can see two crow-streaked skies away/ willow-muscled they run months/ like rain down high grass" and in "Crow King" vibrates "The cross-hatched/ shiver of shadow".

Companion piece to the spare sensitive cadences of "Black Elk on Crazy Horse," "Song for a Strange One" is most fully enacted among these evocations, each section realized as poetry—beauty of flame and shadow in the second, the implicit protest in recall of such massacres as Wounded Knee in the third—framed by fine simplicities ("wear a stone in your hair. . . ride your bones home into the sun.") Here is section three: "come it is dream-time/ thunder fathers/ red-backed hawks/ all of the proud/ warhorses you ride/ will die/ under smoking blankets"

The questioning title proposes a native spiritual quest and is also part of the imaginative restitution, so "useless" and so important to be made. Appropriately a small Dakota publisher, Lame Johnny Press, has issued Robert Schuler's poems in a well-suited format.

—*Ray Smith*

Ray Smith is a poet who lives in Superior and now teaches poetry part-time at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

SEVEN LAKE SUPERIOR POETS edited by Rick Penn and David Kubach; Bear Cult Press, Ashland, Wis., 1979, 67 pp. $4.00

POETICS—PROSODY & PASSION by Livingston Edwards; Metatron Press, Milwaukee, Wis., 1979. 28 pp.

THE FIRST SWALLOW by Nancy C. McElmurry; Karabis Apartments, 201 S. Park St., Madison, Wis. 53715, 1979. 18 pp. $2.00.

LIFE IS by Shirley Losik; Charisma Publishing, Menomonee Falls, Wis., 1979. 95 pp. $2.95.

MOUNTAIN TALK by Jusan Atnarko; Distant Thunder Press, Milwaukee, Wis., 1979. 12 pp. $2.00.

YELLOW EARTH, IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, THE YELLOW CATFISH by Reinhold Johannes Kaebitzsch; Red Mountain Publishing House, Madison, Wis., 1978-79, about 60 pp. $2.00.

The Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets has announced that they will publish an anthology which its editors, Jeri McCormick and Mardi Fries, call overdue. They feel strongly that there are too few opportunities for poetry to be published.

August Derleth, speaking at the founding of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, took that opportunity to advocate self-publication of poetry.

The *American Poetry Review* is assisted by grants from the Pennslyvania Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts so that new and established poets can be provided a forum.

Does this mean that the economics of publishing is such that new means of publishing poetry must be found if American poetry is to survive much less prosper? At the very least, it suggests that there is a widespread interest in and affection for poetry in our land and that this interest and affection is abundantly evident in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Arts Board supported the publication of an excellent anthology, *Seven Lake Superior Poets.* The editors chose to include seven representative poets and to present them more fully. It is regional poetry written by people who have not spent their entire lives in the region.

Kate Basham writes of a sometimes hard life in a harsh land. In the poem, "Snow," she chills the reader with "Wait for her touch: the white/lisp/on your hesitant shape." Peter Hoheisel quietly evokes the northland with "In November/lakes begin to fill with silence."

In an almost prose style reminiscent of Robert Bly, Louis Jenkins unexpectedly peoples his poems. One, "Sergeant Norquist," is a moving and inspiring monologue by a Salvation Army sergeant while "Palisade Head" tells us of "a place of lichen and stubborn trees, a place where only lovers should walk."

David Kubach also tells us about people as he describes "an old immigrant, money in the bank now,/sitting up in October over his small garden,/guarding maybe thirty melons against the kids" in a philosophical poem called "Two Ways of Living."

"The Passing of the Pioneer" is a wise poem by Lee Merrill that tells us "The harshness in my neighbor's voice/an age of scholars could not learn." Any reader who longs to understand the young and the old in a world together will profit by reading her "I Ask You This."

Rick Penn's use of the lower case "i" and bleak descriptions deceive us into accepting strong statements such as "without glass, how can you see outside?" concerning a teacher. The last of the seven, Ray Smith, writes of memories of other places as well as of Lake Superior. But he, too, writes of "Old December" as the "lowering of the dour season/When teeth close upon absence."

This is a remarkable and memorable collection of poems from a fascinating region. It could have benefited from a more objective editing that would have caught a few misspellings and perhaps improved some punctuation. Even poets, alas, need editors.

Poetics—Prosody & Passion by Livingston Edwards is an unusual book in which the author is concerned with "the preservation of principles of our heritage in English literature which are, too largely, being forsaken in today's Poetry Publishing Forum." He is indeed skillful in poetry construction using traditional forms. The antique type and illustrations are lavish throughout the book. It is marvelous to contemplate what would happen if he used language and experience of today and put them into his poetry forms. He would have distinguished company in such an effort in Robert Penn Warren and Alan Tate to mention only two. I hope we hear from him again.

The First Swallow by Nancy C. McElmurry was designed, typed, taken to the duplicating firm, and given to family and friends by the poet. It is one of those books from the heart that all who know the author will cherish. But it is more. It is wisdom gained, in a lifetime of physical suffering, through faith. And, I suspect, it is also an original talent waiting to be polished. She says "Love is/Unpredictable/Untimely/Unplanned" as, perhaps also is poetry. I hope we hear more of this voice and that it will be subjected to editorial assistance

Another book of personal experience is Shirley Losik's *LIFE is.* It is essentially her account of a life fully and well lived, expressed with common sense and enthusiasm. In a particularly affecting poem she sadly describes the old sewing machine and the old woman "attesting to once useful days." Unfortunately, the art work detracts from the poetry in this well edited and carefully printed book.

The title poem in *Mountain Talk* tells us that such talk "does not babel academic dirges;/doesn't fox trot—it boogies." Juson Atnarko is the pen name of Milwaukee writer William Schmidtkunz, and he calls the book "a collection of wilderness visions, winter chants and cabin poems." The paper, illustrations, and beautiful print used by Jeffrey and Carol Winke at the Distant Thunder Press create an artistic whole that makes this limited edition book a joy to see and to hold in your hand.

I first met Reinhold Johannes Kaebitzsch hawking his self-published books at a street sale in Madison. I bought one and cherish it still. He is certainly one of the most prolific poets in Wisconsin, and while he writes and publishes his books in Madison, he travels and reveals broad interests in his poetry. But I see again the pitfall of self-publication which is so hard to overcome. The poems are not equally good, and an editor would probably have omitted some of them. Kaebitzsch is curious and knowledgeable about the earth: the rocks, the soil, the animals and the plant life. And he puts it into poetry, even into poetry about poetry. In reading these little books I have pondered the meaning of and the need for poetry and I found his "Poem" a satisfying statement of what I am feeling.

—Leonore M. Coberly

Lenore M. Coberly is a published poet with a lifelong interest in poetry and poets.

THE IMAGE OF PETER THE GREAT IN RUSSIAN FICTION
by Xenia Gasiorowska; The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979. 199 pp. $27.50.

If the monumental efforts of Peter I to transform Russian society have made him a pivotal figure in the study of Russian history, the legendary character of Peter the man—a combination of rational purpose, savage cruelty, and relentless energy—has been a source of continuing fascination for the artistic imagination. This book surveys the substantial body of literature through which the Petrine legend has been shaped and reshaped for over 250 years. The title is somewhat misleading, for, although the bulk of the examples do come from historical fiction, a genre the author briefly appraises, the work also draws from two other sources: the mainstream historical tradition and *petite histoire,* the world of diaries, memoirs, and anecdotal accounts. These nonfictional sources serve in part as criteria against which the fictional renditions of Peter may be assessed, in part as independent sources of image. The author, wisely it turns out, apologizes in the preface for any confusion the reader will experience owing to this blending of

fact and fiction.

In formal history, judgments on Peter turn on the appropriateness of his reforms to the Russian situation, but in shaping the Petrine literary image, political actions, though never absent, more often than not are overshadowed by deep currents, bright and dark, that course through Peter the man. In capturing the wideranging impact of these character traits on the literary imagination of Russia, Gasiorowska's book does its best work. It is a veritable catalog of literary representations of Peter's strengths, passions, cruelty, capriciousness, blasphemy, love of the grotesque, physical tics, friends, etc. Admirers and detractors alike have had a field day with these materials, the former finding in them evidence of a driving, forceful reformer, the latter evidence of a morally corrupt, bizarre—one could easily say disturbed—personality. Yet for all the richness of the imagery—Gasiorowska argues, the limitations of perspective of the individual artist and the ever-present atmosphere of political constraint—along with a certain ineffability of the tsar's persona—have prevented the formation of an image that is faithful to the complex human being that was Peter. In the *Envoi* she writes, "Yet Peter the Great remains an enigma, not to be explained by a statue cast in bronze, nor by a museum assemblage of authentic relics, nor by a legend created by fiction."

There is a curious, Platonic ring to this final judgment, as indeed to the entire book, for it seems that all representations of Peter must be weighed against some ultimate form—the reality of the man himself—and found wanting. Of course it is in the very nature of an image, be it an icon of a religious personage or a prose description of a major historical figure, that it cannot wholly recapture the person depicted. Nevertheless, we are not deterred from exploring the image for what it says about its creator and about the features of the image that speak to a given society. Though the author is not unmindful of the artistic and social determinants of legend-making, the preoccupation of her argument with the disparity between image and model leaves incomplete several potentially fruitful lines of inquiry. There is much more meaning to the diverse images of Peter than their failure to reconstitute the original in all his epic proportions.

—*J. Michael Hittle*

J. Michael Hittle is associate professor of history at Lawrence University.

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Howard Mumford Jones; University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979. 292 pp. $17.50.

Wisconsin-raised Howard Mumford Jones, Pulitzer Prize winner, critic of American cultural history, and Harvard professor emeritus, has reached that comfortable age of reminiscence. From the rarefied atmosphere of the octogenarian zone, he peers down on the Past, "Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights," his memory undimmed, his gaze eagle-eyed, his wit intact.

Born in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1892, Jones moved with his parents to Milwaukee in 1898 and on to La Crosse in 1901. There his father died in 1906, and he lived alone with his mother through his high school years and the first two years of college at the newly opened La Crosse Normal School. In 1914 he received his bachelor's degree from UW-Madison and the following year, his master's from the University of Chicago.

One-sixth of the book is devoted to his early experiences, and it is these chapters especially that should prove of greatest interest to a Wisconsin reader. At La Crosse he came of age, moving up from typist for the CB&Q Railroad to a summer job as amanuensis to the local celebrity, Hamlin Garland, and from prize-winning orator to publisher of a book of verse and writer of a one-act play produced by Laura Sherry's Milwaukee-based Wisconsin Players.

After a year as a graduate assistant at Chicago, Jones accepted a job at the University of Texas, Austin. This was interrupted by two years at the University of Montana, Missoula, during the First World War, where he met and married his first wife, simply called "W." In the mid-twenties he was back at Chicago, staying at Hull House. Still without a Ph.D. he took a job at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, remarried, and eventually went on to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

In spite of a gentle tone of irony in the early chapters suggestive of a superior air, the book, though self-centered as it must be, is not egocentric. Jones does not list all his numerous accomplishments or recognitions, nor does he boast of those he does mention. Parallels with Henry Adams are not inappropriate as Jones, in an easy though rich style, attempts to sketch in the background of social, economic, political, and psychological forces at work in the larger society as well as in the narrower university communities he has participated in.

Perhaps no one is ever satisfied with any autobiography because it always must meet two aims: delineation of the author's life and times and the development of that specialty that makes him a figure of note. The early chapters do an admirable job on the first; the middle chapters skillfully combine the two; but the later chapters, especially those of the Harvard years, from 1936 to 1962, falter with both. In short there seems too much in the latter devoted to his academic career and too little to his research and writing.

"But what is an autobiography but a man's final judgment on himself?" Jones writes, and in the final chapter, "Nearing Pier 85," he renders that judgment and discusses as well the background, intent, and reception of his critically acclaimed trilogy, *O Strange New*

World, Revolution and Romanticism, and *The Age of Energy,* all published after his "retirement," the first winning the Pulitzer Prize. That chapter and the insightful, prophetic epilogue would be reward enough, for they combine into a cataract "far-thundering from the heights" for the benefit of those still toiling up the mountain.

—*Richard Boudreau*

Richard Boudreau is assistant professor of English at UW-La Crosse.

DIMENSIONS IN URBAN HISTORY: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON MIDDLE-SIZE AMERICAN CITIES by J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth; The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1979. 184 pp. $19.50.

The Hollingsworth duo has provided in *Dimensions in Urban History* a different kind of dimension over a different historical range than many books on urban history. The dimensions they explore are social and political rather than physical, and the history is relatively recent. They have attempted to provide a new way to look at the sociopolitical evolution of small to medium American cities since 1870. They "have blended conceptual analysis, comparative variable analysis using aggregate data and historical case study methods in developing a model for analyzing urban social change in modern industrial society." A typology of middle-size cities and predictions for their evolution is developed from this model.

Using the typology, they examine three middle-sized Wisconsin cities within their conceptual framework. Residents of Eau Claire, Janesville, and Green Bay could find a different viewpoint of their city's present by reviewing the historical changes of each using the economic, social, and political structural dimensions, political culture, and public policy focuses.

The combination of professional backgrounds and interests of the authors are evident in the choice of factors examined. J. Rogers Hollingsworth is a professor of American history and chairman of the program in comparative world history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with interest in American political history. Ellen Jane Hollingsworth is a member of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as well as research director of the Center for Public Representation. She is a student of social policy and legal affairs. The factors included for study reflect both authors' spheres of interest and expertise and give a unique focus to their work. They have sought to use this focus in establishing a new way to classify and compare cities.

In the classification scheme presented, both socioeconomic and governmental activity are used as factors. Five indicators are used in each category to rank 278 cities in the size range under study. No explanation for the selection of indicators was given, nor were suggestions included as to possible uses for the resultant classification system. The latter exclusion may be an indication of the scholarly rather than the pragmatic audience anticipated for the book. It is clearly more of an effort to provide an analytical framework for future research than a basis for local government decision making.

Indeed, except for those interested in the cities described in the case studies, *Dimensions in Urban History* is not intended or recommended for the casual reader. Unlike the philosophical and poetic classic for urban history buffs, *The City in History* by Lewis Mumford, the Hollingsworth's effort is factorally and statistically oriented. Although they, like Mumford, provide a new way to look at the city through time, their focus is on the framework by which to categorize each city rather than on the city itself, the kind of box rather than the contents. Where Mumford strolls through wide spans of time and muses over shapes and meanings, the Hollingsworths crisply march a short distance with an ordered agenda. It is to be hoped that this agenda will someday be expanded by adding an applied research focus to suggest uses for the new methodology they describe. This expansion of focus could add immeasurably to the dimensions which *Dimensions in Urban History* seeks to explore.

—*Elizabeth E. Salmon*

Dr. Salmon, currently a lecturer in city planning for the College of Civil and Environmental Engineering of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, serves on the Dane County Board of Supervisors, chairing the Zoning and Planning Committee, and on the Dane County Regional Planning Commission.

AROUND THE SHORES OF LAKE SUPERIOR: A GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES by Margaret Beattie Bogue and Virginia A. Palmer; University of Wisconsin Sea Grant College Program, Madison, 1979. 180 pp. $6.95.

With the financial assistance of the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Program, the authors set out to tell their readers about nature's wonders around the shores of Lake Superior, as well as to provide some insight into the political, economic, and cultural development of the region. While recognizing that guide books must be selective, they have chosen to emphasize the themes of the Chippewa peoples, missionaries, copper and iron mining, the fur trade, shipping, lumbering, and French-British conflict over territory. So in addition to identifying and briefly describing 113 different sites, they have also written a series of historical essays dealing with these themes and Lake Superior's four major cities. These essays enliven the text making it interesting to read from beginning to end; it is as much a history as a guide. There are some errors in the text, but these do not create a misleading impression of the region's history. The guide is clearly written

and well produced with a color reproduction on the cover of Frances Hopkins' painting "Canoes in the Fog" and with black and white reproductions of historical photographs, paintings, and drawings on most pages. For easy use it is indexed, has a fold out map with numbered entries keyed to the guide, and has numerous maps well placed in the text. It contains a judicious select bibliography. The authors and Sea Grant people have produced a handsome volume. They are now at work on one about Lake Michigan.

—*Timothy M. Matthewson*

Timothy M. Matthewson is assistant professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

MILWAUKEE LANDMARKS by Richard W.E. Perrin; Peerless Press, 1979, 142 pp. $7.95.

During the past ten years, since the original publication of *Milwaukee Landmarks*, the term landmark has become increasingly prominent in the popular vocabulary as meaning a building or site having historical significance and marked for preservation by an agency of local, state, or national government.

It is with architectural interest, importance, and even excellence that *Milwaukee Landmarks* is concerned. Limited to the city of Milwaukee, it is an essay in architectural history, selectively presenting such churches, public and institutional buildings, commercial and industrial structures, and houses which, for the most part, still are standing, pretty much in original condition at least on the outside, and which demonstrate good design, appropriate use of materials, and something of the historical panorama of styles manifested in the latter half of the past and the first half of the present century.

Milwaukee Landmarks is not a catalog of historic places, nor is it limited to such structures which have been officially ranked as landmarks by the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission, Milwaukee County Historical Society, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, or the National Park Service in its National Register of Historic Places.

Milwaukee's architectural landmarks are the eloquent expressions of the social, cultural, and economic forces that shaped the physical environment of its people. Broadly considered, Milwaukee's surviving landmarks span the century from 1850 to 1950. Incorporated in 1846 by the consolidation of three small settlements, Juneautown, Kilbourntown, and Walker's Point, Milwaukee was originally a community of log and timber buildings interspersed with a few prominent structures built of brick. Viewing old lithographs of the city as it appeared in the mid-1850s, one can see that the very substantially built houses, churches, inns, mills, and other structures in Greek Revival and Federal Style are no longer part of the present cityscape. Exceptions are a few churches and houses.

Substantial survivals that may be regarded as old in Milwaukee are therefore scattered Victorian structures usually not antedating 1860. Taken altogether, Milwaukee has enough interesting specimens of Victorian work to consider their preservation and their relationship to urban renewal and neighborhood conservation programs which are generally aimed at the older neighborhoods where such buildings are located. Period architecture of the 1920s also offers preservation and restoration possibilities. Even some comparatively recent buildings should be sympathetically regarded for their landmark potential, since history does not come to an end at any given time.

As more and more of the city becomes transformed into repetitive montages of shiny glass and metal, the desirability of preserving significant landmarks becomes increasingly obvious. The best of Milwaukee's surviving architecture of an earlier day has a character largely its own and there are many opportunities for landmark preservation and restoration that should not be overlooked. Three of Milwaukee's oldest surviving churches were built in the German Classic *Zopfstil* style: St. John's Cathedral on North Jackson Street, Old St. Mary's at North Broadway and East Kilbourn Avenue, and Holy Trinity-Our Lady of Guadalupe at South 4th and West Bruce Streets.

Milwaukee's old churches, and some not so old, reflect many cultural origins and denominational differences, but all are closely interwoven with the city's history. Architecturally, they reflect changing taste and changing attitudes but, above all, much care and effort on the part of their pioneer builders. Mr. Perrin reviews 43 prime examples; they are visible links between past and present and a legacy to be transmitted to posterity.

The 31 public and institutional buildings described in Perrin's *Milwaukee Landmarks* most clearly illustrate America's last Classic Resurgence extended over a forty-year period from 1893 to 1933—from the Chicago World's Fair to the Century of Progress and the Great Depression. The Chicago World's Fair, properly called the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, was probably the most important single event of the late 19th century to turn the architectural tide in favor of Classicism and to put an end to Victorian eclecticism and the nuermous revivials which had marked the preceding fifty years. In the Columbian Exposition the American public saw architecture in the grand manner for the first time. The American people liked what they saw in Chicago and began to insist on classical facades and formal groupings of civic buildings whenever they had an opportunity to do so. Thus the Neo-Classic forms became the principal ingredients for many governmental, public, and institutional buildings for almost half a century.

In Milwaukee the oldest and best example of this resurgent classicism

is the Central Public Library, formerly the Public Museum Building.

It has been said that the aesthetic of a democratic nation is determined not so much by the talent of its artists as by the taste of its citizens. To understand the domestic architecture of those times requires some knowledge of the people. As a new class of successful merchants, industrialists, and professionals emerged, new houses were required and produced which were suitable to the wealth of these men as well as their standing in the community. Perrin gives 49 prime examples of houses.

The days of the great houses ended with the Depression, but their memory lingers on. The history of art and architecture seems to suggest that something once popular—and then rejected—can again become popular under other conditions, but it seems certain that houses as they were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries will never be built that way again. The best examples should be preserved for posterity as landmarks, not only because of their associative and historical values, but because of their architectural excellence. It is in such architecture that the history of civilization leaves its truest and most unself-conscious record.

The author, Richard W. E. Perrin, is a widely known and highly respected architectural historian. A native Milwaukeean, Mr. Perrin is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a past president of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, an honorary curator of history at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and he is the retired Commissioner of City Development for the City of Milwaukee. His interest in architectural history and concern for the preservation of historic buildings spans a period of more than fifty years. He has written a number of books and many articles. With this revised edition of *Milwaukee Landmarks* by his hand, the Milwaukee Public Museum takes pleasure in offering yet another contribution to the cause of historic buildings appreciation.

—Hannah W. Swart

BAY VIEW, WIS. (Centennial Edition) by John Gurda; University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, 1979. 101 pp. $3.00.

In his forward F. Xavier Baron, Executive Director, Milwaukee Humanities Program says "*Bay View, Wis.* is the first in a series of neighborhood studies being prepared by the Milwaukee Humanities Program. The Program, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, is encouraging Milwaukeeans to look more closely at their lives here, to recognize what's good about the city, and to focus on the values and purposes that we share. The neighborhood publications focus on both historical and contemporary experience. They depend heavily on the views and observations of Milwaukeeans themselves. And they stress the importance of the neighborhood as a basic human context in which people's lives are lived."

It's Bay View, not Bayview, as some people spell it. And Bay View is not part of the South Side. To some residents, it's barely part of Milwaukee.

Bay View insists on these specifics. The area's people resent misspellings and resist being lumped together with other neighborhoods. Bay View, in short, has an identity: a sense of where it has been, and a sense of where it is today. In a city of neighborhoods, Bay View is widely recognized as a stronghold of neighborhood feeling. Other communities in Milwaukee have identities, too, but Bay View looks different from other neighborhoods, and its people behave differently from other Milwaukeeans. It is better organized than any area of comparable size in the city, and it proclaims its identity a little more loudly than other communities.

How did the neighborhood develop such a strong sense of place? The answer is surprisingly simple. It's a combination of historical roots and geographic location. Bay View owes its existence to an iron and steel mill that was opened on the lake shore (just north of Russell Avenue) in 1868. Within a few years the mill was Milwaukee's largest employer, and a residential community had formed on the lake bluff south of the mill. The community's residents had a dramatic view of Milwaukee Bay, and so Bay View was born. It was a company town, a compact residential area between the City of Milwaukee to the north and the rural Town of Lake to the south and west. In 1879 Bay View was incorporated as an independent village collecting its own taxes, grading its own roads, jailing its own drunks. When Milwaukee annexed the area eight years later, Bay View came in as a mature community, not a piece of raw land that was needed for the city's growth. In 1979 Bay View celebrated the centennial of its incorporation as a village. While it has been part of Milwaukee for most of its history, Bay View's independent spirit has grown from roots that are more than a century old.

Although there is enough detail in the first two chapters to make older Bay Viewites nostalgic, the emphasis is on the larger themes—the events and forces that produced a distinctive community.

The last two chapters describe Bay View as we find it today, and they were written in a spirit of celebration and challenge. Chapter 3 celebrates Bay View's "small towness." But Bay View is not the peaceful village it was in an earlier time. Chapter 4 describes some of the issues currently threatening the neighborhood's sense of identity, and it challenges the community to recognize that a new Bay View is emerging—one whose problems and potentials deserve a realistic response.

—Hannah W. Swart

Hannah W. Swart is curator of Hoard Historical Museum. □

Lost

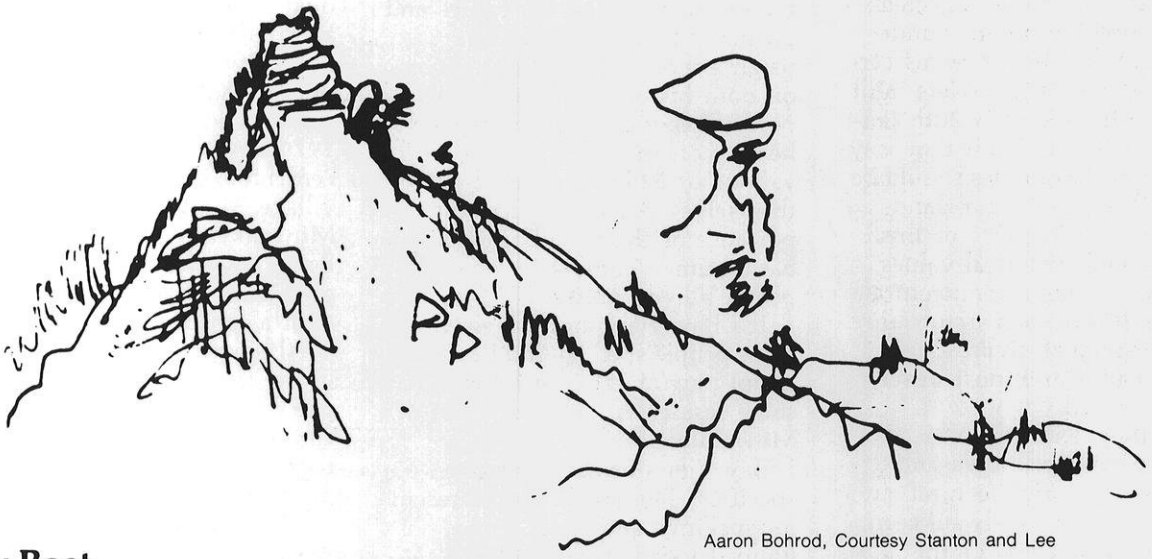
At the end, no one comes.
Ducks and muskrats break trails
through changing colors of water.
You wear goose down, muskrat fur.
Your voice is nothing,
the drumming of your heart is nothing.
You hear wind and touch ice.
The sky turns from orange to stars,
the dipper pours nothing.
You close your eyes, think of fire.

February

Snow, dead grass, skulls of birds.
There's no moon or sun.
Only a stained tablecloth,
twists of hair and rules, lettered
with quills pulled from autumn.

Year

It ends like it began,
rain over dry marsh
flight of birds.



Aaron Bohrod, Courtesy Stanton and Lee

Duck Boat

The bank teller said it was cedar,
resting in three feet of water.
Sundays we walked into the marsh
and never found it.

Bayman

Forty dump trucks build a bridge across the bay.
The north marsh is filling with riprap.
He shoots poorly and doesn't know if his swing is slow
or if he's becoming eelgrass, sea lettuce.
He stands behind glass, watching.
His Chesapeake retriever limps across the kitchen.
Antique dealers fill sacks with his decoys, clamming rakes.
Friends come in wet boots, leave tiny pools of ocean.
All year he cooks and cleans for his father and mother.
He dips his hands in dishwater. He sees with his hands.

—Stephen M. Miller

INSIDE THE ACADEMY

Of Pride and Promptings

by Tom Bliffert

Adults, like children, sometimes get bored and complain, at least to themselves, that there is "nothing to do." As a member of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, if I have nothing to do it is only because I don't want to do it. In the Academy and its 22 affiliated organizations, with interests ranging from entomology to poetry, "nothing to do" is an impossibility.

The Academy was established by our State Legislature in 1870 for the purpose of communicating information and encouraging research on the sciences, arts and letters of Wisconsin. It is among the oldest and largest of the 45 or so state and regional academies in the nation. It is also among the most accomplished of such institutions.

I take pride in my association with the Wisconsin Academy—with good reasons, among which I include:

- The meetings of the Academy held around the state allow members a golden opportunity not only to see more of Wisconsin, but to know it through the learned observations and presentations of geologists, historians, artists, natural scientists, poets, and a rich diversity of resource persons;
- The publications of the Academy, including the scholarly *Transactions*, but also my two favorites: the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, a kind of smorgasbord of stimulating reading on Wisconsin subjects for the general reader, and *Excerpts*, that remarkable journal of creative writing and photography by some remarkable high school students;
- Our Junior Academy, which I think has done more than any other organization except the schools to enrich and encourage the high school students of this state in subjects ranging from dance and multimedia work to research in the sciences and social sciences; and,
- The Academy staff itself, which is as dedicated, talented, and loyal a collection of men and women as you are likely to encounter, be it in nonprofit or commercial enterprise.

I confess to being active in several other organizations. My experience in nearly all instances is that the governing boards take a direct hand in fund raising. One group with which I am familiar, for example, has committed itself to raising the monthly rental costs for their organization. Another board has taken on the burden of obtaining gifts and grants necessary to meet a $200,000 budget deficit.

The point here is that we who are a part of the Wisconsin Academy have much in which we can take pride. But there is much that we can and must do if we are to fulfill the great purposes outlined for us in our legislative charter of 1870. To be a part of the Academy, to be a member of this organization, should imply an agreement that we will do our part in assuring quality programming for the future. We have a job ahead of us, but I am convinced that we also have the board, the staff, and the membership who can turn adversity into advantage if they do their share.

Gifts, gift memberships, or the names of prospective donors or possible new members should be sent to: Office of the Executive Director, Wisconsin Academy, 1922 University Ave., Madison, Wis. 53705.

Tom Bliffert is a Milwaukee businessman, patron of the arts, and past Academy vice president for the arts.

WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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